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History of Richmond Baptists, 1780-1860

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HISTORY OF RICHMOND BAPTISTS

1780 - 1860

BY

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CHAPTER I
BAPTIST BEGINNINGS IN RICHMOND
1780 - 1800

Organized Baptist work began in Richmond in June, 1780. Several families belonging to the Boar Swamp Baptist Church¹ in Henrico County had moved into the Richmond area. The distance, the road conditions, and the modes of travel made it difficult for these people to worship regularly at their church. Their pastor, Joshua Morris, also realized their problem. During the month of June, 1780, he met with these folks at the home of Mr. John Franklin, located on the northeast corner of Carrington and Pink Streets in the east end of Richmond. There were fourteen in attendance. Together they had prayer and religious conversation. It was at this meeting that the Richmond Baptist Church (now First Baptist) was constituted. The fourteen in attendance became the charter members. Of these, only four names have been preserved. These are Mr. John Franklin,

1. The Boar Swamp Church, now known as Antioch Church, is located about three miles east of what is now Sandston, Virginia in Henrico County.

at whose house the church was constituted and frequently met; Mr. John Williams; Mrs. Lewis; and Mrs. Martha Miller, at whose house the church also met periodically. Nothing else is known of this organizational meeting.² Nevertheless, out of these humble beginnings has developed the Baptist ministry within the City of Richmond today.

Richmond in 1780 was a city of 1,800 inhabitants, half of whom were Negro slaves. By this time the city already possessed a fascinating history. The first explorers under the leadership of Captains Christopher Newport and John Smith had appeared at the falls of the James River a few days after the landing at Jamestown on May 24, 1607. Although their expedition was for the purpose of securing either gold or a northwest passage, they recognized the site as a desirable location for a future settlement. But it was not until 1609 that such an attempt was made, and it was short lived.³

Although other settlements were attempted at the Falls, it was not until 1644-45, when the Assembly of Virginia ordered a fort to be erected there to keep back the Indians, that a permanent settlement was finally established. It was named Fort Charles in honor of King Charles of England. The outpost had a shaky existence until 1676 when Captain William Byrd took

2. H. A. Tupper (ed.), The First Century of The First Baptist Church of Richmond, Virginia (Richmond: Carlton McCarthy, 1880), pp. 143-146 (hereafter cited as Tupper, First Church).

3. W. Asbury Christian, Richmond Her Past and Present (Richmond: L. H. Jenkins, 1912), pp. 1-2 (hereafter cited as Christian, Richmond).

charge. Byrd had brought to the Colony of Virginia 122 persons. For this he had incurred the favor of Governor William Berkeley. Berkeley made Byrd an offer. If Byrd would settle fifty well-armed, able-bodied men at Fort Charles, Berkeley promised a grant of 7,351 acres of land, beginning at the mouth of Shockoe Creek and running up the James River several miles and north of it a considerable distance. Byrd fulfilled the conditions and received the land. In 1687, another tract of land, consisting of 956 acres, beginning on the east side of the Shockoe Creek at its mouth, and extending up the creek and down the James, was given to Captain Byrd.⁴ Much of the present site of Richmond is located on these tracts of land.

As the frontier moved westward, Fort Charles became a trading center. Because of this, the site grew in importance. More and more people moved into the area. In April, 1737, Major William Mayo laid off the town into thirty-two squares, four wide and eight long, and each contained four lots. Streets running north and south started with what is now Seventeenth Street and went eastward to what is now Twenty-fifth Street. They were numerically numbered. The streets running east and west were named by letters of the alphabet. These began with what is now Cary Street, then called "D" Street, and continued northward to what is now Broad Street, then "H" Street. The name Richmond was given because of the similarity to

4. Samuel Mordecai, Richmond in By-Gone Days (Richmond: The Dietz Press, Republished from the Second Edition of 1860 in 1946), p. 17; Christian, Richmond, pp. 4-5.

that of Richmond-on-the-Thames in England. Despite these early beginnings Richmond was not incorporated as a town officially until May 15, 1742. On that date Richmond received her charter from George III of England.⁵ Even then it was not a city but a town. It was not until 1782 that Richmond was incorporated as a city.⁶

Prior to this time Richmond was seriously considered and finally established as the capital of Virginia. The first serious consideration for such a move was brought up in 1746 when the public buildings in Williamsburg were destroyed by fire. However, it was decided to rebuild in Williamsburg and the matter was shelved for more than a quarter of a century. Before the matter received its full consideration, the Revolutionary War had erupted. The growing desire for independence and the need for a provisional form of government drew delegates to Richmond on March 20, 1775 to consider arming the colony and then again on July 17 to form a provisional government. War came. The provisional government became greatly concerned over the defenseless position of Williamsburg. Fearing a major loss at this location, the Assembly ordered the capitol to be moved to Richmond. An act to this effect was passed in May, 1779. In May, 1780, one month before the beginnings of Baptist work in Richmond, the first session of the General Assembly was held in that city. The seat of the government was officially

5. Christian, Richmond, pp. 7, 9.

6. Mordecai, Richmond in By-Gone Days, p. 22.

7
changed.

What was Richmond like at this time? In a letter written by a Mrs. Edward Carrington who had recently become a resident of the city the following description is given:

It is indeed a lovely situation, and may at some future period be a great city, but at the present it will afford scarce one comfort of life. With the exception of two or three families, this little town is made up of Scotch factors, who inhabit small tenements here and there from the river to hill, some of which looking...as if the poor Caledonians had brought them over on their backs, the weaker of whom were glad to stop at the bottom of the hill, others a little stronger proceeded higher, while a few of the stoutest and boldest reached the summit....⁸

It was to this city, with the above history and character, that the Baptists came and initiated a work that has been an influential factor in Richmond's history since its conception.

In 1780, Baptist work in Virginia was still a relatively new phenomenon. It was of a limited nature and generally held in disrepute by the general public. The first inroads of organized Baptist work occurred at the hands of the General Baptists⁹ in Prince George County sometime between January 1 and March 25, 1715 by Rev. Robert Norden, a recent arrival from

7. Christian, Richmond, pp. 11-19.

8. Ibid., p. 15.

9. The General Baptists was one of the two types of Baptists in England, so called and identifiable because of their belief of general atonement, i.e., that Christ died for all. They were principally Arminian in theological orientation.

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England. How long the Baptists had been in the Colony prior to this is a debatable question. Most historians believe that they did not arrive in Virginia until late in the seventeenth century, and that there were no Baptist organizations prior to 1695.¹¹ However, at least one church historian, W. B. Hackley, leans toward the concept that Baptists had been in the Colony since the early days with even the strong possibility of some sort of organized Baptist endeavor prior to the 1695 or 1715 date. He believes that there was some such activity as early as 1628 and certainly by the 1670's.¹² Unfortunately, there is no record of any church being organized until 1715. Once the beginning was made, Baptists experienced religious intolerance and political pressure in Virginia. Around 1742, as a result of this intolerance and as a result of an epidemic, most of the General Baptists moved to North Carolina. There they were soon absorbed by the Particular and Separate Baptist groups which entered North

10. W. B. Hackley, "Traditional Baptist Work in Virginia," Religious Herald, Vol. CXXXVII, No. 46, December 3, 1964. The date was 1714 by the Old Style Calendar which counted any day prior to March 25 as being in the year before.

11. Richard Cook, The Story of the Baptists in All Ages and Countries (Baltimore: H. M. Wharton, 1884), p. 214; Garnett Ryland, The Baptists of Virginia 1699-1926 (Richmond: The Virginia Baptist Board of Missions and Education, 1955), p. 1 (hereafter cited as Ryland, Virginia Baptists).

12. Hackley, "Traditional Baptist Work."

Carolina around the middle of the eighteenth century.

The second group of Baptists to establish work in Virginia was the Particular Baptist group, often called Regular Baptists. This work began at the Opecken Creek in Frederick County, Virginia in 1743. It was originally a General Baptist church established by several families who had migrated from Maryland. Soon, however, they embraced Particular Baptist theology, tenets, and practices, and affiliated themselves with the Philadelphia Association which was a Particular Baptist association. From this church, the Mill Creek Church, Particular Baptist work spread in all directions. By 1772, the Ketockton Association, reporting thirteen membership churches with over eleven hundred members, was formed. Particular Baptists were to continue as a separate movement until 1787 when

13. William L. Lumpkin, Baptist Foundations in the South (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1961), p. 64. The Particular Baptists were the second and strongest group of Baptists in England. They came into this country principally in New England and around Philadelphia. They were so called and identifiable because of their belief in a limited atonement, i.e., that Christ died only for a select few who had been predestined for salvation. The Particular Baptists were principally calvinistic in theology. The Separate Baptists developed out of "The New Lights" which was an emotional, zealous group having emerged out of the religious revival known as the Great Awakening in the early 18th century. The Separate Baptists were zealous and enthusiastic; they emphasized the necessity of the new birth, the authority of the Scriptures, and the leadership of the Holy Spirit in the lives of God's people; and they were fearful of formal creeds and adopted no official confessions of faith in their early years.

14. This is now Berkeley County, West Virginia.

15. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, pp. 9, 18-20.

they united with the larger Separate Baptists to form the "United Baptist Churches of Christ in Virginia."¹⁶

The Separate Baptists, by far the most zealous and influential group, entered Virginia as a little group under the leadership of Shubal Stearns. They came from Tolland, Connecticut, in 1754 and settled for a time on Cacapon Creek, Hampshire County, in northern Virginia. There, they tried to establish a church. However, disappointment caused by poor attendance and the uncooperative spirit of the neighboring Baptist churches, Mill Creek and Ketocton of Particular theology, led Stearns and his group to migrate farther south to the Sandy Creek area of North Carolina. There the work became established. Because of the evangelistic zeal of the people, this Baptist work spread rapidly. In 1758 it spilled over into Virginia. By 1760, the Dan River Church was constituted and became the first Separate Baptist church in Virginia. Except for a few missions, the Separate movement in Virginia was virtually inactive until 1765. In that year some people in northern Virginia requested Separate preachers to come to their area. They heeded the call and went into Culpeper, Orange, Spotsylvania, Caroline, Hanover, and Goochland Counties. Many converts were won to the Christian faith. In 1767, organized Separate work began in this area with the formation of the Upper Spotsylvania Church. More were soon to follow. By 1771, at least seventeen churches had been organized, and

16. R. B. Semple, A History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists of Virginia, revised and extended by G. W. Beale (Richmond: Pitt and Dickinson, 1894), p. 101.

Separate Baptist work had penetrated into at least twenty counties in
 17
 the Old Dominion.

Prior to 1770 all Separate churches in Virginia and the Carolinas belonged to the Sandy Creek Association. It was agreed at the annual meeting of the Sandy Creek Association in 1770 to divide the Association into three bodies, one in each state. In Virginia, twelve churches sent representatives to Elijah Craig's house in Orange County in May, 1771 and formed the General Association of the Separate Baptists in Virginia. The Separates continued to multiply. This, however, did not occur without struggle. At least forty-three Baptist preachers were imprisoned because of their beliefs by 1778. Nevertheless, by 1774 there were more than fifty Separate churches in twenty-eight of the sixty counties of Virginia
 18
 with a combined membership of approximately four thousand.

One of the notable leaders in the expanding ministry of the Separate Baptists was Elijah Baker of Lunenburg County. Shortly after his baptism in 1769 Baker, filled with an evangelistic zeal, set out to establish new churches in areas where none previously existed. He journeyed into the Peninsula below Richmond, where he was instrumental in establishing at least five churches. One of these was the Boar Swamp Church in

17. Lumpkin, Baptist Foundations, pp. 10-31; 91-97.

18. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, pp. 51-52, 95.

Henrico County in 1777. Three years later, the Richmond Baptist Church
 was founded as an off-shoot of the Boar Swamp Church.¹⁹

Unfortunately, little authentic information on the initial decades
 of the Richmond Church has been preserved. The earliest Record Book of
 the church was lost, if there ever was one.²⁰ The newspapers offer little
 information during these first two decades of the church's history. Prior
 to 1790, there are also no records of the meetings of the Dover Baptist
 Association,²¹ which was organized in 1783 and through which the Richmond
 Church conducted its co-operative ministry on the district level. On the
 state level, denominational life centered in the General Association of

19. Ibid., p. 114.

20. The earliest Record Book in existence today begins with the
 year 1825. It contains the Minutes of the Business Sessions of the church.

21. Virginia is divided into a number of District Associations.
 The churches in a certain area are joined together voluntarily for the
 purpose of strengthening and advising one another and of sharing together
 a cooperative ministry. In the early days there was only a few such
 associations, each extending over large areas. As the number of churches
 increased, new associations were created thus narrowing the geographical
 limits. Today there are 44 associations in Virginia. The Dover Associa-
 tion originally included all churches in the lower half of that portion
 of the State north of the James River. Its formation will be discussed
 later. Richmond churches on the north side of the James River remained
 a part of this Association until the Richmond Association was formed in
 1951. The churches constituted south of the James in what is now South
 Richmond belonged to the Middle District Association until 1951 when
 they too became a part of the Richmond Association.

Separate Baptists from 1771 to 1783. From 1783 to 1799 the central organization for the State was the General Committee.²² Unfortunately, the minutes of these organizations do not include local church records as such. Therefore, the history of Richmond Baptists during the first two decades must be based on generalizations gleaned from the information available. Nevertheless, such information does provide some insight into the mind and life of Baptists in Richmond.

When the Richmond Baptist Church was organized in 1780, it was the second organized church of any denomination in the city and the first to have a preacher regularly officiating. St. John's Episcopal Church was the first church established in Richmond, but it was considered as a branch of Curl's Church in Henrico County until 1785. In that year a vestry was appointed, a resident pastor came, and regular periods for worship were established.²³ Other denominations did not begin work in Richmond until after 1790. The Roman Catholics and Jews each began work in Richmond in 1791. Four years later the Society of Friends established a ministry in the city. Methodists soon followed and began to thrive in Richmond in 1798 when the city was made a station. By 1793 the Presbyterians were also solidly established under the leadership of John Blair.²³

22. Blanche Sydnor White (compiler), First Baptist Church 1780-1955 (Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, 1955), p. 7 (hereafter cited as White, First Baptist). The establishment and work of the General Committee will be discussed later.

23. Tupper, First Church, p. 51.

24. White, First Baptist, pp. 16-17.

Thus, for its first decade, the Richmond Baptist Church was one of two existing churches, the first to have a resident pastor and regular scheduled periods of worship.

For the first three years of its organizational existence the Richmond Baptist Church operated as an outpost of the Boar Swamp Church. In all probability, preaching at the Richmond Church during this period was on a monthly or semi-monthly basis. The small number of members probably made it impossible to support properly a pastor. However, in July, 1783 Joshua Morris purchased a half-acre lot on the south side of Main Street at Second Street for "11,000 pounds of Nett Crop tobacco," and soon thereafter moved his residence to Richmond. He continued as the pastor of the Richmond Church until 1786 when he moved to Kentucky.²⁵ Little is known of the development and progress of the church under the leadership of Joshua Morris since records are not available. It can be reasonably assumed that the Richmond Church, being organized as a Separate Baptist church, would have the same basic characteristics and tenets as other Separatist churches.²⁶ Further light on their tenets of faith as Baptists is seen in the answer given by the General Committee in 1789 to the query from the Henry Association, "What is the constitution of the Baptists?" The General Committee replied:

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

26. See footnote describing Separate Baptists on p. 7.

We answer the Bible, there is none like it. Human creeds and systems in comparison thereto are like chaff to wheat. A bible Baptist is the best appellation for us.... Neither this committee nor any association have any right to disrobe churches of that independence. The articles in which we all agree are as follows:

1. That there is but one eternal God.
2. That in the Godhead are three distinct persons.
3. That Jesus Christ is properly God.
4. That the scripture is a divine revelation of the will of God.
5. That all Adam's posterity are universally depraved.
6. That nothing atones for sin but the blood of the Lamb.
7. That the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed alone, can justify us before God.
8. That a moral change of heart is absolutely necessary to prepare us for the enjoyment of God in time and eternity.
9. That repentance for sin should always precede baptism.
10. That no water baptism is valid but that of dipping the body in water in the name of the Trinity.
11. That self denial and gospel obedience are necessary in religion.
12. That there is a general judgment appointed by God, where all Adam's race will have their audit and hear their final doom.²⁷

Then, as now, churches generally adopted certain rules by which the members agreed to be governed in their church relationship. Although no records are available concerning a constitution and by-laws of the Richmond Church, records are available concerning the constitution and by-laws of the Elk Creek Church in Kentucky. This church was constituted under the

27. From a letter to the Henry Association from the Baptist General Committee of Virginia in 1789, as found in Minutes of the Strawberry Association, 1787-1822, p. 21.

leadership of Joshua Morris in 1794. Dr. White, in the history of First Baptist Church, says "It is a reasonable supposition that he (Joshua Morris) carried over to his church the pattern of organization which he followed in 'gathering' the Richmond Baptist Church." On the basis of this supposition, Dr. White suggests the following as the probable covenant and rules adopted by the Richmond Church in June of 1780:

We, ...thinking it most for the glory of God and the good of each other, after fasting and prayer, were regularly constituted into a church of Jesus Christ by the aid of our beloved brother, Joshua Morris, agreeably to a Regular Baptist (for the Richmond church the words Separate Baptist would probably be more correct at this point) congregation of Faith, so far as it agrees with the word of God. We agree to hold society meetings every Lord's Day for prayer, praise and public speaking.

We adopt the following rules which, with God's help, we shall endeavor to observe in our church relationship:

1. Resolved, That personal offenses between members shall be settled as the Lord directs in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew.
2. Resolved, That any member neglecting to attend our regular business meetings without a lawful excuse shall be dealt with for such neglect.
3. Resolved, That when the church is in session every member shall keep his seat in silence, and if anyone wishes to speak, he shall rise to his feet and address the moderator. Every motion must first be seconded.
4. Resolved, That strictly private business of the church shall be attended to in private with closed doors.²⁸

The progress of the Richmond Church during the early years remains somewhat vague as well. Although Joshua Morris was probably uneducated,

28. White, First Baptist, pp. 7-8.

"he was a minister of earnest spirit, readily embracing and diligently seeking opportunities of useful labor."²⁹ In all probability the church experienced spiritual and numerical growth under his leadership. The congregation met in private houses until it subsequently settled in the Hall over the Market House on Seventeenth and Main Streets. Exactly when the move occurred is unknown, but it seems that this Hall was used until around 1798 when the first meeting house was built on Cary Street.³⁰

At the outset of Joshua Morris' ministry in Richmond, the Revolutionary War was very real for the people of the capitol. When Lord Cornwallis invaded the State, Richmond shared in the responsibilities of providing a portion of the 2,300 militiamen called for by the legislature for the defense of the State. The women of Virginia were busy spinning, weaving, and dyeing cloth, and making stockings and suits for the new recruits.³¹ During 1781 most of the able-bodied men were away in the army. On January 5 Richmond was captured by the British under Benedict Arnold, who pillaged, plundered, and burned much of the town. Finally in October, with Cornwallis' surrender at Yorktown, the war came to an end,³² and the process of rebuilding the city was begun. It can be reasonably assumed that the Baptists, though small in number, shared both in the

29. Tupper, First Church, p. 112.

30. Ibid., p. 147.

31. Ibid., pp. 47-49.

32. Christian, Richmond, pp. 21-23.

defense and in the rebuilding of Richmond.

By the end of the Revolutionary War, Baptists in Virginia had experienced much growth. Thirty-seven new churches in twenty-eight different counties were established during this period. This caused a problem in relation to the General Association. It was extremely difficult for representatives from these new churches to attend the meetings of the General Association because of distance and poor travelling conditions. It was thus decided in 1776 to divide the General Association into four districts. However, some central organization was needed to co-ordinate the work on a State level and to be the spokesmen for Virginia Baptists in their struggle for full religious freedom. A proposal was made during the 1783 meeting of the General Association to form a General Committee. The tasks of this Committee were set forth as being: to devote its attention to matters of general concern; and to act as guardian of the rights of Virginia Baptists in the struggle against religious discrimination.³³ The Committee defined its purpose in 1791 in the following manner:

Look not upon us we beseech you, as your spiritual head. We disclaim all such power over the associations or churches. We desire you to view us, only as your spiritual mouth, to speak in your cause to the State Legislature, to promote the interest of the Baptists at large, and endeavor the removal of every vestige of oppression.³⁴

33. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, pp. 120-122.

34. Minutes of the Baptist General Committee of Virginia, 1791, p. 8 (hereafter cited as M.B.G.C.).

Richmond Baptists were represented on the General Committee by their pastor, Rev. John Courtney.

The General Committee kept up a flow of petitions and memorials to the General Assembly of Virginia. These included petitions against the incorporation of religious societies, proposed laws for general assessment for the support of religious bodies, and the Vestry Law which authorized marriage by the clergy of the Episcopal Church only. In 1785, amendments were made to the Marriage Law by the General Assembly which authorized marriage by the clergy of all denominations. The general assessment bill was defeated by the Virginia Assembly the same year. The Baptist denomination was the only one which opposed such a tax. In December, 1785 the Act for Establishing Religious Freedom was passed. This made further attempts to unite church and state impossible. The next step in breaking the barriers of religious discrimination came in 1787 when the incorporation act was repealed. This gave all denominations equal footing, whereas under this law the Episcopal Church was favored. This left only one remaining barrier to be removed for the complete destruction of religious discrimination. This was in relation to the glebe laws. "The glebes were the homes and farms for the residences and support of the ministers" of the Established Church (Episcopal). They had been acquired in each parish

35. Lumpkin, Baptist Foundations, pp. 115-118.

by the taxation of its citizens."³⁶ It took several years before these laws were repealed by the Virginia Assembly. Each year the General Committee appointed several individuals "to make a vigorous exertion, for the sale of the glebes and free occupation of the churches by all religious societies." Elder Courtney of the Richmond Church served on this special committee in 1790.³⁷ Year after year this special committee could only report that the General Assembly rejected their petitions. Finally, a petition was granted. The success of the undertaking was recorded in the Minutes of the Baptist General Committee of Virginia of 1799:

Upon report made to the General Committee, it appears that the prayer of our Memorial to the last General Assembly (for the repeal of those laws past since the revolution, vesting the Glebe lands, etc. in the hands of the Episcopal Church) is granted. Resolved therefore, that the report is satisfactory.³⁸

With the repeal of the glebe laws, the General Committee had concluded its basic and primary purpose for existence. As a result, the General Committee was dissolved. However, before they disbanded, they recommended to the different district associations "to take into consideration the expediency of instituting and continuing a general annual meeting of the state of Virginia, for promoting the cause of Religion, and for preserving

36. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, pp. 125-130.

37. M. B. G. C., 1790, p. 5.

38. Ibid., 1799, p. 3.

union and harmony amongst the churches."³⁹

During the 1790's two other matters of importance were considered by the General Committee. One was in regards to the problem of hereditary slavery. A query was brought before the General Committee in 1790 on this problem. The resolutions committee could not agree on the subject. They asked John Leland to write a resolution to which they agreed. The resolution declared:

That slavery is a violent deprivation of the rights of nature, and is inconsistent with a republican government, and therefore recommend it to our brethren to make use of every legal measure, to extirpate the horrid evil from the land, and pray almighty God, that our Honourable Legislature may have it in their power, to proclaim the general jubilee, consistent with the principles of good policy.⁴⁰

However, there were differences of opinion for in the following year the issue was discussed again, and a request was sent out polling the churches for their views on the subject.⁴¹ Finally in 1793 after considerable debate, the General Committee voted by a large majority "that the subject be dismissed from the committee, as it belongs to the legislative body."⁴² No further word on the subject is recorded in the available minutes of the General Committee.⁴³ It is reasonable to assume that the matter was dismissed by them in 1793.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

40. *Ibid.*, 1790, pp. 5-8.

41. *Ibid.*, 1791, p. 5.

42. *Ibid.*, 1793, p. 4.

43. There are no available minutes of the General Committee between 1793 and 1799. Nothing on the slavery issue is recorded in the 1799 minutes.

The final matter of concern was in relation to the establishment of a seminary of learning. The issue was raised in 1792, and a committee was appointed to bring back a plan for consideration in the next year's session. The plan suggested in 1793 included the appointment of fourteen trustees who in turn would select seven others from outside of the denomination. The entire group was to have authority to appoint substitutes in case of death, failure, or resignation. A plan for the establishment of the seminary was suggested to them. They were authorized to make any correction to the plan they deemed wise and then to put it into effect. Thus, a movement toward religious education was set in progress.

Although little is known of the direct participation of the Baptists of Richmond in the matters of the General Committee, they were represented for the most part on the Committee. Most assuredly the discussions and decisions were also reflections on their thoughts and concerns. A number of insights into the thinking of Richmonders can also be learned by the actions and discussions in the Dover Baptist Association to which the Richmond Church belonged.

In 1776, the General Association of Baptists in Virginia divided into four districts. At first only the southwest actually formed a distinct district. The other Separate churches did not form distinct districts at first because of the necessity for unity of counsel and action in their

44. M. B. G. C., 1792, p. 6; 1793, p. 5. Further information on this was unavailable.

struggle against religious discrimination. In 1783 the two districts north of the James River divided, but held one joint meeting a year until 1788 when they divided permanently. The Lower District took the name "Dover."⁴⁵ There were twenty-two churches, including the Richmond Church,⁴⁶ in the original Association. The Dover Association was for a time the largest district association of Baptist churches in the United States.⁴⁷ Although there are no minutes of the meetings prior to 1790, J. S. Boshier, in writing the history of the Dover Association, included the constitution on which basis the association was organized. It stated that:

The Ministers and Messengers of the Association, taking into consideration the great advantages that they have received by associations, in contracting acquaintances with individuals, hearing of the state and order of the churches, receiving counsel, solving queries, and removing difficulties, and believing that a certain regular mode of procedure, would be still more advantageous, do agree, that the following plan of government be observed...

There then followed twenty steps outlining procedure and plan for governing the meetings.⁴⁸ The activities carried on within the meetings of the Dover Association were in line with the above description, and relate, especially through the queries, the problems and concerns facing the Baptists during the last decade of the eighteenth century. These in turn give some idea

45. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, pp. 120-121.

46. J. S. Boshier, "Dover Baptist Association 1783-1941," p. 4.

47. Woodford B. Hackley, "Dover Association," Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958), II, p. 1461.

48. Boshier, "Dover Baptist," pp. 4-5.

as to their mind and character.

In these early days, the formulation of proper church polity and practice was of utmost concern. Churches often raised questions on these subjects at the annual Dover Associational meetings. Some of the questions raised between 1790 and 1799 were: "Is a minister duty bound to serve a church who does not support him?" The answer was in the negative. "Can a member be properly chosen a Deacon, whose wife (if he has one) is an unconverted person?" With qualifications the answer was in the affirmative. "Ought church business to be done in private or public?" The answer was qualified by the type of business to be discussed, most business was to be handled as a private matter of the church. "What shall be done with members, who remove from one church into the bounds of another, and refuse to become members thereof?" The recommendation was "that such person be called upon by the most convenient church to render their reasons for not joining, and if they still refuse, that they be declared by such church not to be in communion with them." "What is the proper mode of obtaining contributions for a gospel church?" It was here that it was pointed out that each member had the responsibility to contribute to the church where he belonged as God had prospered him. "What are the essential qualifications for membership in a Baptist church?" The answer was "Repentance, Faith, and Baptism."⁴⁹ Although it is unknown just which church

49. Minutes of the Dover Baptist Association, 1790-1799 (hereafter cited as Dover Minutes).

raised which questions, it is plausible to assume that the problems they raised were of common concern and interest. The answers given reflected the viewpoints of the churches represented. Among these was the Richmond Church.

There were other questions raised dealing with the proper practice of Christianity in social relations and in personal piety. "If in deed and truth, the Word of God holds forth a covenant of grace, we wish to know the parties contracting, and the terms or conditions of said covenant?" "What is to be done with a member who shall, or has contracted a debt, and makes a conveyance of his property to evade the payment of the same? And what is to be done with a member who shall take such a conveyance?" "What is the gospel direction concerning the Sabbath?" "How ought children to be educated?" "Is there no restriction on believing Masters in the chastisement of their servants?" "Would it not be good policy, as well as an act of justice for the Baptists to form a plan, for the general emancipation of slavery among themselves?" Concerning this last question which was raised in 1797, the following answer was given:

We sincerely sympathize both as Christians and as citizens, with these unhappy people, and although we think it a delicate matter, we would not wish to be backward in promoting their happiness and liberty, upon cautious grounds we would therefore recommend to our brethren to unite with the Abolition society in proposing a petition to the General Assembly for their gradual emancipation upon some sane rational and benevolent plan.⁵⁰

50. Ibid.

It is evident from the above that a number of Baptists were concerned over slavery. How many of them united with the Abolition society as suggested is unknown. No further word on the emancipation of slaves appears in the records.

The Richmond Church called its second pastor, Rev. John Courtney, in 1788. Courtney was reared in King and Queen County. Before coming to Richmond, he had served as pastor of the Upper College Church, now Rehoboth, in King William County. He was forty-five when he became pastor of the Richmond Church. He served the church either as its exclusive or senior pastor until his death in 1824. Courtney was described as being an humble, plain man without the advantages of early education. Nevertheless, the Richmond Church was greatly blessed under his leadership. The Church added regularly to its membership and reached the two hundred mark by 1790. From that date the increase was steady with at least some additions by baptism each year. At the conclusion of Courtney's pastorate in 1824, the church numbered eight hundred and twenty ⁵¹ members.

Where the Richmond Church held its Sunday services during the early years of Courtney's pastorate is unknown. They were probably held either in the Henrico County Courthouse at twenty-second and Main Streets, the

51. Tupper, First Church, pp. 68, 117-123.

Mason's Hall at 1805 East Franklin Street, or in one of the apartments in the new Capitol Building. In 1794, the new First Market building at Seventeenth and Main Streets was erected. The congregation used the hall above the market until they moved into their own building on Cary Street between Second and Third Streets. When this move occurred, it is not certain. The tax assessor's books of 1798, 1799, and 1800 listed the owner of the property as the "Baptist Meeting."⁵² Concerning the appearance and location of the building, Samuel Mordecai said:

One small wooden house, whith a shed at either end stood not far off, in which service was performed by Baptist preachers, for want of a better place of worship. Its locality possessed the advantage of being near the Penitentiary pond-convenient for immersion-for it was then pure water.⁵³

Thus, by the time the eighteenth century drew to a close, the Baptists were well established in the capitol of the Old Dominion. A great ministry was in progress, and was growing along with the city.

52. White, First Baptist, pp. 12-13.

53. Mordecai, Richmond in By-Gone Days, p. 99.

CHAPTER II

BUILDING SOLID FOUNDATIONS

1800 - 1820

Many of the basic foundations on which the work of Richmond Baptists has been built were laid during the early years of the nineteenth century. Policies in regards to doctrine, church polity and practices, and social problems were formulated. Missions, foreign, national, and domestic became firmly rooted in the Baptist way of life. The beginning of the Sunday school movement took root in Richmond. The Church provided itself with new and expansive facilities, and before the second decade drew to a close it gave birth to the Second Baptist Church. Membership increased, and Baptists became recognized and accepted by the populace of Richmond.

Prior to 1802 Richmond was not considered as a very congenial place for Baptists. They were not popular.¹ In fact they were basically ignored. The newspapers were silent concerning their church and its activities. This is why the action of the General Assembly of Virginia in

1. Christian, Richmond, p. 58.

December, 1802 was so surprising and explosive. The Assembly elected as its chaplain of the legislature John Courtney, pastor of the Richmond Baptist Church. This created no small stir among the citizens of Richmond. Many were furious because Courtney was elected instead of John D. Blair, a well educated and respected Presbyterian minister.² The editor of The Virginia Gazette, Augustine Davis, wrote on the eleventh of December:

There were three candidates nominated, of whom the Reverend, Mr. Blair was one, a gentleman of a liberal education. But knowledge and talent did not appear to be the object of the Assembly in this instance, for Mr. John Courtney, a Baptist harranguer among negroes, was elected. I respect the teachers of all the various sects of Christianity, when I know them to be persons of information; when I know them to be capable of explaining the revelations of God. But when I behold an illiterate man appointed Chaplain, who most probably knows not a single proof which has been offered for the proof of the scriptures, who I am well assured understands not a single letter of those languages in which the divine revelation was divulged to man; and who is, therefore, incapable of teaching the Gospel; I know not whether to blame most the judgment of the directors or the presumption of the elected.³

The editor of The Recorder, Callender, joined Davis in denouncing the chaplaincy of Courtney:

Our wise Assembly, in search of a Chaplain, have dived to the very bottom and dregs of the clerical profession.... That a choice so disgraceful may never be made again, the following specimen of the character of the Chaplain is submitted to an admiring world.⁴

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2. White, First Baptist, p. 19.
 3. The Virginia Gazette, December 11, 1802.
 4. The Recorder, December, 1802.

Callender went on in his paper to present slanderous charges against Courtney in an effort to completely discredit him. He accused the minister of cheating a widow in his congregation who was ill and destitute. He asserted that Courtney pocketed the money which had been given by the Church for her relief. He claimed that the matter had been investigated and that several members of the Church had repaid the money to prevent public knowledge of so foul a deed. No real evidence, just accusations,⁵ was reported.

To these accusations, Mr. Courtney made no reply. Concerning his election as Chaplain, the editor of The Virginia Argus wrote a defense of the Assembly's action and of Mr. Courtney. It was primarily directed against Davis and The Gazette. He said:

I shall omit discussing the characters of the clerical candidates from a conviction of that imperative command "Judge not," and conclude with some remarks on the editorial and anti-Christian observations of the author. Had he possessed the slightest knowledge of Christian wisdom, such remarks would never have been made. It will no doubt, redound to the honor of the Legislature that what is called a liberal education did not influence their choice, but that they pursued the example of the author of religion who...paid no respect to this preparation.... If such men then, in former days, were made valuable and proper instruments, is not the same Almighty source of wisdom yet in existence, rich unto all who call upon Him, whether Jew or Greek, bond or free?⁶

Concerning Callender's slander charge, Courtney must have felt that his

5. Ibid.

6. The Virginia Argus, December, 1802.

innocence could only be justifiably established by people who knew his character, and especially by the widow who was involved. Vindication did come. In January, 1803, The Examiner carried an affidavit signed before a notary by the woman. Instead of foul play, she told of Courtney's kindness and pastoral care. She said that he had used all the money placed in his charge to provide provisions and necessities for her relief. She further stated that he had supplied her with an additional five pounds which undoubtedly was from his own pocket.⁷

The controversy, which ended with such a beautiful vindication, not only cleared Courtney, but seemingly cleared the atmosphere of religious prejudice. From this time forward, no more attacks against dissenters or their ministers were made by the press. Baptists gained in respect and recognition. On August 6, 1803, the following notice gave evidence of this:

A few weeks ago the expression of "dipping adults" occurred in The Examiner. It was not intended by this phraseology to cast any censure or ridicule upon the Baptists. On the contrary, they are a much-respected class of men.⁸

On their part, the Baptists sought to maintain the respect of other people. They also desired to be good citizens and to support the civil government. In the 1808 meeting of the Dover Association they declared what they felt their relation to the civil government included:

7. The Examiner, January, 1803.

8. Ibid., August 6, 1803.

1. It consists in the punctual payment of tribute or taxes.
2. It consists in rendering such personal services, as may be requisite for the defense or preservation of government.
3. It is our duty to pray for all that are in authority.
4. Men in authority are entitled to honor and respect.
5. We are bound to render obedience to every mandate coming from men in legal authority, and which appertains to their respective offices, unless such mandate stand opposed to a superior law, viz. the law of God, or the law of nature.⁹

Thus, they stood behind the civil government and rendered to it proper respect and authority. They were also greatly concerned for the welfare of the nation, and were willing to take up arms if necessary for its protection.

Soon the War of 1812 came. In all probability there were Baptists in the uniform of the United States in helping to preserve the government of this nation. Strong feelings and great concern were manifested by those at home. On one occasion during this war, an alarm was sounded that Richmond was about to be attacked by enemy troops. Although the alarm turned out to be false, it brought many armed men to the public square to defend the city. Included in this group "was the seventy-year old Baptist minister and Revolutionary War veteran, John Courtney, his old musket in his hand, ready once more to defend his country."¹⁰ In 1813 a resolution was sent to the President praising the nation for its frequent "appeals to Heaven in times of national distress, by appointments of days of fasting,

9. Dover Minutes, 1808, pp. 5-8.

10. White, First Baptist, p. 26.

and prayer."¹¹ Another such resolution was sent the following year. It included a request for Congress "to appoint a day of fasting and prayer, that it may please God in mercy to remove from us the calamities of war and blood shed."¹² Such resolutions must have been warmly received during those days of war, when the United States still stood on shaky ground as a nation.

These early years of the nineteenth century were also formative ones for the Baptists concerning their theological concepts, their church polity, and their activities and actions as Christians. Each year questions were raised at the annual meeting of the Dover Association as churches sought to be properly grounded in the faith. Many of the decisions reached have remained unaltered, while others, dealing especially with social practices, have changed with the currents of time. A look into some of these questions will help relate the struggles and concerns of the early Baptists in Richmond.

Questions in regards to church membership and baptism were frequently asked. The question on what is involved in becoming a member of a Baptist church was first asked in 1799. It was brought before the Association again in 1802. The same answer prevailed: "Repentance, faith, and baptism."¹³ "Is it Scriptural to re-baptize a person who has previously

11. Dover Minutes, 1813, p. 8.

12. Ibid., 1814, p. 10.

13. Ibid., 1802, pp. 4, 6.

been baptized by immersion, upon profession of faith?" The answer was in the negative.¹⁴ "Is it according to Gospel order, to permit a person who has been baptized by immersion, and belonging to and holding membership in another church, to commune with a Baptist church?" The answer was simply recorded, "we conceive not."¹⁵ If a person presents himself to the church who embraces Arminian sentiments, should he be accepted? How about the baptism he has received even though it was by immersion? The answer stated that since the Baptists of Virginia were doctrinally Calvinists in their theology, it is best for the brethren of the same church to be of like mind. However, one must realize "that perfect co-incidence of sentiments in all points is not to be expected, and that tenderness and gentleness have commonly succeeded best in bringing about uniformity." Therefore, the Association advised: accept these brethren "provided they give evidence of piety, and appear willing to bear with their brethren who differ from them." In regards to their baptism, the churches were encouraged to examine each person as to their experience and their faith at the time of baptism. If satisfied, they were advised to receive them remembering that "the qualification of the administration¹⁶ ought not to invalidate baptism."

Problems concerning church polity were also reflected through the

14. *Ibid.*, 1803, p. 7.

15. *Ibid.*, 1810, pp. 5, 7.

16. *Ibid.*, 1811, p. 7.

questions asked at associational meetings. "Can a church silence a preacher without depriving him of his membership?" This right was recognized whenever the church felt that such a man was unprofitable because of unsound doctrine or bad conduct. What should the place of funerals be in the church? Since funeral sermons and ceremonies were not supported by the Word of God, should such activities be continued? ¹⁷ This was a serious question since it concerned a current practice of the churches. The answer was therefore delayed until the following year, and became the subject of the Circular Letter. In this letter, which was sent out to all the churches, encouragement was given for them to continue with funeral sermons and ceremonies. Although funerals in themselves "have neither good nor evil,...as we practice them, we are persuaded that they are often productive of many beneficial consequences to the cause of religion." ¹⁸

Questions concerning one's activities and actions as a Christian were also asked. They reflected both the conservative character of early Baptists and their desire to be and to do what is right. "Is a member of our order justifiable, in having Instrumental Music in his family?" The feeling was that since such music was basically used "for Carnal or Idolatrous purposes," it should not be allowed in the homes of Christians. "What position of the body is most commendable in time of praise or prayer to God,

17. *Ibid.*, 1802, pp. 4, 6.

18. *Ibid.*, 1803, pp. 8-12.

in public and family worship?" The answer stressed being reverent in whatever position. However, it went on to encourage kneeling for prayer and standing for singing of praise, except when justifiable obstacles stood in the way. The problems as to following the fashions of the world, in the manner of dress and make-up and jewelry were also a concern of these early churches. A question on this subject was submitted in 1801. The answer first acknowledged the scriptural exhortation which speaks against conformity to this world. It regarded "superfluous dress" of any kind highly improper, but recognized that no specifics had been set forth in the scriptures. It recommended on this basis that Christians "not carelessly...hurt the feelings of each other, for the sake of so trifling a gratification," and that each church should adopt its own methods of correcting any errors that might arise. ¹⁹ Many other questions in regards to Christian living were possibly answered before they were asked by the Circular Letters. These letters, which were sent out each year to the churches after having received the approval of the Association, dealt generally with subjects in regards to Christian living. Such subjects as the nature and utility of Gospel discipline, covetousness, Christian marriages, Christian meekness, Christian liberty, and "On the True Church" composed the Circular Letters. ²⁰

19. *Ibid.*, 1801, pp. 6, 8-9.

20. *Ibid.*, 1810-1819.

Another vital concern of these early Baptists was their relation to other denominations. In 1819 the question was asked: "How far may the Baptists consistently unite with professing Christians of other denominations in religious exercises?" The Association replied:

In most of the religious denominations amongst us, many of their religious exercises quite coincide with our own; to join such when convenient, seems not only not to be improper, but happily indicates a Christian temper in the present day of benevolence and godly enterprise. There are many excellent institutions set afloat by one denomination of Christians, in which all others can join with propriety, pleasure and great usefulness. To aid the advancement of such institutions is doubtless our bounden duty.²¹

Such an attitude of cooperation and sharing has been manifested in many ways down through the years.

Little is said during the period concerning the subject of temperance. The concept of total abstinence, which came later, was not the prevailing practice and polity at this time. However, there were serious feelings about the right and wrong use of alcohol. This was the subject of the Circular Letter of 1801. It first set forth what were considered the acceptable uses. "It cannot...be denied, but that Spirituous Liquors may sometimes be useful if temperately used." These uses included small quantities for medical purposes to promote good health; the use of wine in the Lord's Supper; and the use of "a small portion of Spirituous Liquors...to obviate the mischiefs which may arise from being exposed to cold or wet

21. Ibid., 1819, p. 6.

weather." The letter then set forth some mis-uses of alcohol, especially drunkenness and intemperant consumption.²² The Association further felt that alcohol should not be retailed on the Lord's Day "unless in cases of urgent necessity."²³ No further word is found during this period concerning the use of alcohol.

A more serious problem which the people faced during these years was the racial problem. The white and colored races actually got along quite well together. However, many Virginians were deeply concerned over the Negro's status in regards to slavery and human rights. In 1778 Virginia, the first state to do so, passed a law prohibiting the importation of slaves. Later in 1782 a law encouraging the emancipation of slaves was enacted by the General Assembly. As a result, the number of free negroes grew from 3,000 in 1783 to more than 30,000 in 1810. This created a greater problem, for job opportunities for freedmen were few. Therefore, in 1806 a law to discourage, not to prohibit, the freeing of slaves was passed. It required that every slave freed from that year on to leave Virginia within a year. If he was under twenty-one, he could remain in the state until he reached that age. Still the problem of freedmen and slaves bothered the people of Virginia. Another proposed solution was to send them back to Africa. Prompted by Virginia, Congress authorized in 1816 the formation of the American Colonization Society. By 1819 a

22. *Ibid.*, 1801, p. 11.

23. *Ibid.*, 1802, p. 6.

large tract of land on the western coast of Africa was acquired. It was named Liberia, and plans were made to establish an independent and self-sustaining Negro republic. The greatest support for this colonization plan was given by Virginia.²⁴

How did Richmond Baptists respond to the Negro? Many were for total emancipation as was reflected in the resolution by the General Committee in 1790. But the decision in the matter was left up to the General Assembly.²⁵ However, both freedmen and slaves were received into the church. In fact, colored membership soon outnumbered the white. Yet, colored males were not given the same status in the church as the whites. There were reasons for this that seemed plausible at the time and were not believed to be anti-Christian. What appears to have been a simple query in 1802 set off a definite declaration as to the place of the Negro in the church. The question was: "Have all male members a right to equal privileges in the church?"²⁶ The answer was made the subject of the Circular Letter for 1802. It stated:

If by privileges of the church we are to understand those ordinances and institutions which were intended for the strengthening and comfort of the saints, it is clear to us, that members of all sexes, ages, and ranks are equally entitled to them. But if we also understand by privileges, the authority and power of the church, we are of the opinion that all male members are by no means upon an equality in that respect.

24. William Edwin Hemphill, et al., Cavalier Commonwealth (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1957), pp. 220-222.

25. See page 19.

26. Dover Minutes, 1801, p. 6.

1st. Because all the officers of the church are by scripture endowed with special trust, or authority.... No private member...can be entitled to equal authority with an elder or officer.

2nd. No person is entitled to exercise authority in the church whose situation in social life renders it his duty to be under obedience to the authority of another-- such as minor sons and servants. Reasons:

(1). Because the minds of persons who are under the authority of others, cannot be sufficiently independent to give an impartial decision.... They cannot avoid fears, also, they may have to give an account at home of their vote in the church.

(2). Those who are under habitual subjection have seldom an opportunity of acquiring a tolerable share of knowledge; their judgments, of course, are inadequate to decide upon most cases that may come before the churches.

(3). Such persons are also subject to strong and unreasonable prejudices, for and against particular characters; consequently no impartial decision can be relied on from them.

Lastly, Brethren, the many inconveniences and embarrassments, both religious, political and domestic, which arise from hereditary slavery in this country, joined with some later events, ought to make us doubly cautious on this subject.

From all these considerations, we give it as our opinion, that none but free male members can properly exercise authority in the church.²⁷

It needs to be realized that even though Negroes did not have the same status as the whites, they did receive adequate religious instruction and training. "Deacons of their own color were appointed to watch over and counsel them, and they listened every Lord's Day to the same instructions and exhortations as their white brethren...." Through the efforts
28
of the Church, many hundreds were won to Jesus Christ.

27. J. D. McGill, Sketches of the History of the Baptist Churches within the limits of the Rappahannock Association in Virginia (Richmond: Published by Harrold and Murray, 1850), pp. 110-112. For an unexplainable reason this Circular Letter was not printed as part of the 1802 Dover Minutes, but was preserved in the above writing.

28. White, First Baptist, pp. 68-69.

One of these Negroes to experience Christ through the ministry of the Richmond Baptist Church was Lott Cary. He came to Richmond from Charles City County in 1804 when he was hired out by his master to the proprietor of the Shockoe Tobacco Warehouse. He was twenty-two years of age at the time. Three years later, while worshipping at the Richmond Church, Cary was led to an acceptance of Christ. He purchased a Bible, and using it as his textbook along with the help of a friend, he learned how to read and write. Because of his education, coupled with his ability and dependability, Cary was soon promoted. By 1813, he was able to purchase his freedom, and soon thereafter did the same for his family. Desiring to further his education, Cary enrolled in a night school course in 1812 which was taught by William Crane, a deacon of the Richmond Baptist Church. The course was offered to the colored members of the Church as an additional ministry to them. Mr. Crane read to his pupils any books or articles that he felt would be beneficial to them. Among these was the magazine published by the Triennial Baptist Convention.²⁹ The magazine carried articles from such men as William Carey, pioneer missionary to India, and the Judsons, pioneer missionaries to Burma. These stories deepened the concern of Lott Cary for the spiritual needs of his own race. Especially was he interested in reaching those in Africa in whose hearing the Christian gospel had never been preached. Being greatly

29. This was the first national Baptist Convention organized. This was in 1814. The account of its formation is related later in this chapter.

burdened, he suggested that an African Baptist Missionary Society should
 30
 be formed. The organization had its founding in April, 1815, and its
 first president was the well known Baptist leader, R. B. Semple, while
 Lott Cary served as secretary. William Crane became active in its pro-
 motion. Contributions received by this Society were held until the
 Triennial Convention's Foreign Mission Board could establish a mission
 31
 somewhere in Africa.

The burden for an African mission pressed heavy upon the heart of
 Lott Cary. In 1818, he offered himself as a missionary to that continent.
 He was joined in his desire to serve as a missionary by another Negro mem-
 ber of the Richmond Church by the name of Collin Teague. In the following
 year a letter was written by William Crane to Rev. Obadiah B. Brown, a
 Baptist minister in the District of Columbia and a director of the recently
 formed American Colonization Society. Crane explained the whole movement
 around Cary and Teague, and he told of their interest in Africa which had
 led first to the formation of the Richmond African Missionary Society and
 of their determination to go to Africa themselves as missionaries. He
 said concerning these men:

They possess little, except a zealous wish to go and
 do what they can. Brother Lott has a wife and several chil-
 dren.... Brother Collin has a wife, a son of 14 years of age
 and a daughter of 11.... Collin is a saddler and harness

30. Nan F. Weeks and Blanche Sydnor White, Liberia For Christ
 (Richmond: Woman's Missionary Union of Virginia, 1959), pp. 20-22
 (hereafter cited as Weeks, Liberia).

31. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, p. 188.

maker. He had no early education.... He can read, though he is not a good reader, and can write so as to make out a letter.... Lott...for a number of years has been chief manager among the laborers in the largest tobacco warehouse in this city.... he receives \$700 a-year wages.... He reads better than Collin, and is, in every respect, a better scholar.... Their object is to carry the tidings of salvation to the benighted Africans. They wish to be where their color will be no disparagement to their usefulness.³²

Mr. Crane's letter was forwarded to Rev. William Straughton, Corresponding Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board of the Triennial Convention. On April 28, 1819, Lott Cary and Collin Teague were appointed as missionaries to Liberia. A transportation delay prevented their sailing for Liberia until January, 1821. They sailed with a group of colonists who were being sponsored by the American Colonization Society. The two men were charged with the responsibility of establishing missionary work among the negro colonists and natives in Liberia.

Shortly before leaving this country, seven of the colonists, all members of the Richmond Baptist Church, met in the home of William Crane. Included in this group were Cary and his wife, Teague and his wife and son, and Joseph Langford and his wife. There these seven organized themselves into a church which, after their arrival in Liberia, became known as the Providence Baptist Church of Monrovia, Liberia. This

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 202-203.

church, for which Cary was ordained to serve as pastor, was the first church of any denomination in Liberia.³³ The Triennial Convention provided these new missionaries with books valued at one hundred dollars and with two hundred dollars in cash. "The Richmond African Baptist Missionary Society continued to send them one hundred dollars a year; the American Colonization Society paid to them the usual allowance granted to emigrants to Liberia, and the missionaries, by their own labor,³⁴ supplied other needs." At the time of his death in 1828, Lott Cary was acting governor of the Liberian Colony and Hillary Teague, Collin's son, had become pastor of the Providence Church as well as editor of the Liberia Herald and secretary of the colony.³⁵

During the second decade of the nineteenth century, there was a growing concern about missions in general. The African Missionary Society was neither the first missionary society nor the only mission interest by the Baptists of the city. The first missionary society had been organized in 1813. This was the Female Missionary Society of the Richmond Baptist Church. It was the pioneer among Woman's Missionary Societies in Virginia, and was the second among Baptist women in the South. It resulted from an appeal sent out by the Boston Female

33. Weeks, Liberia, pp. 25-26.

34. White, First Baptist, p. 30.

35. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, p. 203.

Missionary Society. Baptist women all over the United States were called upon to meet on the first afternoon of each month for the purpose of prayer for missions. Women of the Richmond Church answered that appeal. Some of its members, who opposed organizations of any nature, complained to the pastor. Courtney settled the matter by stating: "I have never heard of prayer doing anybody any harm. For my part, the sisters may pray on." This they did, and the Female Missionary Society was born. ³⁶

During the same year Luther Rice returned from India. He had been sent there along with Adoniram Judson and Judson's wife as missionaries of the Congregationalist Church. Enroute to the mission field, the Judsons studied the subject of baptism. They decided that the Baptist point of view was the right one. Baptism should be administered by immersion to believers only and not to infants. Upon reaching Calcutta they received believers' baptism and united with the Baptist Church there. Six weeks later Luther Rice left the United States for India. Enroute he had a similar experience and became a Baptist. Because of this experience, the three decided that they could no longer receive financial support from the Congregationalists. Rice was selected to return to the United States and to seek the support of the Baptists for the mission work of the Judsons. Meanwhile, the Judsons moved to Burma in July, 1813 when they were denied the privilege of working in India by the East India Company. Rice

36. White, First Baptist, p. 27.

arrived in New York in September, 1813 and reported to the Boston Baptist Foreign Mission Society, which had recently been organized. Together they decided that Rice should enlist the support of the entire country. He then left Boston and visited the larger cities on the eastern coast telling about his and the Judsons' experience and seeking support. The trip also included Richmond. While traveling from Richmond to Petersburg, he formulated a plan of enlisting each state to organize one principal missionary society. From these, he suggested that delegates should be appointed to help form a general society for the nation.

Resulting from the above suggestion and the influence of Rice, the Virginia Missionary Society was organized in Richmond on October 28, 1813. During the early years this society was more frequently referred to as the Richmond Baptist Missionary Society. There were several reasons for this: it was the name given it by Rice in his earlier reports,³⁷ and "because its meetings were held so frequently in Richmond, and also because the leadership of the Society was drawn so largely from that city's churches."³⁸

The influence of Rice on the Baptists of this country was dynamic. Growing out of his suggestions, thirty-three delegates from eleven states

37. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, pp. 180-181.

38. Blanche Sydnor White (compiler), Richmond Baptists Working Together 1780-1960 (Richmond: The Williams Printing Company, 1961), p. 7 (hereafter cited as White, R.B.W.I.).

and the District of Columbia met in Philadelphia on May 18, 1814. There they formed "The General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America for Foreign Missions," better known as "The Triennial Convention" because of its decision to meet every three years. The Richmond Society was represented by Robert B. Semple and Jacob Grigg.

An interesting experience occurred to Semple on his way to the Convention and led to greater missionary endeavors by Richmond Baptists. After crossing the Potomac River, he discovered a group of scattered Baptists living along the Maryland shore. This discovery was made when one of them approached him who "having heard that the Richmond Society was for domestic as well as foreign missions determined to request him to endeavor to send them ministerial help." Upon returning to Richmond, Semple related to the Society his experience. They readily agreed to procure the necessary funds and to send a preacher. The preacher sent was Samuel L. Straughan, pastor of two churches in the Northern Neck. Annually, until his death in 1821, he went on missionary trips to Charles' and St. Mary's counties in Southern Maryland. After his death this missionary endeavor was continued by Philip Montague as missionary.³⁹ Support for the work was given by the Richmond Society.

39. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, pp. 182-183.

As these events occurred, missions became an even greater concern. In 1814, the Dover Association received the query: "How far would this Association encourage the business of Gospel Missionaries?" It answered: "We feel hearty in attempts to propagate the Gospel in dark and ignorant places." The Association agreed that the subject of missions would be the content of their next Circular Letter.⁴⁰ In response to a letter from Luther Rice along with copies of the annual report of the Triennial Convention's Mission Board in 1815, it was resolved that a corresponding secretary would be appointed for the purpose of corresponding with that Board and with other missionary societies. John Bryce, co-pastor of the Richmond Church, was appointed. The Circular Letter of that year discussed the scriptural proof for missions and encouraged the support of mission work. Examples of its mission ministry included the work of Straughan in Maryland.⁴¹

In 1816 the query, "What further encouragement will this Association give to Gospel Missions," was asked. The possibility of the Association declaring itself as a Missionary Society and thus more effectually aiding missions was discussed. The churches were requested to consider the matter so that it could be discussed again at the 1817 meeting and

40. Dover Minutes, 1814, pp. 7, 10.

41. Ibid., 1815, pp. 9, 11-23.

some decisions formulated. At this meeting a majority of churches reported in favor of the idea. This led the Association to assume, in addition to its other services, the character of a Missionary Society. Five regulations were set forth:

1. A Missionary Board composed of nine members... shall be annually appointed....

2. It shall be the duty of the said Board to... attend to such Missionary concerns as come within the objects of this Association.

3. It shall be the special duty of this Board... to send preachers to the vacant churches and destitute places, within the bounds of their own district....

4. The funds of the Society shall be raised by requesting the churches to send annual contributions to the Association especially for the benefit of missions, donations from individuals, and by public collections at the meeting of the Association, and in any other way the Board may think proper to adopt.

5. It shall be the duty of the Board to report to each session of the Association, their proceedings... and the Association may...give instructions to the Board touching any matter relative to the objects of this institution....⁴³

At the meeting of the Dover Association in the following year the Board gave its first report. Having studied the matter extensively, they had discovered a spiritually destitute area, lying between Richmond and Hampton and between the York and James Rivers. They recommended that a preacher should be provided to travel in this area at least once a month, and they further suggested that John Courtney of the Richmond Church should be solicited to do this job. Receiving the approval of all the

42. *Ibid.*, 1816, p. 8.

43. *Ibid.*, 1817, p. 7.

Churches concerned, the Board presented the matter before Courtney, and he "with his usual readiness to do good, accepted the appointment." The mission was then undertaken, and the Board proudly reported that the destitute places were being supplied with a "faithful Gospel Ministry." 44

In 1818 Luther Rice returned to Richmond and additional impetus was given to the expansion of missionary concern in the area. Rice, after his departure from Richmond, reported what had occurred while he was at the Richmond Church. He spoke of attending the annual meeting of the Female Mission Society, the African Mission Society, and the Richmond Mission Society. He also told of preaching a sermon for a collection which was to be used to aid in beginning a Youth's Mite Society. Speaking of this missionary endeavor he said:

The fact that the little girls from six or seven, to twelve or fourteen years old, had formed a society to save from the purchase of little delicacies their mites to assist the glorious object of giving knowledge of the gospel to the whole world, and that their lovely example was producing something similar among the little boys, could not fail to awaken emotions peculiarly delightful, anticipations the most lively and interesting.

Regular gifts were sent from these children's groups to the General Board for Foreign Missions. 45 Thus, by the year 1820, missions — foreign, national and domestic — had become solidly founded and firmly rooted in the work and life of Richmond Baptists.

44. Ibid., 1818, pp. 6-8.

45. White, First Baptist, p. 32.

During these years, while they were building their own solid foundations, the Baptists of Richmond also contributed to interdenominational, education, and philanthropic movements in the city and state. The first welfare institution in Richmond was The Amicable Society, organized in 1788. Even though there is no record of Baptist support in the early years of this Society, they did support similar organizations that were soon to come into existence. Among these were the Female Humane Association, the Female Union Benevolent Society, the Dorcas Association, the Maternal Society, and the Female Orphan School. The latter, which was reputed to be the first orphanage in the South, was officially founded in 1811. Perhaps as an attempt to get enough funds to officially launch the orphanage, several charity sermons were preached. Early in 1810 one such sermon was preached by Rev. R. B. Semple at the Richmond Baptist Church with an offering being received. In their support of the Dorcas Association, "each lady-member pledged three garments a year - 'ready made, new, or second hand; large or small.'" "In support of their many benevolent charities, the Baptist ladies, with their sisters of other denominations, initiated a system of public fairs," which practice continued for a number
46
of years.

The Baptists were on hand to offer assistance in the tragic fire of the Richmond Theater on December 26, 1811. Six hundred people were in

46. White, R. E. W. L., pp. 5-6.

attendance. During the second act a fire broke out when the chandelier was raised before the oil lights were put out. Soon the stage curtains were on fire and panic reigned as people frantically fought to escape death. That night seventy-two died in the fire. Among the many who assisted was Gilbert Hunt, a Negro blacksmith and a member of the Baptist Church. He stood outside the burning building and caught ladies who were dropped from the upper story by Dr. James McCaw. When Dr. McCaw finally jumped himself, he broke his leg. Hunt dragged him to safety and, following the doctor's instructions, he set the broken leg. Many bodies of those who died, along with the severely injured, were carried into the sanctuary of the Baptist Church and laid side by side until relatives could come. ⁴⁷ Since so many of the bodies of those who died could not be recovered from the burned building for burial, the theater property was consecrated as a sacred deposit of those killed in the fire. All the bodies were buried there in a common grave. It was then proposed to build a Monumental Church on that site, and this was ⁴⁸ done, commencing in August, 1812. The Richmond Baptist Church shared with the other churches of Richmond in raising a memorial fund which was ⁴⁹ used in the erection of this church.

47. White, First Baptist, pp. 25-26.

48. Christian, Richmond, pp. 79-81.

49. White, First Baptist, p. 26.

When in July, 1813 the Virginia Bible Society was organized, the Baptists also participated with other denomination in the undertaking. John Bryce, the co-pastor of the Richmond Church, was included on its Board of Managers.⁵⁰ Baptists also joined with their sister churches in the monthly missionary concert of prayer. This was held from church to church. To it were invited Christians of all denominations who were seriously concerned about missions.⁵¹

Richmond Baptists were also concerned about secular education. In 1816, the Lancastrian School, the first public school in Richmond, was started. Financial contributions were received by the Baptist Church for this work.⁵² Not satisfied with the smallness of public education, many private schools were conducted. Among those in operation were three by Baptist ministers: the Rev. Peter Nelson, Rev. Peter Dupuy, and Rev. Henry Keeling.⁵³ In addition to these there was also one under the supervision of William Crane, a deacon of the Richmond Church, for the colored members of that congregation.⁵⁴

50. Christian, Richmond, p. 87.

51. White, First Baptist, p. 35.

52. Ibid., p. 34.

53. White, R. E. W. L., pp. 6-7.

54. See page 39.

Still another form of education which was introduced during this period was the Sunday school. The first one had been established at Gloucester, England in 1782 by Robert Raikes, and since that time, it had rapidly spread through English-speaking countries. Many felt it to be a good thing, while others feared it as being dangerous to true religion. Most conservatives felt it should not be endorsed until it had proved itself. This seems to have been the attitude of all Christians in Richmond until 1816. In that year William Crane, a merchant and David Roper, a young minister, decided to wait no longer. Together they launched the first Sunday school in Richmond. They met first in the second story of a shoe-store located on the south side of Broad Street between Eighth and Ninth. A little later, the school was moved to the gallery of the Baptist Church. Soon problems arose in connection with the teaching program. At a weekly prayer meeting the problems were discussed and prayer in regards to them was held. It was decided that each member of the group would take turns presiding over these services and that "none of the four or five minister-members of the church, who habitually monopolized all the exercises' shall 'be allowed to interfere with' the circle of prayer." A serious misunderstanding developed. Pastor Courtney came to feel the Sunday school was "a secular organization" and had no

55. White, R. B. W. L., p. 12.

56. Solon B. Cousins, et al., Historical Sketches of Second Baptist Church (Richmond: Garrett and Massie, Inc., 1964), pp. 33-34 (hereafter cited as Cousins, Second Baptist). Undoubtedly David Roper was not included in the forbidden ministerial group.

right to meet on the Lord's Day. "The majority in the church must have supported his decision, for in 1820, the Sunday school was banished from the gallery of the sanctuary."⁵⁷

Although Pastor Courtney and many of his congregation felt that the Sunday school was "a secular organization" and was not fit for the Lord's Day, there was a growing desire throughout the Dover Association for more knowledge of the program. In 1819 the Association agreed for David Roper to write the next Circular Letter on "the propriety and im-⁵⁸portance of Sunday schools." Roper wrote the letter for the purpose "of encouraging the establishment and support of Sunday schools." In this letter he set forth the primary object as being for religious instruction. He discussed its value as a free school for elementary education, but at the same time asserted that their major emphasis was religious instruction. "They are intended to open to the understanding of the rising generation, the grand and interesting truths of revelation." The memorization of scripture was employed as a means to this end. The Sunday school society in Richmond had several people to memorize the entire Gospel of Matthew "in a quarter of a year, one little girl in less than nine Sundays, and by one boy in a little more than five." Other fruits of Sunday school education, Roper pointed out, included the molding

57. White, First Baptist, p. 31.

58. Dover Minutes, 1819, p. 5.

of these young minds in righteousness and the leading of many to a conversion experience.⁵⁹

In the same year, 1820, a query from the Upper Essex Church asked: "Would it not be advisable for the Association to recommend and furnish in their minds a form for the constituting of Sunday school societies, and for regulating and organizing Sunday schools?"⁶⁰ The answer, returned the next year, reflected a general approval of the Association of Sunday schools, but expressed the feeling that furnishing constitutions or taking any part in regulating local Sunday schools was over-stepping the bounds of the Association's authority.⁶¹ By this time, however, the influence of Crane and Roper had been realized. The Sunday school was on its way to becoming an established function.

A by-product of the movement led to the establishment of Second Baptist Church in 1820. Controversy over Sunday schools had divided Baptist thinking. The Sunday school group that had been meeting during the week for prayer and study began to consider the expediency of organizing another church. At such a prayer service on April 14, 1820, held in David Roper's house at 107 North Third Street, a resolution was adopted which called for a separate church:

59. *Ibid.*, 1820, pp. 9-15.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

61. *Ibid.*, 1821, p. 5.

The subject of forming a 2nd Baptist Church in this City being proposed for consideration - The Brethren interchanged their sentiments freely, and after mature deliberation, unanimously expressed it as their opinion - That it is expedient, another Baptist Church should be formed in this City. Resolved, That brethren D. Roper, D. Donaldson and H. C. Thomson be appointed a committee to prepare an appropriate memorial to be presented to the Church, requesting our dismissal - and that we meet here next Monday night to hear the report of the committee and sign the memorial. Prayer by brother Donaldson, and the meeting adjourned.⁶²

On Monday evening, April 17, the committee presented the prepared memorial. Various reasons were given as to the value of beginning a new church. No effort was made to conceal that the sixteen who signed this memorial had differences with their old church. However, it was not their desire to separate with a harsh spirit. In the concluding paragraph they stated: "It is our earnest wish that no coldness or unpleasant feeling may be produced by the proposed separation; but that we may part in peace and love...that we may feel and pray for each other, that we may continue to share as much as ever in each other's affections, and that the two Churches may be as Sisters, not...as rivals."⁶³ The memorial was presented to the mother Church the next day. Letters of dismissal were granted. The Richmond Church thereafter became known as The First Baptist Church. With the report that dismissal had been granted, the separated group met to name committees and to draw up a covenant. The group was not formally

62. "Minutes of the Second Baptist Church," April 14, 1820 (hereafter cited as "Second Minutes").

63. Ibid., April 17, 1820.

constituted as a Church until July 12, 1820. On May 5 part of the constitution was presented and adopted. Also that night deacons and a clerk were chosen, and preliminary arrangements for formal recognition by the Dover Association were made. On May 12 the remaining portion of the constitution was accepted as well as the Church covenant. Immediately the new church was faced with the problem of where to meet. The first service was held in the school-room of H. C. Thomson on June 25, 1820, but arrangements were soon made to rent a house at Eleventh and Main Streets at \$250 per annum. It was at this location that the young church met on July 12 and was formally constituted as a Church.

During the intervening months there was strong feeling towards the new church, which was considered a rebellious movement. The older congregation had declared that there existed "no fellowship" with the new congregation. Although attempts at reconciliation were made, success was delayed until July 11. On that day the new church met to be formally constituted. It was the custom to have a presbytery composed of noted Baptist leaders to examine the Church as to conduct and beliefs before formal constitution took place. R. B. Semple, Luther Rice, and Peter Ainslie formed the presbytery that examined Second Church. They gave unqualified endorsement to the new church. John Bryce of First Church was present at the meeting. He asked that the exercises of formal constitution be postponed until he tried once again to reach reconciliation with his church. Everyone was in agreement to his request. The attempt was made with satisfactory results. Bryce was able to prevail upon the

members of First Church to withdraw their resolution of non-fellowship. Reconciliation was acknowledged and recognition was given to Second Church.⁶⁴ The next day the Second Baptist Church was joyfully constituted. David Roper served unofficially this young church as its pastor. Although he was subsequently officially elected as pastor, he declined to accept the office,⁶⁵ but continued to preach for them without compensation for over five years. In October of 1820 Second Church was officially received into the Dover Association at its annual meeting.⁶⁶

By this time the now First Church had grown considerably and had moved into a fine meeting-house. Prior to 1802 the Church had worshipped in a small building on Cary Street, but in November, 1802 the congregation moved into new quarters on the northeast corner of Broad and Fourteenth Streets. The property was deeded to the trustees of the Church by Philip Turpin in September, 1803, and on this lot a brick meeting-house was erected.⁶⁷ The building was later enlarged by additions on three sides, "making a cruciform edifice one hundred by seventy feet." It was capable of accomodating a large congregation.⁶⁸ The actual growth of membership

64. Ibid., April 19, May 5, May 12, June 23, July 3, July 11, and July 12, 1820.

65. Ibid., October 26, 1821.

66. Dover Minutes, 1820, p. 4.

67. White, First Baptist, p. 22.

68. Tupper, First Church, p. 66.

year by year during this time is impossible to calculate. The Church grew from two hundred in 1790 to eight hundred and twenty members by 1824. Each year there were some baptisms. The growth was somewhat slower prior to 1810. In 1809 only three hundred and sixty members were reported to the Dover Association. However, revival fires broke out. In its annual report in 1814 the Church reported two hundred baptisms during the year. By 1820 there were probably between seven and eight hundred members of the Church. In that year the population of Richmond was reported as 12,046, which included 6,407 whites, 4,393 slaves, and 1,246 free negroes.

Thus, by the end of the second decade, the Baptists in Richmond had laid some solid foundations. The foundations for the Sunday school and for a total missionary outreach were laid. Theological concepts and church polity were more solidly formulated. Two churches were established, and the Baptists had found a place of acceptance in Richmond.

69. Ibid., p. 68.

70. Dover Minutes, 1809, p. 3.

71. Ibid., 1814, p. 4.

72. Christian, Richmond, p. 98.

CHAPTER III
EXPANSION AND GROWTH
1820 - 1840

In 1820 there were two Baptist churches in Richmond with a combined membership of not more than eight hundred. To meet the needs of an expanding and growing Richmond, a third church was added in 1833. Membership in the three churches increased to 2,837 by 1840. In addition, several missions were started during these years. The Sunday school movement gained momentum by 1840 and was flourishing in Richmond. The missionary movement had also increased its activities in an attempt to meet the growing needs. Great strides in education were made and culminated in the establishment of Richmond College. Furthermore, the state denominational paper, The Religious Herald, was founded by Richmond Baptists and had gained a large measure of success by 1840. These activities reflect the expansion and growth experienced by the Baptists of Richmond between 1820 and 1840.

The first church to experience growing pains was Second Baptist. Their rented quarters soon became inadequate. A resolution was passed on May 25, 1821 to begin raising money to procure a lot on which to build

their own church.¹ Six months later a lot was purchased for \$1,035. It was located on Eleventh Street, between Main and Cary. In April, 1822 work was begun on the building. The building, which was of brick and measured 50 by 60 feet, cost about \$4,000. It was a two-story building, the first story being actually a cellar. It was dedicated on October 26 of that year.² Although space was now more adequate, the church increased little during the next four years. In 1826 they were only able to report a total membership of thirty-seven members.³ However, the year 1826 was a turning point in the history of the church. Before the year was out,⁴ the church called James B. Taylor to be their pastor. Through his ministry the following year the church experienced a revival. Fifty-seven persons were baptized, and by the end of the year membership had grown to ninety-eight.⁵ This increase led to a crowding, but was solved by the addition of galleries in 1829. An additional room was also added to the rear of the building to better provide for the Sunday school.⁶

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1. At that time the house being used was rented.
 2. "Second Minutes," May 25, 1821; November 23, 1821; October 26, 1822.
 3. Dover Minutes, 1826, p. 3.
 4. "Second Minutes," December 25, 1826.
 5. Dover Minutes, 1827, p. 1.
 6. "Second Minutes," June 18, 1829.

Until 1825 there is little information concerning First Church. One can only speculate as to what took place in the life of the church prior to this date. The major issue in 1820 was the place and value of the Sunday school. Under the leadership of Rev. John Courtney the church rejected it as a "secular institution." This caused a division within the membership and led to the formation of Second Church. But what happened to the Sunday school after 1820 at First Church? The first mention of it in the available minutes of the church was in 1827. In that year it was reported that this educational ministry had been in operation for some time.⁸ The question is, how long? One would assume that the Sunday school ended following Courtney's rejection of it in 1820, and probably did not resume at First Church until after Courtney's death in 1824. However, the church's historian, Dr. White, believes that since several of the original teachers remained at First Church when the division occurred, the Sunday school had continuous operation there. She feels it was reorganized under the leadership of the ministerial members of the church who had previously been by-passed in regards to Sunday school work.⁹ There are no records or known facts to substantiate this view, although such action was possible.

7. No church minutes available prior to that year.

8. "Minutes of the First Baptist Church," April, 1827 (hereafter cited as "First Minutes").

9. White, First Baptist, p. 32.

In February, 1825, Rev. John Kerr was called to become the third
¹⁰
 pastor of First Church. Under his leadership the church experienced
 substantial numerical growth. When he arrived in 1825, there were 950
 members. Soon revival fires broke out. In 1827 the church received 261
 persons for baptism and reported a total membership of 1,357 to the Dover
¹¹
 Association that year. Then in 1831 the new evangelistic method of the
 protracted meeting reached Richmond. A four day crusade was planned at
 First Church, and the spiritual fervor awakened in these four days could
 not be cut off. It flourished and led into a protracted meeting which
¹²
 lasted for five months. The results were almost unbelievable. The
 church reported at the end of the year that 574 were baptized and 48 were
¹³
 received by letter or restoration to increase its membership to 1,867.

The spirit of revival and evangelism spread across the city.
 Second Church was caught up in the spirit. Soon they were engaged in a
 similar protracted meeting. At the year's end they reported 191 additions
 by baptism and 16 by letter or restoration for a total membership of
¹⁴
 312. Dr. Douglas S. Freeman, in writing the "Historical Sketch of The
 First Thirty Years of The Second Baptist Church," said: "It is not too
 much to say that these additions put the Second Church on its feet, solved

10. "First Minutes," February 19, 1825.

11. Dover Minutes, 1825, p. 3; 1827, p. 1.

12. White, First Baptist, p. 46.

13. Dover Minutes, 1831, p. 3.

14. Ibid.

its financial problem and marked the end of the first period in the history of the church."¹⁵ Perhaps no other year in the history of Richmond Baptists has equaled such an evangelistic fervor as the year 1831.

The results of the protracted meeting were so tremendous that a change in Associational procedures was felt wise. Prior to this experience, the Association met annually in district union meetings for the purpose of inspiration and revival. These drew only a limited number of people and were necessarily short in duration because of the great distance people had to travel. In 1832, as a result of the meetings of 1831, the Association decided "that the protracted meetings which obtain in most of our churches, supercede the necessity of appointing district union meetings. The former being considered more promotive of the glory of God, springing as they do from a free and unconstrained desire to engage¹⁶ in his service."

By this time the population of Richmond was also expanding. There¹⁷ were 16,060 residents in 1830. Families were beginning to move away from the center of the city. For many of them it became exceedingly difficult to attend the "downtown" churches. This was especially true of an afflicted lady who lived "in the upper part of the city." She

15. Cousins, Second Baptist, p. 42.

16. Dover Minutes, 1832, p. 6.

17. Christian, Richmond, p. 115.

requested Rev. Henry Keeling, editor of the Religious Herald (1828-1831), to conduct a series of prayer meetings in her home on Sunday afternoons. Out of this two Sunday schools were established and provided the foundation for a third Baptist church in Richmond.¹⁸ The initial effort was augmented by a resolution of the Second Church on February 21, 1833. It stated:

That it is expedient that exertions be made by this church to raise another church and congregation with a view to the furtherance of the Kingdom of Christ, to worship in some suitable place to be provided not further East than 4th Street nor far from H Street (Broad)....

The reason given was their concern for the "six or seven thousand inhabitants" then living north and west of the territory conveniently served by the other two churches. This action culminated in July, 1833 when several members of the Second Church applied for dismissal in order to constitute a new church on Shockoe Hill.¹⁹ First Church was in full agreement with this.²⁰ The formal constitution of the Third Baptist Church²¹ occurred on December 2, 1833 at the Second Church. After an appropriate service, the right hand of fellowship was given by J. B. Taylor, and the church

18. Nan F. Weeks, Grace Baptist Church Richmond 1833-1958 (Richmond: Garrett and Massie, Inc., 1958), p. 2 (hereafter cited as Weeks, Grace Baptist). Note: No minutes of this church exist prior to 1880 because of fire.

19. "Second Minutes," February 21, 1833; July 10, 1833.

20. "First Minutes," August 3, 1833.

21. Now known as Grace Baptist Church.

was officially constituted. The first action of the new church was to secure a lot on which to build. A lot on the northwest corner of Second and Marshall Streets was obtained, and there the first meeting house was built. It was dedicated on Monday, May 23, 1834, while Henry Keeling was installed as the first pastor, a position which he held until 1837. In 1834 the church was received into the Dover Association with a total membership of forty. In addition the church also reported a flourishing Sunday school, a Bible class, and a Female Foreign Missionary Society.

Expanding organizational activities were occurring in the other churches. In 1832 First Church had a Sunday school, a Female Education Working Society, and a Youths' Missionary Society. Many of their members were connected with Bible, Missionary, Temperance, and other benevolent societies. By 1833 the church also reported a Male and Female Bible class as well as a Sabbath school. A Domestic Missionary Society was added in 1834 and an African Missionary Society in 1835. At Second Church in 1831 there was a Sabbath school, two Bible classes, a Youths' Missionary Society, a Female Missionary Society, and a Female Education Society. Nearly all its members participated in Temperance and Benevolent Societies. A Tract and Maternal Society were formed in the following year. Two

22. Religious Herald, Vol. VI, No. 48, December 6, 1833.

23. Weeks, Grace Baptist, pp. 2-5.

24. Dover Minutes, 1834, pp. 4-5, 11.

Sabbath schools were reported that year also. In 1833 a third Sabbath school was under the direction of the church. Other ministries which were started that year included a Youths' Bible Society, a Judson Society, and a Female Domestic Mission.²⁵ These organizations were for local concerns, for missionary and benevolent purposes, and for the purpose of dealing with social problems. The basic reason for having these organizations was to present as full a ministry as possible to the total needs of mankind, both local and around the world.

Perhaps stemming out of the circumstances that led to the organization of the Third Church, a greater concern was generated among Baptists to provide a ministry for the out-lying areas of the city. William Crane had attempted in 1831 to enlist all the Protestant denominations in Richmond to support a society for the purpose of carrying the gospel "to those who have no disposition to attend public worship." This effort failed, and the interdenominational society was dissolved.²⁶ But the Baptists were not willing to shelve the matter. Several members of the First Church helped to constitute a church at Cat Tail in September, 1833.²⁷ Then in January, 1834 a committee was appointed at First Church to confer with the other two churches concerning missionary operations

25. Ibid., 1831-1835.

26. White, R. B. W. L., p. 13.

27. "First Minutes," September 7, 1833.

in Richmond and the surrounding communities. In February the Richmond Baptist Extension Society was constituted. It was composed of the pastor and two members of each church, and they were charged with the responsibility of "supplying the destitute portions of the city and its neighborhood with preaching, the establishment of Sabbath schools, and the distribution of tracts, as the case may require." Although the Extension Society was responsible for raising funds for any program which they might institute, it was suggested that the churches should support the work on a voluntary basis.²⁹ The next year, resulting from a men's mission of the First Church, the New Bridge Church in Henrico County was begun.³⁰ Also in that year a mission Sunday school was sponsored by Second Church members. It met in the Brook school house. This later became the North Run Baptist Church. On May 14, 1837 an "Association for a Concert Meeting for Prayer and Songs" was organized by the three Richmond churches along with "the mission at Rocky Ridge."³¹ The same year Second Church reported to the Association: "There is another school under the superintendence of this church, and is taught near the north part of the city. It is called the Bacon Quarter Branch Sabbath school."³² Another mission Sunday

28. *Ibid.*, January 27, 1834.

29. *Ibid.*, February 24, 1834.

30. *Ibid.*, June 1, 1835.

31. White, E. B. W. L., p. 13.

32. *Dover Minutes*, 1837, p. 11.

school in the lower part of the city was started in 1838, jointly supported by the First and Second Churches.³³ Shortly afterwards, Third Church joined with Second to give supervision to the Bacon Quarter Branch school, and First Church assumed the total responsibility for the mission in the Union school-house at Twenty-fifth and Franklin Streets.³⁴

The three churches continued to grow in numerical strength. First Church, under the leadership of J. B. Jeter since 1836, reported in 1840 a membership of 2,095. Of this number, 395 were white and 1,700 were colored.³⁵ To meet their needs more adequately, the church decided to segregate the whites and the Negroes. A new church was put under construction in 1839 to which the white membership would move upon completion. The old building was to be sold to the Negro membership for their use.³⁶ At Second Church the ministry of J. B. Taylor officially ended in February, 1840. At the time of his departure the church had 458 members and three Sunday schools with an attendance of over 220. Mr. Taylor was succeeded by Rev. E. L. Magoon on April 2, 1840. By 1840 ten young men had entered the ministry, and a lot had been purchased for a larger and better located

33. Ibid., 1838, p. 12.

34. White, R. B. W. L., p. 14.

35. Dover Minutes, 1840, p. 4.

36. "First Minutes," September 23, 1839. The details of this move will be related later in this chapter.

house of worship. ³⁷ Receiving 92 by baptism that year, the church reported to the Dover Association a membership of 556, of whom 331 were white and 225 colored. ³⁸ Shortly after J. B. Taylor resigned his pastorate at Second Church, Third Church prevailed upon him to become their pastor. He started his ministry there in July, 1840. ³⁹ A protracted meeting began on September 8. Good responses occurred. According to the Religious Herald of September 24, twenty-two persons had already received baptism, ⁴⁰ and thirty others had come forward as "a subject of special prayer." This meeting enabled the church to report to the Dover Association sixty-six baptisms for the year and a total membership of 186, of whom 139 were white and 47 colored. ⁴¹ By 1840 the total church membership was 2,837 as over against a population total in Richmond of 20,153. ⁴² As the city grew and expanded, so did the membership and ministry of the Baptists in Richmond.

During these years the churches were faced with many problems as they struggled for stability and maturity. A continuous problem was that of finances. At this time true Biblical stewardship of voluntarily giving a tithe of one's income as a minimum goal had not been realized. Instead,

37. Cousins, Second Baptist, pp. 10, 44.

38. Dover Minutes, 1840, p. 4.

39. Weeks, Grace Baptist, p. 9.

40. Religious Herald, Vol. VII, No. 39, September 24, 1840.

41. Dover Minutes, 1840, p. 4.

42. Christian, Richmond, p. 140.

other methods of financing were employed. The most frequently used method was the contingent fund. This fund took care of the running expenses of the church, such as the sexton's salary, the purchase of candles and candlesticks, stoves and stovepipes, coal, and general repairs to the building. At First Church this fund was collected by committees of white men and women and certain of the colored deacons appointed for that purpose.⁴³ On one occasion, when two stoves were purchased, a committee was appointed to call on the male membership of the church; each one was "required" to pay \$100.⁴⁴ At Second Church subscriptions were sent out requesting that each member should subscribe what he could give to meet the contingent expenses. Second Church also used this method to pay for their new church building. Members were asked to present at the monthly meeting in January what they could give for the year. These gifts were to "be paid quarterly in advance."⁴⁵ A different approach was used by First Baptist when they were preparing to build in 1839. The committee, which was selected to purchase the lot for the erection of the new church, was authorized to "erect it on loans." These loans were to be repaid by selling "such a portion of the pews as may be necessary."⁴⁶ Missionary

43. White, First Baptist, pp. 41-42.

44. "First Minutes," November 6, 1827.

45. "Second Minutes," January 9, 1823; May 22, 1823.

46. "First Minutes," March 25, 1839.

enterprises and organizations were supported by special offerings while the Sunday school received its income also from special offerings.⁴⁷ Occasionally some financial help came from organizations outside the church. Such was the case when Second Church was helped with its building indebtedness by the Dorcas Society of Richmond.⁴⁸

Discipline was another area of great concern. The early Baptists guarded very closely what they felt to be the proper code of ethics for a Christian. They frequently reprimanded and even dismissed members because of "unchristian conduct." At Second Church one member was excommunicated for "disorderly conduct in playing at Shuffleboard and falsehood in afterwards repeatedly denying it." One sister was admonished for using profanity, and another member was admonished and suspended from the privileges of the church because of intemperance.⁴⁹ Members of First Church in February, 1826 resolved, "that if any member...shall visit any place of merriment, amusement or entertainment contrary to the advise of a respectable member of this church, they ought to be and will be considered in discord and disorderly and dealt with accordingly." Such cases did occur and action followed. One member was dismissed for attending the theater and unchristian conduct. Another was dismissed for attending the races. Still another was suspended until he could give the church satisfactory

47. White, First Baptist, p. 49.

48. Cousins, Second Baptist, p. 41.

49. "Second Minutes," September 5, 1820; June 13, 1825.

evidence of reformation and sensible conduct.

By this time First Church was also concerned about the irregularity of attendance by many of its members. In 1833, in an attempt to keep in touch with the entire membership, the church roll was divided into three districts. Deacons were appointed over these and were charged with the responsibility of holding prayer meetings. The clerk was instructed to write to those who had become non-resident members and to urge them to join a Baptist church where they lived. If there were no Baptist churches near, they were instructed to write the First Church relating their spiritual

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condition. Through such methods the churches attempted to keep up with their memberships and attempted to keep their members "in line" in their Christian living.

There were also problems in the area of doctrine and church polity. Although these were not as numerous as in the earlier decades, they were important. This was especially true regarding the controversy centering around the theology of one Alexander Campbell. Campbell came from Scotland in 1809 and settled in Brooke County, Virginia. Soon thereafter he became a Baptist. Then, in 1823, he began a publication known as The Christian Baptist. In this paper he attacked missionary, Bible, Sunday school and Tract societies as "engines" of "priestly ambition." He

50. "First Minutes," February 11, 1826; November 27, 1828; January 15, 1829; January 18, 1825.

51. White, First Baptist, pp. 41, 48.

opposed the sending of missionaries. He was against the "ordination of ministers and the payment to them of a fixed salary, a pastor's having care of more than one church, the organization of churches into associations which he considered to be creeds, the requirement of a religious 'experience' prior to baptism and all else he could not find specifically in the New Testament." He further taught that baptism was essential if there was to be the remission of sins and the appropriation of God's promise of forgiveness. It was his intention to instigate a "reformation" amongst the Baptists and to lead them to his views.

The main line of Baptists soon stood opposed to his doctrines. The first formal action against Campbell was taken in May, 1830 by the Appomattox Association. After the stating of "Campbell's creeds," they recommended earnestly that all churches do away with the writings of Campbell as being doctrinally unsound. Other groups began to take action as the tension increased. By 1832 the major problem confronting the churches was what to do with those members who had become followers of Campbell and were
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thus causing so much trouble.

The disturbance struck into the life of the Richmond churches. The Campbellites in First Church were causing so much trouble that the church adopted in February, 1832 the following:

Whereas, it is evident that a party has arisen in this Church entertaining opinions of Scripture doctrine and Church government materially different from those of the great body of this Church and all the Regular Baptist churches in Virginia; and whereas, out of these discordant opinions and views a state of feeling has grown very unfavorable to the peace, honor and piety of the Church - therefore

Resolved, That this Church earnestly recommends to those who have embraced these new doctrines and opinions to withdraw from us and become a separate people worshipping God according to their own views of propriety.⁵³

As a result of this action, seventy-two withdrew their membership and organized the Sycamore Church, later known as the Seventh Street Christian Church.⁵⁴ First Church reported to the Dover Association that year the action of the church in this regards. The report related the necessity of such action and stated: "We bore with them till forbearance ceased to be a virtue, our admonitions and warnings were treated with contempt, too wise to be instructed and too confident to be admonished, they pursued a course of fault finding pretense, criticism, as inconsistent with the meek and gentle spirit of the gospel, as with the peace and piety of the church."⁵⁵ Second Church also reported to the Association the severance of four because of their adherence to the views of Alexander Campbell.⁵⁶

53. "First Minutes," February 18, 1832.

54. White, R. B. W. L., p. 3.

55. "First Minutes," October 8, 1832.

56. Dover Minutes, 1832, p. 15.

Recognizing the seriousness of the controversy, the Dover Association appointed a select committee in 1832 to study the problem and to make a report. John Kerr, pastor of First Church, was chairman of the committee, and his report asserted that: "we are thoroughly convinced that [their] doctrines [are] not according to godliness, but subversive of the true Spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ...and therefore, ought to be disavowed and resisted, by all the lovers of truth and sound doctrine." This was followed by a recommendation to the churches of the Dover Association to separate from having fellowship with the adherents of Campbellism. Recognizing that several ministers and several churches within the Association had become infected with Campbellism, the committee concluded their report with the following resolution:

That this Association cannot consistently, and conscientiously receive them [the ministers], nor any other ministers maintaining their views, as members of their body; nor can they in the future act in concert with delegates from any church or churches, that may encourage, or countenance their ministrations.

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Notice of this action was sent to all the churches. The next year several churches were excluded from the fellowship of the Association for embracing the views of Campbell. ⁵⁸ Soon thereafter the controversy died out.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8, 14.

58. *Ibid.*, 1834, p. 6.

Still another problem confronting the Baptists was over the growing concern of temperance. In 1826 the Virginia Society for the Promotion of Temperance had been launched, and soon thereafter Temperance Societies were formed in many churches. Through these societies there developed a rising concern for total abstinence.⁵⁹ Caught up in this zeal for total abstinence, Second Church adopted it as a test of church membership. This touched off a lively controversy that threatened to divide Baptists in Richmond. Finally, Second Church retreated from its extreme position and peace was restored.⁶⁰ Second Church did continue to encourage total abstinence, and happily reported to the Dover Association in October, 1833, that their "members with scarcely a single exception have abandoned the use of ardent spirits."⁶¹ A committee on temperance was established in the Dover Association in 1840, and J. B. Jeter, pastor of First Church, was elected chairman. Serving with him was E. L. Magoon, pastor of Second Church. They presented their first report that year. It reflected the change of attitude toward the consumption of alcohol.

Resolved, That in the opinion of this Association, the use of intoxicating drinks, except medically, is inexpedient, and is fraught with dangerous consequences to society.

59. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, p. 286.

60. White, R. B. W. L., p. 7.

61. Dover Minutes, 1833, p. 12.

Resolved, That the churches of this Association be requested to adopt such measures...to influence their members, and the community generally, to abandon the use of intoxicating drinks, except for medical purposes.

Resolved, as the opinion of this Association, That the churches composing this Association be affectionately recommended to abstain altogether from the use of ardent spirits.⁶²

This changing attitude was to become more fixed on total abstinence through the years ahead.

Between 1820 and 1840 the Sunday school movement gained great momentum in Richmond and in the Dover Association. The key figure in this was James B. Taylor, pastor of Second Church. He set forth the advantages of the Sunday school to the Association in 1834 and recommended that each church establish a Sunday school and that ministers encourage "this work of faith and love."⁶³ In 1836 the Associational Circular Letter dealt with the promotion of the Sunday school.⁶⁴ As a result of this increasing concern, a Sunday school committee was appointed by the Association in 1837. They were to promote Sunday school efforts and to report what the various churches were doing in this ministry. Such a report was included in the 1837 minutes. The Richmond churches reported as follows: First, 11 teachers and 104 scholars; Second, 20

62. *Ibid.*, 1840, pp. 5, 12. Compare this with the Association's position on alcohol in 1801, p. 35 of this paper.

63. *Ibid.*, 1834, p. 7.

64. *Ibid.*, 1836, pp. 14-19.

teachers and 120 scholars; and Third, 12 teachers and 55 scholars.
 Libraries were also reported as a part of this work.⁶⁵ In 1838 the Association gave its approval of the newly formed Virginia Baptist Sunday School Association. Its objects were commended to the churches. Continuous concern and participation in regards to Sunday school work were urged upon the members of the churches.⁶⁶

These years also witnessed a developing concern for missions among the Baptists in Richmond. In each church missionary societies were established, especially among the women and youth. Their purpose was that of study, prayer, and financial support of missions. Soon the churches recognized the need for local missions. This led to the formation of the Richmond Baptist Extension Society in 1834.⁶⁷ In 1835 missionary concern reached a new peak. It was in that year that the first foreign missionaries from Virginia were appointed. The first of these was William Mylne, a member of Second Church. He volunteered to go to Africa. The church favored his decision and related his request to the Board of Managers of the Triennial Convention. The Convention duly appointed Mylne as a missionary to Liberia during its meeting in Richmond in 1835.⁶⁸

65. *Ibid.*, 1837, pp. 6, 11-14.

66. *Ibid.*, 1838, p. 6.

67. See p.67.

68. *Religious Herald*, Vol. II, No. 12, March 27, 1835.

He and his wife sailed on July 7. Shortly after their arrival in Liberia both contracted a fever. Mrs. Mylne died there in September, while Mr. Mylne was finally forced to return home in 1838 because of poor health resulting from the fever. Two other Richmond young men received appointment in 1835. These were Robert Davenport and Lewis Shuck. They were members of First Church. Lewis Shuck and his new bride, Henrietta Hall Shuck, became the pioneer missionaries to China where they opened schools and organized churches. Davenport and his new bride, Mary Francis Roper,⁶⁹ went to Siam. There they opened schools and established churches.⁷⁰ They also printed tracts and the Scriptures in Siamese and Chinese.

Richmond Baptists also gave leadership to the missionary cause on the local scene. Rev. David Roper served as the first Corresponding Secretary of the General Association. In that position he did much in superintending and conducting the State Mission work of the Baptists of Virginia. The first secretary of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board⁷¹ was Rev. James B. Taylor.⁷² Financial help was also greatly needed, and the challenge was not left unmet. In 1835 at the Triennial

69. Both men were married just prior to their leaving Richmond. Mary Frances Roper was the daughter of David Roper, first pastor of Second Church.

70. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, pp. 270-272.

71. This was formed in 1845 as a part of the newly organized Southern Baptist Convention. The story of this is related in the next chapter.

72. Cousins, Second Baptist, p. 42.

meeting in Richmond a resolution was proposed by the Youths' Missionary Society of the Second Church. This proposal first called for enlarged efforts for the evangelization of the world. Then it set a goal of one hundred thousand dollars for this work in 1836, which was double the amount received in the previous year. ⁷³ The action was endorsed by the

Dover Association, and the Association also approved the effort of the General Association of Virginia to raise five thousand dollars that year. The same year, the Associational Circular Letter was devoted to, "The duty of the members of our churches to contribute for the spread of

the Gospel." ⁷⁴ A real missionary consciousness had been awakened among the Baptists of Richmond in the 1830's and by 1840 they were substantially supporting domestic, home (United States), and foreign missions.

A greater effort was also made in the field of Christian education during this period. At first it centered around the idea of Luther Rice to establish a Baptist college in the Nation's capitol. This was realized in 1821 with the incorporation of Columbian College. The College began with a student body of twenty, but by 1825 it had increased to 113 students

and ten faculty members. ⁷⁵ When the College was temporarily closed in 1827 because of a lack of finances, an effort was made to raise \$50,000 for its relief. The Dover Association that year passed a resolution encouraging students to attend it and the churches to support Columbian with financial

73. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, p. 264.

74. Dover Minutes, 1835, pp. 7, 15-22.

75. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, p. 223.

76 gifts. First Church contributed \$700,⁷⁷ but how much more support came from the churches of the Dover Association is unknown. However, it was reported that Virginia Baptists as a whole gave generously. These efforts made it possible for the College to reopen permanently in 1828. In 1873 the name was changed to "Columbian University" and in 1904 when its Baptist connections were severed, to "George Washington University."⁷⁸

It was soon realized that facilities for Christian education were needed in Virginia. In June, 1830 the General Association held its annual session at Second Church. During this session a special meeting took place. It was for the purpose of "devising and proposing some plan for the improvement of young men, who in the judgment of the churches are called to the work of the ministry." The meeting had two results: The Virginia Baptist Education Society was created, and a small school was opened at "Dunlora," a 900 acre estate in Powhatan County. Six students were enrolled in that year. Edward Baptist was appointed as teacher. It was realized after the second year that the number of students would increase beyond the available facilities at "Dunlora." It was also learned that Edward Baptist's health would not permit him to be a permanent instructor. As a result, the Society bought "Spring Farm," four miles north of Richmond, and Robert Ryland was engaged to take charge of the school. On July 4, 1832 the Virginia Baptist

76. Dover Minutes, 1827, p. 7.

77. "First Minutes," April 30, 1829.

78. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, pp. 223-224.

Seminary was formally opened with ten students. Within a year the student body had increased to twenty-six, sixteen of whom were "beneficiaries."

These "beneficiaries" were students who had been approved by the churches for the ministry and as a result they received their tuition without cost.

The other students were called "moral youths," and they defrayed all their

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expenses. The action of the Society was approved by the Dover Association, and the churches were exhorted to encourage the work of the

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Seminary.

The property at "Spring Farm" was sold in 1834 and the Haxall estate, called "Columbia," was purchased for \$9,500. This estate was located one

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and a half miles from the State capitol on the outskirts of Richmond.

It comprised almost eight acres and included buildings which would "accommodated seventy students and furnished rooms for the teachers, a chapel

and recitation rooms." To this location the Seminary moved in December,

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1834. The following report was sent by the Dover Association to the churches in 1835:

It gives us pleasure to state that the Virginia Baptist Seminary...is in a flourishing state. The Education Society has under its care about twelve beneficiaries. There are also several of the literary students who will probably devote themselves to

79. *Ibid.*, pp. 224-228.

80. *Dover Minutes*, 1832, p. 9.

81. Now on the corner of Grace and Lombardy Streets in Richmond.

82. Ryland, *Virginia Baptists*, p. 228.

the work of the ministry. The number of students all together is about forty. In view of the great destitution of ministers in our churches, permit us...to recommend this institution to your attention. Your interests and the interests of our denomination are deeply involved in its continuance and increased efficiency. We commend it to your prayers and your contributions.⁸³

In 1839 the Female Education Society of First Church contributed \$1,000 toward an endowment fund for the Seminary. This was the first gift received by the institution for this purpose. Soon the Virginia Education Society realized that the school would be greatly enhanced if it could receive a charter as a college from the State. A committee was appointed to petition the Legislature. Finally on March 4, 1840 a charter was granted, and the institution was renamed "Richmond College." A Board of Trustees was appointed, and the work of establishing the college was begun. The necessary changes were completed in 1843 when the property, and endowment were transferred by the Education Society to the Trustees of the College.⁸⁴

There also developed a need for a religious publication to serve as a religious news media for the Baptists of Richmond and Virginia. In 1825 David Roper of Second Church proposed to establish in Richmond a religious periodical under the title of the Richmond Christian Journal. This proposed periodical received the approval and commendation of the Dover

83. Dover Minutes, 1835, p. 24.

84. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, pp. 268-269.

Association that year. Unfortunately, Roper's health declined that year, and he died in 1827. Because of this, the proposed paper never was published. The need for a Baptist periodical in Virginia became more acute after 1825 when the Luminary, a Baptist publication from Washington, was discontinued. This led Henry Keeling of Second Church to edit and to publish a monthly under the title of Evangelical Inquirer. The first issue was published in October, 1826. Keeling stated in this issue the basic purposes and format of this paper:

It may be expected to contain Essays, original and selected, on Evangelical Doctrine, Experience and Practice; exhibitions of the progress made in the march of Messiah's Kingdom in Christendom and among the Heathen; critical and explanatory remarks on difficult and obscure portions of the Sacred Scriptures; censures directed against crimes which are most prevalent in the age in which we live; together with biographical, literary and even political sketches.⁸⁶

The paper was an immediate success. As a result, it was decided to change it from a monthly to a "weekly royal sheet."⁸⁷

The first issue of the "new" paper appeared on January 11, 1828, but it was renamed The Religious Herald to avoid confusion with the secular newspaper, The Richmond Enquirer. It also had a new publisher and editor,⁸⁸ William Sands. Sands was brought to Richmond from Baltimore by William

85. Dover Minutes, 1825, p. 6.

86. The Evangelical Inquirer, Vol. I, No. I, October, 1826.

87. Ibid., Vol. I, No. XII, September, 1827.

88. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, pp. 220-221.

Crane, a member of Second Church. Crane, too, had felt the need for a weekly religious periodical, and he was determined to see the undertaking succeed. In 1827 he found Sands willing to embark upon such a venture and authorized him to purchase equipment. A press paid for by Crane was bought for \$677, and The Religious Herald was launched.⁸⁹ From 1828 to 1830 Henry Keeling worked with Sands as an associate editor. He was succeeded in this position by Eli Ball who assisted Sands until 1833. After that Sands became the sole editor and publisher of the paper. The Herald, which was financially backed by Crane, sold at a subscription price of \$3.⁹⁰ It was soon realized that solicitation for subscriptions was necessary if the paper was to continue. In December, 1830 James B. Taylor, pastor of Second Church, wrote: "We are endeavoring to make an extra effort in behalf of the Herald. Without such an effort it will sink. But it must not sink." Being greatly burdened, Mr. Taylor "took the road" for the Herald, and within several months had enlisted five hundred subscribers.⁹¹ With this effort, the paper got over its initial "hump." Since that time, with the exception of a short period near the end of the Civil War, it has had a continuous publication.

Richmond Baptists also played a major role in other facets of the denominational life of Virginia Baptists. A change in the organizational

89. Cousins, Second Baptist, p. 43.

90. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, p. 221.

91. Cousins, Second Baptist, p. 43.

structure on the state level had occurred following the year 1799. The
major purposes of the old General Committee had been fulfilled,⁹² and its
work came to an end. In order to continue some sort of general annual
meeting in the state a "General Meeting of Correspondence" was proposed.
Its main purpose was to preserve union and harmony amongst the churches.
However, "the great jealousy which had been expressed by the associations
respecting the General Committee put the Convention so much upon their
guard, that in forming the Constitution they almost gave them nothing to
do." This led a majority of the delegates of the seven associations
present at a state-wide meeting in 1802 to reject the plan as "desirable
but not attainable."⁹³ This was not the desire of the delegates from the
Dover Association. When the delegation, which included John Courtney of
First Church, reported back to the Dover Association that year, they pro-
posed the following resolution: "we give it as our opinion that the plan
for the General Meeting of Correspondence formerly presented to us is a
good one, and that they meet at such time and place as may be agreed on."⁹⁴
This was adopted by the Association. Then the Dover Association in-
vited all other associations interested to meet with them in the follow-
ing year. At first only one responded, but others were soon to follow.

92. See p. 16.

93. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, pp. 163-165.

94. Dover Minutes, 1802, p. 6.

By 1808 six associations were represented. Among those that responded a certain degree of union and harmony was preserved. The General Meeting of Correspondence continued until 1823 when it was then replaced by the
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General Association.

Although the General Meeting of Correspondence continued through 1822, only a few of the twenty district associations belonged to it, and the delegates often did not attend. At the 1821 meeting in Charlottesville only three delegates came. There was no officer present, and no business was done. On their return home Edward Baptist of Appomattox suggested to James Fife of Goshen the creation of "a new organization for the definite purpose of inquiring into the spiritual destitution in Virginia and devising means of relieving it." These two then came to Richmond where they consulted with William Crane of Second Church and John Bryce of First Church. These men concurred in the suggestion and joined with Baptist and Fife in working out a plan. When the General Meeting of Correspondence met in First Church in 1822, the new plan was revealed and a proposed constitution presented. It was approved. David Roper and John Bryce of Richmond "were appointed to draft an address explaining the nature and design of the new constitution" to be sent to the churches. The first meeting of the General Association was set to be held at Second

Church in June, 1823.⁹⁶ From that date the organization has had a continuous existence.⁹⁷

The year 1835 was a high water mark for Richmond Baptists in denominational entertainment. In May they were the hosts for the Eighth Triennial Convention of American Baptists. One week prior to that the annual meetings of the Baptist General Association of Virginia, the Virginia Baptist Foreign Missionary Society, and the Virginia Baptist Education Society had also met in Richmond. During these two weeks Richmond Baptists "entertained and enjoyed delegates from over the state and the United States, and visitors from England, India, and the Cherokee Nation."⁹⁸

Major concern was also given by Richmond Baptists to the religious instruction of the colored people. The Richmond churches preached to both races; baptized them on the same confession of faith, gathered them into their fellowships; and exercised care over their spiritual and moral development.⁹⁹ Both slaves and freed Negroes were received into membership. Colored deacons were soon appointed to look after the colored members. Their duties included keeping an eye on their conduct and behavior and reporting the need for disciplinary action.¹⁰⁰ It also included helping in their spiritual development. Mr. Nelson, the first such deacon at

96. *Ibid.*, pp. 205-207.

97. *Dover Minutes*, 1824, p. 28; 1827, p. 31.

99. "Second Minutes," April 22, 1824.

100. The government of each church was by its white male members.

Second Church, was permitted to hold monthly prayer meetings in his home for colored members. He was further allowed to invite the colored members

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at First Church to participate.

To enhance the spiritual development of the colored even more, Negroes were licensed to "exercise their gifts" in public exhortations.

In 1826 the Dover Association recommended a procedure to be followed in the granting of these licenses:

We advise that each of the churches first... require any who feel a desire to exercise any gift, to make application to the colored elders, and get them to call a meeting, before whom they may then speak, and if approved by such elders, they should report then to the church, and if the church on investigation shall approve, they may then be permitted to exercise their gifts. Without such a license, none should be allowed to go farther than to sing and pray in public.

The reason for such an examination prior to granting a license was that many who did not "possess any kind of capacity to impart instruction, and some also of suspicious moral character" had been preaching and teaching. In so doing they had instigated many evils and brought much reproach upon

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the Baptist cause. To keep a check on this some churches had the colored to "renew" their license. Such was the case with First Church in 1829. They passed a resolution "that no colored person shall hereafter be allowed to preach in appointed meetings unless they obtain a new certifi-

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cate."

101. "Second Minutes," October 26, 1826; November 16, 1826.

102. Dover Minutes, 1826, p. 9.

103. "First Minutes," July 9, 1829.

Following the insurrection led by Nat Turner in Southampton County, Virginia in 1831, religious instruction and training of the colored church members was made more difficult. The State of Virginia passed laws restricting the assembling of Negroes. These laws also forbade them to preach, and required that the pastors of Negro churches had to be white.¹⁰⁴ Reacting to the changing situation, First Church stated: "There being an impossibility from the nature of the land for our colored brethren to exercise public gifts, all of them who have been licensed are requested to give up their licenses to the church and they are revoked."¹⁰⁵ The action greatly limited the church's religious instruction to the colored members. But recognizing the need in this area the Dover Association in 1834 recommended to its pastors and members that they adopt "a more systematic course of oral religious instruction for the benefit of colored persons" which would be in conformity with the provision of the laws.¹⁰⁶ In January, 1835, in compliance with this request and with the State laws, First Church appointed white members whose duty was "to be present at all meetings held for colored discipline and to promote... scriptural instruction and edification of the colored members...." They were further instructed to point out their responsibility of attending

104. Hemphill, Cavalier Commonwealth, p. 226; Ryland, Virginia Baptists, p. 282.

105. "First Minutes," September 15, 1831.

106. Dover Minutes, 1834, p. 8.

all the preaching services of the church and that "they be correctly informed of the state of the laws relating to this subject."¹⁰⁷

The racial relations by the 1830's were made even more difficult by the growing abolitionist movement. Agitation by certain societies and individuals in the North excited the South and brought about "just displeasure" from many. In the 1835 meeting of the Dover Association the delegates felt that, as a religious body and as citizens of the State of Virginia, they should express their sentiments and in resolution declared:

Resolved, unanimously, That we view with feelings of deep regret, and decided disapprobation, the course which has been pursued by the Northern Abolitionists, as being calculated, in our esteem, to excite discontent and insubordination among the slaves, to destroy the peace of the community, and even to injure the interests of those for whose welfare those misguided men profess to be laboring.¹⁰⁸

Despite these difficulties, colored membership continued to grow rapidly. The first separate statistics for white and colored members appeared in the 1838 Dover Minutes. The total membership was 5,755 white and 9,112 colored. First Church reported 356 white and 1,600 colored; Second Church indicated 264 white and 204 colored; while Third Church reported 68 white and 46 colored.¹⁰⁹ The large colored membership, especially at First Church, created difficulties. The problem of inadequate bi-racial religious instruction was recognized as early as 1821. In that

107. "First Minutes," January 18, 1835.

108. Dover Minutes, 1835, p. 7.

109. Ibid., 1838, p. 4.

year First Church had asked the Association's advice on forming an African church in Richmond out of its colored members. The Association advised against such a church for it was felt that such action was inexpedient
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at that time. In 1830 the question arose again at First Church when the colored membership presented a letter requesting the Church "to consider with them the propriety of their having a house of worship built
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for themselves." No action was taken. As the years passed and the colored membership increased in widening ratio to white, the problem became even more acute. Finally this led the church in January, 1836 to approve the appointment of a committee to confer with Second and Third

Churches "respecting the expediency of providing a separate place of
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worship for the colored portion of these churches." Dr. J. B. Jeter,

the new pastor of First Church, became convinced that a bi-racial ministry was not providing the best religious development and instruction for either race. He felt that neither the white nor the colored within the church would achieve their maximum effectiveness under existing conditions.

He said that "it was impossible in one church house to provide adequate place for both races, and preaching suitable at once for those so ignorant
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and those of intelligence and culture." However, neither he nor the

110. *Ibid.*, 1821, p. 6.

111. "First Minutes," July 3, 1830.

112. *Ibid.*, January 25, 1836.

113. George Baxton Taylor, *Virginia Baptist Ministers* (Lynchburg: J. P. Bell Company, Inc., 1912) III, p. 315.

First Church wanted to push the Negro out. They desired a more effective ministry for them, but believed this could be better accomplished through segregated churches. An address was prepared in 1838 setting forth the need for a segregated ministry. The address received the support of both

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the Second and Third Churches. Therefore, in the October business meeting of the church that year the following resolutions were passed:

1. That if the sum of \$13,000 (the appraised value) shall be raised by the citizens of Richmond and we can procure a suitable lot for the erection of another meeting house, the title to the meeting house of the First Baptist Church shall be conveyed to trustees to be held and used by them for the religious instruction of the colored people in the manner proposed in the address of the committee recently published.

2. That a committee be appointed to purchase a lot.

3. That the committee of twelve just appointed carry into effect the 1st resolution provided a lot be purchased.¹¹⁵

A lot was soon secured at 12th and Broad Streets and the deed was recorded
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in May, 1839. In September of that year the new building was begun.¹¹⁷

Soon a segregated ministry was realized.

114. Weeks, Grace Baptist, p. 7.

115. "First Minutes," October 7, 1838.

116. White, First Baptist, p. 55.

117. "First Minutes," September 23, 1839.

CHAPTER IV
MOVING TOWARD MATURITY
1840 - 1860

The two decades prior to the War between the States were for the Baptists of Richmond years of change and development as they moved toward maturity. The first change to take place was in relation to the colored Baptists of First Church. The Church had voted in 1833 to leave the old building to the Negro members provided that the appraisal value of \$13,000 could be raised by them and by the citizens of Richmond. A second provision was that a suitable lot for the erection of another church building for the First Church had to be secured. This second provision was met in 1839 when a nice lot at Twelfth and Broad Streets was purchased.¹ Realizing the difficulty that the Negro members would have in raising \$13,000, First Church voted in January, 1841 to reduce the amount to \$7,500.² The colored members were successful in raising \$3,500 and the citizens of

1. See pp. 92-93.

2. "First Minutes," January 26, 1841.

Richmond contributed \$2,750 for a total of \$6,250 towards the payment. This represented "a generous relinquishment of a part of the appraised value."³ A committee which was composed of representatives of the three Baptist churches of the city was then formed at the request of the First Church. The committee was charged with the responsibility of formulating a plan for the organization of the African Baptist Church. In July, 1841, the plan was set forth and adopted by First Church. It included the following regulations:

The Baptist churches of Richmond shall annually appoint a committee of twenty-four white members to superintend the religious instruction and discipline....

From the most experienced and judicious members of the body there shall be appointed thirty deacons to continue in office during good behaviour; these deacons shall be selected by the church, with the concurrence of the above named committee....

The pastor...shall be a white minister of good standing....

Meetings for public service must be held in the day time.... At every meeting...the pastor must be attended by at least two members of the committee.

The government of the body shall be vested in the pastor, committee, and deacons....

If received in the Dover Association the church is to be represented by white delegates.... from pastor and committee or appointed by the three white churches.⁴

The plan was so constructed in order to comply with Virginia law which allowed Negroes to assemble only in daylight hours and under the guidance

3. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, p. 284.

4. "First Minutes," July 8, 1841.

and leadership of whites. On the basis of this plan, First Church officially dismissed the colored members of that church "in good order and fellowship."⁵

The newly constituted African church began its ministry on the first Sunday in October, 1841 with seven hundred members.⁶ Dr. Robert Ryland, in addition to his duties as president of Richmond College, became the pastor of the First African Church, a position which he held until 1865. The kind of ministry he had is reflected in the historical address delivered by Dr. Ryland in June, 1880 as a part of the centennial celebration of the First Church. In this he stated: "I treat the colored people from the pulpit and in all my presidings as Moderator, and in all my official intercourse, exactly as I would a white congregation, that is, with the greatest possible respect." He went on to say that in his preaching "...he sought to be instructive rather than pathetic, to dwell on the distinctive doctrines and precepts of Christianity, rather than on its metaphysical refinements - to preach out of their minds, their dreams, and fancies, their visions and revelations, and all their long-cherished superstitions - to preach into their minds a knowledge of the great facts of their religion." Resulting from such a ministry, the First African

5. *Ibid.*, September 22, 1841.

6. There had been approximately 1,700 removed from First Baptist membership. Why all did not unite immediately with First African is unknown. Many of those who did not at first, eventually did. The exact number is unknown.

Church received by baptism, from October 1, 1841 to July 1, 1865, 3,832
⁷
 new members.

In the 1841 meeting of the Dover Association, the First African Church was cordially received into its membership. The Association firmly believed that it was its duty to extend fostering care and counsel to the African church. At the same meeting a new standing committee was appointed "...to report upon the condition of the colored population... and recommend a plan, the better to promote among them good morals and the Christian religion."⁸ In their initial report the committee recommended regular religious instruction, temperance societies, and the dispensing with all unnecessary labor on the Lord's Day to encourage their attendance at public worship.⁹

Work among the Negroes grew rapidly. First African received 618 by baptism in its first year. In the following years its growth was greater than the white churches combined.¹⁰ A second African Church was formed in 1846. It was composed primarily of the colored who had held their membership at Second Church. The white members of Second Church desired a separate church. Perhaps they were motivated by the same reasons as First Church had been.¹¹ After the formation of First African,

7. Tupper, First Church, pp. 255-262.

8. Dover Minutes, 1841, pp. 5-6.

9. Ibid., p. 11.

10. Ibid., 1842-1860.

11. See pp. 91-93.

Second Church encouraged its colored members to unite with this church. Few did. An increasing colored membership was felt to be detrimental. A resolution was passed against accepting additional colored members except in unusual cases. At least two were admitted under this ruling, but by and large additions from among the colored ceased. Still the problem was not solved. Finally the church decided the best solution was a separate church. As a result, the Second African Church was organized on February 1, 1846 with forty-three males and fourteen females. Others followed. Second Church sponsored Second African, but apparently did not have to assume any financial liability. A committee from Second Church was formed to attend the African services and to give the church counsel. In its 1846 meeting, the Dover Association also received Second African Church into its membership.

Prior to 1860 two additional African Baptist churches were formed. The first was the Ebenezer or Third African Church which was constituted in 1858. It started as a colony of the First African Church. First African had grown to such an immense size that it was unable to accommodate adequately all of its members. It was felt by many that another African church should be formed by a colony of members from this church. Permission was granted in 1856. Grace Street Baptist Church (formerly Third

12. "Second Minutes," May 25, July 23, 1842; October 1, 1843; April 25, February 1, February 19, 1846.

13. Cousins, Second Baptist, p. 46.

14. Dover Minutes, 1846, p. 6.

Baptist) was given the authority to tender entire supervision over the
¹⁵
 new African church. The new church was received into the Dover Associa-
¹⁶
 tion in 1858. One year later the Fourth African Church was organized
¹⁷
 and received into the Dover Association. By 1860 there were 4,633
 members in the four Negro churches. Of this number there were 3,260
 member in First African, 1,109 in Second African, 224 in Ebenezer, and
¹⁸
 40 members in Fourth African. The following complimentary editorial
 appeared in the Richmond Dispatch in 1859 to contradict Northern opinion:

It is a fact most creditable to the Christian
 zeal of the Baptist church and which is worth con-
 sidering by those fake philanthropists who pretend
 that Southern men neglect the religious instruction
 of their slaves, that the African churches of Rich-
 mond number 4,000 members and that a gentleman of
 the prominence and ability of President Robert
 Ryland of Richmond College devotes himself to this
 humble but most useful sphere of labor, as their
 chief pastor.¹⁹

The white Baptist churches also experienced some growth and expan-
 sion during the 1840's and 1850's as they sought to fulfill their role in
 a growing Richmond. In 1841 there were three churches with a total member-
²⁰
 ship of 1,201, of which 291 were colored. By 1860 there were five churches

15. "First Minutes," April 28, October 27, 1856.

16. Dover Minutes, 1858, p. 13.

17. Ibid., 1859, p. 12.

18. Ibid., 1860, pp. 26-27.

19. White, R. B. W. L., p. 16.

20. Dover Minutes, 1841, p. 4. No colored in First Church.

with a total membership of 2,275, of which only 43 were colored.²¹ The first church expansion occurred in May, 1842 with the organization of the Fourth Baptist Church in the Union School-house at Twenty-fifth and Franklin Streets. Fourteen members were dismissed from the First Church for this purpose.²² The new church struggled desperately for survival. It soon became apparent that the church was poorly located and was thus not adequately meeting the needs of Richmond expansion toward the east. In April, 1851 the church was dissolved, and nearly all the members returned their membership to First Church.²³ The property was then sold, and the money was used to pay the debts which had accumulated during the several years of declining strength.²⁴

Although Fourth Church dissolved, the Baptists did not relinquish a ministry to the growing East End section of the city. There was a great need for work in this area for two reasons. The first was that this section of the city was rapidly being populated and little was being done for the people's religious well-being. Secondly, travel conditions between Church Hill and First Church (the closest Baptist church) were extremely poor. This was especially true when Shockoe Creek flooded, which was fairly frequent. When this occurred, no travel across Shockoe

21. *Ibid.*, 1860, pp. 26-27. Colored: eight at Second and Thirty-five at Grace Street.

22. "First Minutes," May 1, May 2, 1842.

23. *Ibid.*, April 20, 1851.

24. White, *First Baptist*, p. 75.

Valley was possible, and people in Church Hill were forced to remain at home.²⁵ Realizing the need, First Church appointed a committee to investigate the procuring of a preaching place on Church Hill. The committee reported in January, 1851 that a lot could be bought and a meeting-house built for about \$1,500. For some unrelated reason First Church did not deem such a course of action wise. Instead of acting on the committee's proposal, First Church enlisted the support of Second and Third Churches in petitioning the State and Home Mission Boards of the denomination. They asked that a missionary be appointed for this section of Richmond. Rev. Reuben Ford, former pastor of Spring Creek Baptist Church in Chesterfield County, was appointed to this mission field. The Temperance Hall at Twenty-sixth and M Streets was used as the place for services. Ford's ministry met with immediate success. Soon after his arrival, he led in revival services and a large number of conversions were reported.²⁶ It became evident that his work on Church Hill was a growing proposition. Because of this, Ford led the group in raising "enough money in cash and in good subscriptions to justify them in buying the lot at the corner of Twenty-fifth and Leigh Streets, then Henrico County, and to begin at once the erection of a church house of their own." The lot was purchased on September 6, 1852, and construction began promptly. On Christmas Day, 1853

25. W. C. James, Leigh Street Baptist Church, 1854-1954 (Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, 1954), p. 2 (hereafter cited as James, Leigh Street).

26. White, First Baptist, p. 76.

a great gospel service was conducted in the newly completed basement.

Now having a place of their own in which to worship, the Church Hill congregation appointed a committee "to draw up a preamble and resolution to be submitted to the three Baptist churches of the city of Richmond asking their counsel and advice in relation to the constitution of a church on Church Hill." The request was laid before the churches in May, 1854. They were all favorable and offered their congratulations and assistance as far as possible.²⁸ First Church heartily approved the action on May 22nd, and on June 26th eighty-three persons were dismissed for the purpose of forming the new church.²⁹ The Leigh Street Baptist Church was officially established on July 30, 1854.³⁰ It was received into the Dover Association the same year.³¹

Third Baptist became the responsible parent for the fifth permanent Baptist church in Richmond. In the early spring of 1849, prayer meetings were started on Oregon Hill in private residences by members of Third Church. In five years Oregon Hill had grown from twelve dwellings to a population of several hundreds and was constantly increasing. The need for a religious ministry was great. Within a few weeks the prayer meetings were expanded into nightly worship services. The Rev. Mr. Kingsford of Third

27. James, Leigh Street, p. 4.

28. Ibid., p. 7.

29. "First Minutes," May 22, 1854; June 26, 1854.

30. James, Leigh Street, p. 9.

31. Dover Minutes, 1854, p. 6.

Church preached as often as time permitted. A number responded to the invitation of Christian fellowship. As the witness went out, more and more attended these services. The growing crowds soon could not be accommodated in private dwellings. A lot was secured, and within six weeks a meeting-house was built.³² This building was dedicated to the worship of God on July 29, 1849.³³

On February 3, 1850, members of this new congregation on Oregon Hill decided to form themselves into a "Colony of Baptists." This was simply recognizing themselves as a distinct congregation even though the members actually held their membership in the various other churches. This action was also for the greater convenience of public worship by this group. It enabled them to meet together as a congregation on Oregon Hill at the regular scheduled hours of worship. Such an assembly was recognized by the other churches as valid church attendance. Those attending were excused from being in their respective churches. Also, on February 3, John M. Butler began his ministry as "pastor" of this group. He had recently been licensed to preach, but was not a trained minister. Nevertheless, under his leadership the work continued to grow. This led the Colony of Baptists to organize themselves into an independent Baptist Mission on July 3, 1853. The reason for this was that they might exercise all the

32. Religious Herald, Vol. XVI, No. 31, August 2, 1849.

33. Dover Minutes, 1849, p. 22.

privileges, rites and powers of a regularly organized church. The church then stood in need of a trained pastor to come and to give them leadership. However, at this point in their history they were not financially strong enough to secure such a person. Finally in May, 1854, in recognizing their need, the General Association of Virginia offered them financial assistance in securing a suitable pastor. Rev. Henry W. Watkins was called as pastor. Under his able leadership the work progressed even more rapidly than before. Soon the congregation desired to organize officially into a church. An organizational meeting was called on the first Sunday in May, 1855 and the Belvidere Baptist Church³⁴ was constituted with sixty-nine charter members.³⁵ It was received into the Dover Association the same year.³⁶

A number of other missions were started during the years 1840-1860. Although the majority never became churches,³⁷ they met existing needs. In July, 1843, under the leadership of Rev. J. B. Taylor, Third Church started a mission Sunday school "four miles west of the city." About ten years later Third Church, then known as Grace Street Church, operated two different mission schools. The one which had been started by Taylor was no longer in operation. The two new schools were known as the Grace Street

34. Now known as Pine Street Baptist Church.

35. Mrs. John B. Harvie (ed.), Beacon on a Hill (Richmond: The Williams Printing Company, 1955), pp. 10-15.

36. Dover Minutes, 1855, p. 6.

37. Some did not because the work in them was stopped by the Civil War. Perhaps finances or poor location or changing city conditions caused the others to end.

38

Mission and the Navy Hill Mission. These had been organized by Mr. John Francis who was employed by the Young Ladies' Sewing Circle of Grace Street Church as the city missionary of that church. His specific task was to establish mission Sunday schools in needed areas of the city.

39

Early in 1855 First Church started a mission Sunday school in the town of Sydney, just west of Richmond.⁴⁰ Desiring to do even more, the ladies of First Church organized a Sewing Circle in November, 1855 "for the support of a city missionary and to aid the Dorcas children of the church and congregation." This city missionary's task was to be similar to that of Mr. Francis at Grace Street Church. Within six months the ladies had secured enough funds to employ such a person. Isaiah T. Wallace, a junior at Richmond College, was employed for the summer months of 1856. The Sewing Circle was so pleased with his work that they kept him on a part-time basis during his senior year at college, and employed him on a full-time basis in 1857 upon his graduation. With the exception of six months in 1858, Wallace did the work as a city missionary until 1860. His first major accomplishment came in his first summer in 1856, when he led in the organization of the Port Mayo Sunday-school.⁴¹ In December, 1857, the Port Mayo Mission and the Sydney Mission were authorized by First Church

38. Information as to how long these operated and their exact location was not obtainable.

39. Weeks, Grace Baptist, pp. 11, 27. How long Mr. Francis continued in this work was not recorded.

40. This mission organized as a church in 1863. It is now known as the Grove Avenue Baptist Church.

41. White, First Baptist, pp. 78-79.

to organize themselves. They were to be known as the Port Mayo Section and the Sydney Section of the First Baptist Church. The following regulations were set forth:

1. That they will meet together regularly on the Sabbath and at such other times as they may appoint.
2. That they will meet for transaction of business.
3. That they may elect a moderator and clerk.
4. That they may receive members by letter or experience and that they may request any ordained minister to administer the ordinances of baptism or the Lord's Supper.
5. The clerk of each body shall report quarterly to our church.
6. In case of any difficulty or division, in the conferences, the subject shall be referred to our church.

One month later, Port Mayo and Sydney were officially organized under

42

these regulations. By 1860 two additional missions had been organized under Wallace's leadership. Both of these were located in Shockoe Valley, one near the lower end (Fulton area) and the other near the northern end (around Seventeenth Street). They were known simply as Valley Mission Number One and Valley Mission Number Two. During the Civil War, the work of the Sewing Circle with missions was suspended. The Port Mayo Mission was discontinued and its building sold. The two in the valley were also

43

discontinued at this time. Perhaps it was from some of the seeds sown

42. "First Minutes," December 20, 1857; January 23, 1858.

43. White, First Baptist, p. 81.

in these missions that there emerged following the war the Fulton and Venable Street Churches.

To further facilitate church extension the Richmond Baptist Extension Union was organized on March 25, 1860. This was actually the replacement for the long defunct Richmond Extension Society which had been formed in 1834.⁴⁴ The Richmond Baptist churches established a Board of Managers to conduct the business of the new Extension Union. Each church was entitled to one representative on the Board and to one additional representative for every one hundred members. Pastors were *ex officio* members.⁴⁵ Work commenced immediately. The following report was made to the Dover Association in the fall of 1860 concerning this ministry:

During the past spring meetings were held, resulting in the formation of a society, termed the Baptist Church Extension Union. Its objects are to supply with preaching the destitute portions of Richmond, and to extend the influences of our denomination. Under the auspices of the Board of Managers of this Union, Rev. E. J. Willis has, since the first of July, been laboring with reference to the establishment of a new Baptist church in the north-western portion of the city. A lot on the corner of Fourth and Clay Streets...has been purchased, upon which it is proposed during the next year to erect a handsome church edifice.⁴⁶

This new work soon produced the Clay Street Baptist Church. It, however,⁴⁷ did not continue as a permanent work.

44. When it became inoperative is unknown, but it had been inoperative for a number of years prior to 1860.

45. White, R. B. W. L., p. 23.

46. Dover Minutes, 1860, p. 19.

47. J. S. Boshier, "History of the Dover Baptist Association," p. XVI.

Between 1840 and 1860 Sunday school work experienced substantial increase. However sizeable increase did not occur until after 1847. In 1841 the three Richmond churches reported Sunday schools with an average attendance of 650 scholars.⁴⁸ By 1847 there were four Sunday schools. The additional one was established in Fourth Church. However,⁴⁹ the number of scholars had increased by not more than one hundred. During the next thirteen years growth was more rapid. By 1860 there were seven Sunday schools reporting with an enrollment of 2,190 scholars and 254 officers and teachers.⁵⁰ To better facilitate the work, a Sunday School Union was formed. The purpose was for mutual encouragement and advice. Also, a Sunday School Concert was held monthly. At these concerts the report of each school was read; prayer for the usefulness and increase of the schools was offered; and addresses delivered. These meetings were felt to be highly advantageous, and contributed much to the zeal and efficiency of the teachers.⁵¹ To spark pupil interest,

48. Dover Minutes, 1841, p. 10.

49. Ibid., 1847, p. 10.

50. Ibid., 1860, p. 19. This figure includes the Sunday school in each of the five established churches as well as the Port Mayo and Sydney Sunday schools. It does not include the two Valley Missions. No report is recorded on their work in this area. This figure does not include the African churches. They did not have Sunday schools. Perhaps the reason was because of the law which forbade Negroes to assemble themselves at any time for the purpose of instruction in reading or writing. Also they were not allowed to assemble at any time unless the leader was a white person (See Dover Minutes, 1850, p. 9 for an attorney's report to the Association explaining the law on these points).

51. Ibid., 1847, p. 10.

Mr. James C. Crane offered two suggestions:

The first suggestion called for the issuance of tickets of varied values as rewards for "attendance, diligence, proficiency in memorizing Scripture verses and hymns, and general behavior." The tickets were to be redeemed with good books.... These books would be the property of the pupils to whom they were awarded. The second suggestion was that singing be introduced as part of the Sunday school curriculum. "Not," Mr. Crane stipulated, "with all the stiff precision which the new science demands, but the practice of music for some ten or fifteen minutes each Lord's day, so that the children may learn such tunes as are used in the congregations in public worship, and also such as are specifically appropriate to their own age and condition."

These suggestions were adopted and were a contributing factor to the
52
program's growth.

Another mark of advancement was in the fact that all five of the city Baptist churches had entered new buildings by 1860. First Church entered their new building at Twelfth and Broad Streets on October 17, 1841. It not only provided them with newer facilities, but enabled them to leave to the colored members the old building. The move was to the
53
benefit of all. During the same year, Second Church erected a new edifice at Sixth and Main Streets, and the work was completed in January, 1842. On the sixteenth of that month the building was dedicated. The reasons for moving included the need for a larger and more suitable build-

52. White, R. E. W. L., pp. 19-20.

53. "First Minutes," October 17, 1841.

ing and the desire for a better location. For the same reasons Third Church began construction on a new building in 1843 at Foushee and Grace Streets.⁵⁵ The work progressed slowly as the church adopted the plan of not running into debt. The workmen were paid as the building progressed. When the basement was completed in December, 1844, the church moved in to occupy this space. However, it was not until May 10, 1846, that the entire structure was completed. On that day the new building was dedicated and the church officially changed its name from Third Baptist Church to Grace Street Baptist Church.⁵⁶ Both Leigh Street and Belvidere Churches built their initial buildings during this time.

Finances continued to be a serious problem for the churches. In 1839 the idea of "selling pews" was presented at First Church. A set of rules and regulations was presented to the church in September, 1841 governing the selling and renting of pews. It described which pews would be free (those at the front and in the galleries), and which ones would be for sale or rent. The pastor's salary was to come from monies received by this method. Also, a large portion of it was used to help pay for the construction of the new building. By 1843, \$20,680 had come from pew rental for this purpose. Other expenses, including missionary and benevolent

54. Cousins, Second Baptist, p. 10. The church was previously located on Eleventh Street between Main and Cary Streets.

55. The church was then located at Second and Marshall Streets.

56. Weeks, Grace Baptist, pp. 12-15.

gifts, were paid from public collections. Grace Street Church employed the pew rental method around 1850. Prior to this time, in an attempt to increase the giving at Grace Street Church, Dr. J. B. Taylor, then pastor, had conducted an intense training of the members in systematic giving to their church and to missions. This had helped for a time. Nevertheless, the pew rental system was felt needed in 1850. Among the oldest records of the church is a record card on a pew rental dated 1860. It sets forth the amount due for three months rental as being \$1.50. The card, which was sent to the individual also bore the following warning:

Any person failing for three months to pay what may be due on a pew, shall forfeit the use of the same, and the committee shall be at liberty to sell or rent it to another.⁵⁹

To help insure an adequate collection in order that the current expenses be paid, some form of assessment was employed by some churches. At First Church a plan was adopted in 1840 "which anticipated a contribution from every member 'male and female, rich and poor, proportionate to his ability and the liberality of his heart.'" At Leigh Street Church an assessment of each member was made by a special committee according to what was felt to be a fair figure. When the assessment was completed, the list of the

57. "First Minutes," September 22, 1841; October 7, 1843.

58. Religious Herald, Vol. XI, No. 22, May 30, 1844.

59. Weeks, Grace Baptist, p. 26.

60. White, First Baptist, p. 93.

membership with each member's assessment was read at a public meeting of the church. Those objecting to their assessment could say so, and have it changed. Silence meant consent. To become delinquent was to encounter disciplinary measures from the church.⁶¹ By such methods of financing, the churches were able to sustain their work and to contribute adequately to the missionary and benevolent causes outside the local church.

Maintaining proper Christian conduct likewise continued as a problem for the churches. In 1845, First Church stated: "While we claim no right to control the judgment or consciences of our fellowmen, yet as unity of feeling and action is indispensable to secure the peace and prosperity of the church, it is the duty of each member to conform to the views and practices of the body of the church and refrain from such things as are calculated to wound the feelings of members." Those who did not comply to the views and practices of the body of the church were excluded.⁶² The other churches were following similar courses of action. New churches also expressed the same attitude.⁶³

The churches were also concerned with the number of Baptists who moved from one locality to another and did not unite with a church in the new locality. First Church asked the Dover Association for advice in this matter.⁶⁴ The Association recommended that the churches should impress

61. James, Leigh Street, p. 20.

62. White, First Baptist, p. 101.

63. Harvie, Beacon on a Hill, p. 16; James, Leigh Street, pp. 19-21.

64. "First Minutes," October 29, 1851.

upon their members the importance of uniting where they live. They further suggested that churches make their letters of dismissal good for twelve months only.⁶⁵ After that time such members should be subjects of discipline, and if exclusion was the resultant action, the church in whose limits they resided should be notified.⁶⁶ A number of churches followed this advice.⁶⁷ Leigh Street Church went beyond this. They limited the validity of their dismissal letters to six months, since they believed that this was ample time for a member to relocate.⁶⁸ By such means the churches were able to cut down on non-resident membership and were able to encourage continual regular church participation by those who would change residences.

Another concern of the churches was over the sale and use of alcohol. The drive towards total abstinence developed during the 1840's and 1850's. Public opinion within the churches supported more and more such

65. The custom at this time was to issue the person's letter of dismissal in good standings to the person himself. He in turn would present it to the church that he joined showing them he had been a member of good standings in his former church. Today such letters are only sent to the church where a person unites by his former church and the individual never sees or handles his letter.

66. Dover Minutes, 1851, p. 28.

67. For example, First Church did on March 23, 1858. See "First Minutes" on this date.

68. James, Leigh Street, p. 21.

a position. During this time most of the associations in Virginia recom-
 mended to their member churches the adoption of total abstinence. ⁶⁹ Dover
 Association did this in 1840. ⁷⁰ Almost annually thereafter a temperance
 report was received which urged total abstinence and sympathy with groups
 and periodicals supporting this concept. In 1846 the Dover Association
 appointed a committee to memorialize the Legislature of Virginia to submit
 the granting of licenses in each county to the voters of that county. ⁷¹
 Here was an attempt at liquor control. The feelings against alcohol con-
 tinued to grow. Some churches made the use of it a "test" for church mem-
 bership. ⁷² A group at Grace Street Church withdrew and organized what was
 called a "Test Church." It was a premature move, and soon failed. Most ⁷³
 of the group returned to Grace Street Church and resumed membership there.
 Nevertheless, negative feelings toward alcohol became more and more pro-
 nounced. In 1860 the churches of the Dover Association expressed the
 belief: "That it is difficult for us to discover how a professor of the
 religion of Jesus Christ can be a consistent Christian, who sells to be
 drunk, or drinks intoxicating liquor for the gratification of appetite." ⁷⁴

69. Ryland, Virginia Baptista, p. 287.

70. See pp. 76-77.

71. Dover Minutes, 1846, pp. 9-10.

72. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, p. 287.

73. Weeks, Grace Baptist, p. 27.

74. Dover Minutes, 1860, p. 11.

This concept has continued as the basic viewpoint of Baptists.

The Baptists in Richmond were also interested in providing adequate periodicals to meet the needs of Virginia Baptists. In 1840 the Religious Herald, edited and published by William Sands, was the only Baptist periodical in the State. However, several new publications were started between 1840 and 1860. In 1842 a new publication, especially for the preachers, was started. This was the Virginia Baptist Preacher. Henry Keeling was editor and proprietor. This monthly publication, which contained original sermons and addresses by natives and residents of Virginia, continued for sixteen years. Still another new venture occurred in 1847 when The Baptist Guardian was first published. This was known as a "Religious Family Newspaper." J. L. Reynolds, pastor of Second Church, was the editor, and H. K. Ellyson, a member of Second Church, was the publisher. It was absorbed by the Religious Herald after a year, and added maturity and strength to that paper. More strength was added in 1857 when David Shaver became co-editor with Sands of the Religious Herald.⁷⁵ Since that time, the Herald has continued as the State paper. In addition to this periodical, H. K. Ellyson began in 1853 publishing a mission's journal known as The Home and Foreign Journal. Its support was urged upon the churches of the Dover Association.⁷⁶

75. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, pp. 293-294.

76. Dover Minutes, 1853, p. 13.

Substantial development came to Richmond College by 1860. The school had received official status as a college in 1840 when it received a charter from the State. However, the charter did not allow for the establishment of a theological professorship. The reason for this was that it was not then the policy of the State to incorporate an institution of a religious nature. Theological instruction was thus dropped. The course of study was reorganized to include "two years of 'Academic' (preparatory) and two years of 'Collegiate' (Freshman and Sophomore) literary work." These changes were completed in 1843. The first catalogue of the College was issued in 1843. It listed forty-three in the Academic and twenty-five in the Collegiate departments. A Junior year was added to the curriculum in 1843 and a Senior one in 1848. ⁷⁷ Emphasis was then placed upon increasing the school's endowment. The Dover Association ⁷⁸ periodically encouraged the member churches to add to the endowment. ⁷⁹ By 1853, \$100,000 had been received in the endowment fund by Richmond College. ⁸⁰ In 1854 the College added an additional building. ⁸¹ By 1860 the faculty consisted of six professors and a tutor, while the student body numbered 114. There was also an adequate library and a fine collection of scientific apparatus. Concerning the College, the Dover Association declared in 1860:

77. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, pp. 269-270.

78. Dover Minutes, 1846, p. 9; 1847, p. 17; 1850, p. 12; 1851, p. 67.

79. Ibid., 1853, p. 11.

80. Ibid., 1854, p. 10; 1855, p. 7.

81. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, p. 289.

While we, as Baptists, have and should have a settled purpose to elevate Richmond College to a yet higher position, we believe that it is now, in its officers, its standard of graduation, and its moral influence, fully equal to any college in the State; and as such, we heartily commend it to the support of all our brethren.⁸²

There also developed in Richmond in 1850 a real concern to establish a school for young women. The movement was sparked by James T. Taylor, who was then serving as Corresponding Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. His membership was still at Grace Street Church where he had last served as pastor. Taylor called for a meeting of two representatives from each of the Richmond churches. He served as one from Grace Street Church. These representatives, in turn, called for a general meeting. At this meeting a stock company was launched for the purpose of selling stock in the proposed Female Institute in order to secure the necessary funds for the school's establishment. In 1853, before a building was erected or teachers acquired, the Richmond Female Institute was incorporated. With the money from the sale of stocks, this "paper" Institute soon became a reality. A building was erected on the east side of Tenth Street between Marshall and Clay Streets. The trustees prevailed upon Basil Manly, Jr., pastor of First Church, to become the president of the Institute. He resigned his pastorate in April, 1854 in order to accept this position. Under his leader-

82. Dover Minutes, 1860, p. 13.

83. "First Minutes," April 24, 1854.

ship the new Female Institute opened in the fall of 1854 with 191 students. Manly was succeeded by Charles H. Winston in 1859 when he resigned in order to accept a professorship at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The Institute continued to develop under Winston's presidency which lasted
84
until 1873.

From 1840 to 1860 a number of other activities worthy of mention were engaged in by the churches. In 1843 the Dover Association appointed a committee for the purpose of developing a plan for raising a fund to aid
85
in supporting destitute ministers, widows and orphans. Although nothing more is related, the fund probably served to assist the needy in these areas for a number of years. A short time later, a committee composed of the Baptist pastors of the city was appointed by the Sunday School Concert of Prayer to "inquire into the practicability of establishing a Sabbath
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school in the State Penitentiary...." In 1848 the Virginia Baptist Sunday School and Publication Society opened a depository of religious books in Richmond. This first "Baptist Book Store" provided for the sale of the denominational publications. One could also purchase there issues of the principal publishing houses in the country. The book store was opened "to afford greater facilities to pastors, colporteurs and Sunday schools, in the purchase and circulation of religious books, and from its profits to

84. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, p. 291. The Institute was reorganized in 1893 as The Woman's College of Richmond, which in 1914-16 was absorbed into Westhampton College.

85. Dover Minutes, 1843, p. 9.

86. White, R. B. W. L., p. 19. The author does not say if this work ever got under way or not. It certainly was a worthy project.

supply poor ministers and destitute Sunday schools with libraries."

Richmond Baptists also participated in the launching and development of the Richmond Male Orphans' Society, a work which started in March, 1846. They also shared in the establishment of the Young Men's Christian Association in 1854. ⁸⁸ Some of the churches supported the Magdalen Association,

a work established for the purpose of helping women who had fallen into destitution and degradation. Leigh Street Church, for example, made a regular monthly contribution to a lady worker for her support. ⁸⁹ All of the churches through special offerings supported the poor of their own congregations, and most of them went beyond to offer financial assistance to others who were in need. ⁹⁰

One of the most beneficial ministries to develop during the 1840's and 1850's was that of colportage. This work was under the direction of the Virginia Baptist Sunday School and Publication Society. Men were employed to go into the destitute and needy areas of the State and to serve in the capacity of pastor, missionary, and book distributor. These men participated in visitation evangelism. They visited in the homes of people and shared with them the message of Jesus Christ. They also sold or gave away Bibles, New Testaments, and other religious literature. ⁹¹ At first

87. Dover Minutes, 1848, pp. 6, 9.

88. White, R. B. W. L., p. 25.

89. James, Leigh Street, p. 23.

90. "First Minutes," March 26, December 24, 1855; James, Leigh Street, p. 23.

91. Dover Minutes, 1854, p. 17.

this work was done on a small scale with only a few men in the field actually serving in this capacity. As the work increased and the need became more evident, the Sunday School and Publication Society employed Alfred E. Dickinson as General Superintendent of Colportage and Sunday Schools. Under his leadership the number of colporteurs increased from eight to fifty in the State, and the distribution of Bibles and other books, by sale and gift, was prosecuted vigorously in the most destitute portions of the State.⁹² The Richmond churches joined with the other churches in the State in supporting this worthy ministry. To do this, some of them received special offerings as did First Church.⁹³ In other churches one of the missionary societies assumed the support of an individual colporteur. This was the method employed at Grace Street Church.⁹⁴ Because of generous support, this valuable ministry was able to continue through the Civil War, and served the troops stationed in Virginia as well as the needy citizens of the State.⁹⁵

Perhaps the most significant change to take place during these two decades preceeding the Civil War was the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845. The immediate issue was that of slavery. However, the tendency toward division in American Baptist life was in evidence before slavery became an issue. It first appeared in relation to the work

92. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, p. 296.

93. "First Minutes," September 24, 1855.

94. Weeks, Grace Baptist, p. 29.

95. J. William Jones, Christ in the Camp (Richmond: B. J. Johnson and Company, 1887), pp. 161-170; William F. Bennett, The Great Revival (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen and Haffelfinger, 1877), pp. 72-73.

of the Home Mission Society. Many Baptist leaders in the Southern states felt that the Home Mission Society was neglecting the Southern area. This Society had been formed in 1832. Its purpose was set forth in its motto: "North America for Christ." Yet, from its outset, the Home Mission Society, which was located in New York, secured most of its missionaries from New England and New York and set them to the upper Mississippi Valley, north of the Ohio River. The needs south of the Ohio and, later in the Republic of Texas, were going unmet. Many Southern leaders felt that only a Southern organization would be truly sympathetic to Southern needs. They, therefore, not only protested against Northern neglect, but they also called for a Southern organization to meet their needs. For example, a correspondent in the Nashville Baptist Banner wrote:

It appears from the "last report of the Executive Committee of the American Baptist Home Mission Society" that they have not a single missionary in all Kentucky, Alabama, Louisiana and Florida, and that they partially or entirely sustain one missionary in Mississippi, three in Tennessee and three in Arkansas, making in all seven missionaries for these six states and one Territory... only one missionary to every 428,581 souls, while in the state of Michigan...they have sixteen missionaries...one missionary to every 4,000 souls.... Why are these states (Illinois and Indiana) so liberally supplied? Are they more needy? Are they more destitute? They are more liberally supplied because of Northern contributions, and because Northern preachers refuse to come to the south.... It is, therefore, apparent, that the only way to produce effort in the south must be brought about by the formation of a Southern Baptist Home Mission Society.

Complaints such as this continued until the final separation in 1845.

Although the complaints were honestly made, they were based on inadequate information. The Home Mission Society was endeavoring to meet the needs

in the Southern area, but had been unable to secure personnel to go into these regions. Nevertheless, the complaints were sincere and, since knowledge was lacking, they had the same effect on Southern minds as if the charges of neglect had been completely true.

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Then the slavery issue came to the forefront. This was a most divisive issue as it was at once a political, economic, social, moral, and religious issue. Yet, it did not cause religious and political division until after the opposition took the form of abolitionism in the 1830's. In 1840 the Free Baptist Foreign Missionary Society was organized in New York and New England on abolition principles. Shortly thereafter, because this Society was not radical enough, the more militant abolitionists formed the American and Foreign Baptist Missionary Society. The agitation of these two Societies helped to develop abolition sentiments among the rank and file of Baptists. This agitation eventually instigated enough pressure on the Board of the General Convention for foreign missions, which was located in Boston, that they began to refuse fellowship with Baptists in the Southern states. These abolitionist's feelings were soon detected in the South. As early as November, 1840, the Alabama Baptist Convention stated that they believed the abolition movement was unscriptural. They further refused to support the Board for Foreign Missions and the American and Foreign Bible Society until they were assured that these

96. William Wright Barnes, The Southern Baptist Convention (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1954), pp. 12-17. (hereafter cited as Barnes, S. B. C.).

agencies had no connection with antislavery. If they did, the proposal was set forth to establish a Southern Board. The issue was brought to a head in 1844 when the Georgia Baptist Convention, in an attempt to force the Home Mission Society to make a definite stand, requested the Executive Board of the Society to appoint the Rev. J. E. Reeve as missionary to the Indians. Reeve was a slaveholder. At the time of this request, the salary for Reeve had already been secured by Georgia Baptists, and his field of labor indicated. The Executive Board only needed to appoint him. However, in view of the purpose behind the request, the Board declined.

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In November, 1844, the Alabama Convention asked the acting Board in Boston whether a slaveholder would be appointed as a missionary. Although the full Board at their annual meeting earlier that year had voted to remain neutral on the slavery issue, the Acting Board replied to the Alabama Convention's question with a definite and negative answer. This action made further cooperation impossible.

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Following the action of the Boston Board, the Virginia Baptist Foreign Mission Society, under the leadership of J. B. Taylor, pastor of Third Church, issued a call for a consulative convention. Three hundred and twenty-seven messengers from eleven states met at Augusta, Georgia on May 8, 1845, and organized the Southern Baptist Convention. The proposed

97. On the acting Board of fifteen rested all transactions between the annual meetings of the full Board of more than sixty.

98. Barnes, S. B. C., pp. 18-25.

constitution was approved by the messengers two days later. It called for two boards: the Foreign Missions Board with its headquarters in Richmond, and the Domestic Missions Board with its headquarters in Marion, Alabama. The constitution was sent out to the various states to inform the churches of the action. The time and place for creating a permanent organization under the proposed constitution was set for Richmond in June, 1846.

The matter of a new Southern convention was presented to the Dover Association in the fall of 1845. The Association unanimously resolved: "That we cordially approve the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention and ¹⁰⁰encourage the liberal support of all the churches of this Association." The new Foreign Missions Board elected two Richmond pastors as its leaders, Dr. J. B. Jeter as president, and Dr. J. B. Taylor as corresponding secretary, a position which he held until his death in 1871. ¹⁰¹ Dr. Taylor was given a room in the basement of First Church to use as his office. ¹⁰² The newly appointed boards began to function immediately. By 1846 the Domestic Board had six missionaries in the field. The Foreign Board appointed its first missionary, Samuel Clopton, as missionary to China in September, 1845. However, he was not sent out

99. Ibid., pp. 26-32.

100. Dover Minutes, 1845, p. 7.

101. Ryland, Virginia Baptists, p. 274.

102. "First Minutes," September 28, 1846.

until the following year. The Baptists of Richmond joined eagerly in leadership and support of the new Convention. Soon all the Southern states contributed generously to the mission work of the Convention. The records of 1859 indicate that the Southern states contributed for Domestic Missions a total of \$266,359 and for Foreign Missions \$384,339.07 between the years 1846 and 1859. This was an average annual contribution seven times greater than the states gave before the organization of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The new Convention was taking its stride and gaining momentum with each passing year. But a cloud...was rising over the horizon. War just ahead, followed by "reconstruction," would nearly wreck the Convention and lessen its activities, as it would everything else in the South, for a generation.¹⁰⁴

This cloud of war was soon to cast its shadows across Richmond. More adjustments and changes would have to be made. Special ministries would have to be projected. A strong and solid foundation would be necessary to withstand the ravages of war that would soon come. Although the struggle would be intense and the very foundations of life would be shaken, the ministry of Richmond Baptists would go on, for it was built on solid foundations.

103. Barnes, S. B. C., p. 32.

104. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

Through the first eighty years of their history, the Baptists of Richmond developed from a small and insignificant group to a strong and influential denomination. The work started in 1780 with fourteen people. By 1860 there were five white churches with a membership of 2,275. In addition there were four African churches with a membership of 4,633, while in that year the census reported a population in Richmond of 37,968. Thus, by 1860 Baptists composed about one-fifth of the population of the city. The city expanded geographically during these years, and with the expansion the Baptists established new churches in the new sections to minister to these areas. Second Church was formed in 1820 as the city expanded westward. Further westward expansion led to the establishment of Third Church in 1833 and the Belvidere Church in 1855. Eastward expansion resulted in the organization of the Leigh Street Church in 1854. Because of an almost impassable deep ravine surrounding the northern edge of the city, expansion did not occur in that direction. The James River prevented geographical expansion southward. There was, therefore, no

church expansion in either of these directions. The five white and four colored churches in 1860 were suitably located to offer an adequate ministry to the entire City of Richmond.

During this period the Sunday school movement was started in Richmond. With a relatively small group, William Crane began the work in 1816. Conflicting views in regards to its place and value soon developed. The differences of opinions concerning the Sunday school led to the formation of the Second Church in 1820. Soon, however, both churches had active and flourishing Sunday schools. In 1860 all five white churches reported Sunday schools with a total membership of 2,190 scholars and 254 officers and teachers. The work had become firmly established in Baptist life. It continues today as the educational "arm" of the church.

A well defined mission program was also developed by 1860. Mission work started in an organized way in 1813 with the formation of the Female Missionary Society of First Church. In October of that year the Virginia Missionary Society was organized in Richmond. From that time forward interest and support increased. At first it was centered mainly in foreign mission work. The interest and the influence of Richmond Baptists were great in this area. Because of this, the Foreign Missions Board of the newly formed Southern Baptist Convention in 1845 was located in Richmond. Leadership for the Foreign Missions Board came also from Richmond Baptists. Soon the need in domestic missions was realized and support was given in this area. A domestic missionary to Southern Maryland was supported by the Missionary Society of Richmond as early as 1814. Missionary needs

within the State of Virginia were soon realized. In 1816 the Dover Association assumed the character of a Missionary Society in an attempt to meet the needs within Eastern Virginia. The next year, Rev. John Courtney of First Church gave some time to missionary activities in this area. By 1860 a corps of workers known as colporteurs were actively serving throughout the state in missionary endeavors. City missions also came under the attention of Richmond Baptists. A mission extension society was organized in 1834 for the expressed purpose of establishing new Sunday schools and supplying preaching in the destitute portions of the city. In addition, there were the local missionary endeavors of the individual churches. A number of new missions were started. To support the total missionary outreach, special offerings were regularly received within the churches. Thus, by 1860, missions - foreign, domestic, state and city - had become solidly founded and firmly rooted in the work and life of Richmond Baptists.

During these years great strides in education took place among the Baptists of Virginia. Richmond Baptists gave leadership and financial support to the developing work. It started with the Virginia Baptist Seminary, which was organized in 1832. This became Richmond College in 1840 when it received a charter from the State. By 1848 the school offered a full four-year college course. The student body increased from six in 1832 to 114 in 1860. The faculty increased from one to six during the same period. An endowment fund was started in 1839 as a result of a contribution of \$1,000 for this purpose by the Female Education Society

of First Church. By 1860 over \$100,000 had been received in the endowment fund by Richmond College. In addition, a school for young women was established in 1850. Through these educational institutions a number of young people had the opportunity for higher education. Today these two schools, Richmond College and now Westhampton College, are a part of the University of Richmond which continues to offer a beneficial educational ministry to the city and state.

By 1860 a state denominational newspaper was firmly established with its work being done in Richmond. This was the Religious Herald. It started as the Evangelical Inquirer in 1826 on a monthly basis, but became a weekly in January, 1828 under the name Religious Herald. The work was initiated and operated by Richmond Baptists. Through the years the Religious Herald furnished Virginia Baptists with informative, inspirational, and valuable news. It still operates today as the state denominational paper.

Richmond Baptists also led the way in segregated churches with the forming of the First African Church in 1841. By 1860 there were four colored churches in Richmond. A more adequate ministry was provided through the segregated fellowships. Each colored congregation was under the leadership of a white pastor. The law required this. The limited training of Negroes also made it a necessity. As a result, good Christian education and preaching were provided for them. A wholesome relationship existed between the two races in Richmond, and much credit for this goes to those who sacrificially gave of their resources and talents to provide an adequate ministry for the Negroes.

By 1860 the basic tenets of faith and practices of the church were set. Through the years questions and problems both in regards to beliefs and practices occurred. These called for careful examination and formulation. Most of the questions and problems were handled with little difficulty. Others, such as the controversy over the concepts of Alexander Campbell, caused division and strife. Nevertheless, by 1860 the basic concepts and practices of the Baptist churches were formulated. Since that time there have been modifications but few real changes in beliefs and in church polity and practice. The structure and outworking of the church is basically the same.

The Baptists in Richmond had come a long way by 1860. They had provided a growing ministry for a growing city. Richmond was the focal point of their labors. However, their witness went beyond the city through their missionary endeavors unto the uttermost parts of the world. The future would provide many opportunities for an expanded witness. It would also bring many struggles. Because of the maturity which had come through the first eighty years, the Baptists of Richmond would be able to meet the opportunities and struggles victoriously. They had accepted the call of Jesus to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world," and to be a "witness unto Him unto the uttermost parts of the world." To this end they had labored, and would continue to labor in the years ahead.

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