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### The Colonial Church in Virginia's Isle of Wight

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THE COLONIAL CHURCH  
in  
VIRGINIA'S ISLE OF WIGHT

by  
Marie Davis

A Paper  
Prepared for the  
Seminar in Southern History  
Farmville State Teachers College  
1943

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## INTRODUCTION

The records of the county of Isle of Wight, along with those of Surry and Accomac, form one of the reliable sources of material regarding the early history of the colony of Virginia. According to local tradition, and in the opinion of several authorities, Isle of Wight County has within its boundaries the oldest Protestant church building in the United States.<sup>1</sup> With that church as the center of interest this study has attempted (1) to trace the history of the Established church in Isle of Wight, and, in a few respects, in Colonial Virginia; (2) to determine the reason for its founding, and if possible, to discover the approximate date; (3) to show the influence the Established church exercised, or failed to exercise, upon the lives of the people themselves; (4) and to present the reasons for the decline of the importance of the Anglican church in America and the consequent state of neglect of the Old Brick Church near Smithfield, Virginia during the century following the Revolution.

From time to time several articles concerning this church have appeared; one of the best of these, "The Colonial Churches of Isle of Wight and Southampton Counties, Virginia", by George C. Mason, in the William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, January, 1943, came to my attention a few days ago. However, it is the intention of

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1 The first brick church at Jamestown was completed in 1639, while it is generally believed that The Old Brick Church at Smithfield was erected in 1632.



this investigation of the early history of the Church in Isle of Wight County to offer a side light on colonial life in Virginia, and especially on that of the people who settled on the south side of the James River.

CHAPTER I  
THE PEOPLE

Following the transfer of the Virginia Colony from the London Company to <sup>the</sup> Crown in 1624, inventories were taken in the several settlements. The Corporation of James City listed seventy-eight dwellings; included were those " 'over the water' (which) reports 18 dwellings, 5 stores, 4 tobacco-houses, 1 store house and 1 silk house".<sup>1</sup> In April, 1619, Mr. Christopher Lawne's ship arrived with one hundred emigrants sent by Richard Wiseman, Nathaniel Basse, and others to make a settlement on the south side of the James River near the Indian Village of Warrascoyack.<sup>2</sup> In 1608 Captain John Smith had crossed the river and spent the night at Warrascoyack<sup>3</sup>, where one of his soldiers, with an Indian guide, set out for Roanoke Island to search for the unfortunate colonists of that settlement.<sup>4</sup> Smith tells us that in the same year he purchased fourteen bushels of corn from the Warrascoyack Indians.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Alexander Brown, The First Republic in America, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1898), pp. 622-23.

2 ibid., p. 288.

3 There are approximately twenty variations of the spelling of this word, including "Warwick Squeak", which is an excellent example of an English attempt to add a foreign sound to the language. In this study it will appear in what is apparently its simplest form, Warrascoyack.

4 Lyon G. Tyler, "Isle of Wight County Records", William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, (1) VII (August, 1899) 205.

5 loc. cit.

His map of Virginia in 1606 (dated thus because they left London, December 20, 1606) shows Warrascoyack on the southern side of the broad mouth of the James River.<sup>6</sup> From the beginning, then, of the colony at Jamestown, Warrascoyack, or after 1637, Isle of Wight, offered an element of interest to the people of Colonial Virginia.

Contrary to widespread opinion, few of the first colonists of Virginia were wealthy Cavaliers. Colonial Virginia's population was composed of county squires, craftsmen, merchants, and prosperous yeomen.<sup>7</sup> The two latter groups formed the large majority of the immigrants to Virginia. Not until the execution of Charles I in 1649, did the Cavalier families, or those people in sympathy with the Crown, come to Virginia in large numbers. In the early years of the colony there was a great demand for indentured workers. Long hours in the open fields were required for the careful cultivation of Indian tobacco. Many of the first settlers were merchants, unaccustomed to the long, hot, damp Virginia summers. It was they who posted notices in London, Liverpool, or Bristol offering to pay the expenses of the voyage to America in exchange for the services of able-bodied workers on their plantations. In most instances Virginia offered an opportunity for financial advancement to both landowner and laborer. Fifty acres of land were granted to the

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6 Lyon G. Tyler, editor, Narratives of Early Virginia, 1606-1625, (New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1907), p. 76.

7 Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, Patrician and Plebian in Virginia, (Charlottesville, Virginia: Michie Company, printers, 1910), p. 28.

man who paid the cost of the passage from England; when his period of service was over, the worker, too, was free to become an owner of land.

In seventeenth century England the laws regarding indebtedness were severe and frequently unjust. Men were commonly imprisoned for failing to meet the most trivial obligations. Many of these were fortunate enough to come to Virginia as indentured servants, where they were free from disgrace or more formal punishment. An Act of the General Assembly in 1624 exempted from prosecution persons who had fled from their creditors in England.<sup>8</sup> The English law of primogeniture often left the younger sons of the nobility in a state of financial stress; sometimes they were provided with professional training or some special skill. Numerous families of the nobility were represented by young doctors, lawyers, or craftsmen who came to Virginia.

There was evidently a steady flow of immigrants to Virginia. In reply to a petition of the General Assembly of 1619, the London Company ordered, "..... in each of the particular Plantations, a Guest-house..... shall be built, for the lodging and entertaining of fifty persons in each, upon their first arrival".<sup>9</sup> In 1624

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8 *ibid.*, p. 164.

9 Alexander Brown, The First Republic in America, (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1898), p. 377.



there were four thousand English speaking people in Virginia. At that time only twenty-two negroes were accounted for; it is quite probable that they were indentured servants. In 1642 there were only three hundred negroes as compared to 15,000 white people.<sup>10</sup> The slowness with which negroes were imported seems to indicate that a large proportion of the labor was performed by white indentured servants.<sup>11</sup> According to Wertenbaker<sup>12</sup> the doubling of Virginia's population in the twenty years following 1649 was due to the influx of indentured servants. It is almost certain that because of their unpopular political status at the time, numerous Cavalier families were represented among that group. During these years, too, the mortality rate had decreased as the colonists became adjusted to life in a strange new land.

Though the erroneous opinion has frequently prevailed that the Jamestown colonists practiced communism, the first government of Virginia was based upon the plantation system. The estates of the colony were quite large; William Byrd II, who died in 1744, left to his heirs 179,440, acres of land.<sup>13</sup> While the plantations

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10 John Fiske, Old Virginia and Her Neighbors, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1898), I, 253.

11 The word "servant" carried with it less stigma than it does today; a servant was one who served.

12 Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, op. cit., p 20.

13 Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, "William Byrd II", Dictionary of American Biography, 1928 edition, III, 383.



of the Tidewater were often from four to six thousand acres in size, those of the region to the west were frequently of twenty or forty thousand acres.<sup>14</sup> The rivers were the highways of Colonial Virginia; along their banks were located the large estates of the landowners. In the back country were found the smaller holdings of the yeomen farmers. Robert Beverley, writing in 1705, called Virginia the best poor man's country in the world; according to him, there were few of the very poor, and they were not servile.<sup>15</sup> After 1700 however, the very poor white people increased in number, but they never formed a large groups; to those who possessed the least ambition the frontier offered a new opportunity.<sup>16</sup> In 1680 there were few white servants in Virginia<sup>17</sup>; the freedom of the frontier for the white man and the negro's ability to work long hours in the tobacco fields lessened the call for white labor.

As early as 1640 the plantations were being established farther apart and over a wider area. We are told that when the first brick church was completed at Jamestown in 1640 the people

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14 Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, Patrician and Plebian in Virginia, (Charlottesville, Virginia: The Michie Company, printers, 1910), pp. 34-35.

15 ibid., p. 206.

16 ibid., pp. 210-211.

17 ibid., pp. 158-159.

even then were beginning to move away from their capitol.<sup>18</sup> Up and down the broad rivers of Tidewater, westward to their falls, and south across the James, the colonists had begun to acquire land as early as 1619. In the first House of Burgesses which met at Jamestown, July 30, 1619, Captain Lawne and Ensign Wahsor represented the settlement at Lawne's Creek or Warrascoyack.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Paul Wilstach, Tidewater Virginia, (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1929), p. 118.

<sup>19</sup> Lyon G. Tyler, "Isle of Wight County Records", William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, (1) VII, (August, 1899), 206.

CHAPTER II  
THE GOVERNMENT

Colonial Virginia was composed of hundreds and boroughs (sometimes used interchangeably). As early as 1625 there were four large boroughs or corporations: Henrico, Charles City, Elizabeth City, and James City, of which Warrascoyack was a part.<sup>1</sup> "The Eastern Shore over the Bay"<sup>2</sup> was settled, but had not been officially surveyed. In the first General Assembly each borough was represented by two men chosen by their fellow landowners. The Assembly enacted laws regulating commerce and placing certain restrictions on individuals. ~~Th~~rough the church affairs of Virginia were under the direction of the Lord Bishop of London, who was a member of the Council of the London Company<sup>3</sup>, the General Assembly passed laws to regulate the local problems of the church. During the years between 1619 and 1622 that body enacted over two hundred laws concerning the colonial church; to a greater or lesser extent, they were enforced until the Revolution. However, they were adjusted from time to time to meet the needs of a growing colony.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Alexander Brown, The First Republic in America, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1898), pp. 622-23.

2 ibid., pp. 624-25.

3 ibid., p. 477.

4 The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, The Colonial Church in Virginia, (Milwaukee: Morehouse Publishing Company, 1927), pp. 76-77.

While the burgesses were the representatives to the colonial government at Jamestown, the vestrymen were the local government officials. Each county (before 1634 each borough or shire) was divided into two or more parishes for the sake of more effective administration of government where distances were great. In England the vestry was composed of the whole body of parishoners assembled to elect churchwardens and transact other business of the parish. The first vestries in Virginia followed this plan.<sup>5</sup> Sir Thomas Dale (who, as High Marshall of Virginia, ruled the Colony from 1611 to 1616<sup>6</sup>) said that in his time the affairs of the church were administered by "the minister and four of the most religious men".<sup>7</sup> These were evidently churchwardens and sidesmen rather than vestrymen. As early as 1635, vestries are mentioned in the records of the county courts. They are first referred to by the Assembly in an Act of that body in 1643.<sup>8</sup>

Originally chosen each year by the whole body of parishoners or by the county court, the vestry was in most instances representative of the people. Like that of the colonial justice of the

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5 ibid., pp. 76-77.

6 John Fiske, Old Virginia and Her Neighbors, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1897), I, 163.

7 The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, op. cit., p. 176.

8 ibid., p. 76.

peace, the position of vestryman was one of dignity and honor; often the same man served in both positions. To many it was not only a privilege but a duty to serve in the vestry; to others the office was only a stepping-stone to political power. Their duties were conscientiously performed and many were men of real piety. But the majority, like most of the people of Colonial Virginia, lacked deep spiritual convictions. Of course it is necessary to remember that they were primarily a political rather than an ecclesiastical body. The meetings of the vestry were infrequent but important.<sup>9</sup> Bruce<sup>10</sup> says that they met at least twice every year and frequently convened on a special order of the court. The attendance of a "goodly number" of county officers was required, and other people as well were attracted.<sup>11</sup>

The responsibility of building the churches and of hiring the clergy fell upon the vestrymen of the parish. All of the inhabitants were assessed for the support of the Established church. It became necessary that parochial boundaries be strictly drawn. This was done by common agreement, by order of the Governor and council, or by

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9 ibid., p. 88.

10 Philip Alexander Bruce, Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1935), I, 70.

11 The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, op. cit., p. 88.



an act of the General Assembly. In 1642 the single parish of Warrascoyack was divided into the Upper and Lower (or Newport) parishes. The boundaries of the Upper parish were "to extend from Lawne's Creek [The present boundary between Isle of Wight and Surry Counties] to Pagan Creek [just east of the town of Smithfield]". Those of the Lower parish were "to extend from Pagan Creek to the plantation of Richard Hayes [on Chucktauck Creek]".<sup>12</sup>

The vestry was usually prompt to build chapels in the remote sections of their parish and to keep them repaired. As the need arose churches were built. Should they fail to do so, the people were free to petition the Governor and his Council or the House of Burgesses. It was also the duty of the vestry to inquire into delinquences such as drunkenness and "if accusations proved to be well grounded to submit them to the General Court as a basis for formal indictment".<sup>13</sup> These duties were executed by the churchwardens who were chosen annually from the vestrymen, all of whom served in rotation. They were directly responsible for the upkeep of the church building and the registering of births and deaths within the parish.

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<sup>12</sup> W. M. Clark, editor, Colonial Churches in the Original Colony of Virginia, (Richmond, Virginia: The Southern Churchman Publishing Company, 1908), p. 84.

<sup>13</sup> Philip Alexander Bruce, Virginia: Rebirth of the Old Dominion, (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1929), I, 246.

During the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, the attention of the home government was centered largely upon domestic affairs; little attention was paid to the American colonies. In Virginia Sir William Berkeley was the royal governor; unfortunately he could not appreciate the advancing political ideas of his time. In 1662, under his direction, the General Assembly passed a law requiring each vestry to number twelve "of the most able men of the parish"; vacancies were to be filled by the selection of the vestry itself, and the bodies could be dissolved only by a special act of the legislature.<sup>14</sup> After the defeat of Berkeley in 1676 an Act was passed by Bacon's Assembly which required that the entire body of vestrymen be chosen at least once every three years.<sup>15</sup> This Act was revoked by royal decree and an Act of the next legislature.<sup>16</sup>

Generally speaking, however, service in the parish vestry was usually considered a privilege and the office was ably executed. In part of an old vestrybook of Chuckatuck Parish, Nansemond County covering the years from 1702 until 1709 were found the oaths required of vestrymen and churchwardens upon their entering office:

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14 The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, op. cit., p. 78.

15 Philip Alexander Bruce, Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1910), I, 66.

16 Goodwin, loc. cit., p. 78.

I, A.B., do sincerely promise and swear, that I will be true and faithful, and bear allegiance to His Majesty, the King.....So help me God.....I do swear, that I approve of the doctrine and discipline, of government in the Church of England as concerning all things necessary to Salvation.....17.

The only record of the vestry of Isle of Wight County during the Colonial period is the vestrybook for the years of 1724 to 1771,<sup>18</sup> of which a photostatic copy is now carefully preserved at the clerk's office of that county.<sup>19</sup> For much of the history, therefore, of its churches and especially that of the Old Brick Church in Newport Parish, the records of county itself must be investigated.

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17 Bishop Meade, Old Church, Ministers and Families of Virginia, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1857), I, 307.

18 ibid., I, 304.

19 The original, along with a photostatic copy, is in the Virginia State Library at Richmond.

## CHAPTER III

## ISLE OF WIGHT'S PLANTATION

In 1611 Kecoughtan to the east and Henrico to the west had been settled, and when the first House of Burgesses met, there were plantations along both sides of the River from Old Point to Richmond.<sup>1</sup> But in those early years a large number of the Virginia colonists died, and at the settlement of Captain Christopher Lawne on the south side of the James River the mortality rate was extremely high. When his plantation was hardly established, Lawne himself died.<sup>2</sup> On November 30, 1620, the London Company ordered that "in regard of the late mortality of the persons transported heretofore by the late Capt. Lawne, his associates be granted till midsummer, 1625 to make up the number of persons which they were disposed to bring over".<sup>3</sup> In February 1621, the "Abigail" left England and brought a letter written by Sir Edwin Sandys (for the Council of the London Company) to the governor; in it a number of early patents, including that of Captain Lawne, had been confirmed. The provision was made that "the said plantation [Captain Lawne's] shall from henceforth be called the Isle of Wight's plantation,

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1 The Reverend H. H. Covington, "The Colonial Church", address delivered at Centennial Celebration of the Diocesan Missionary Society, (Richmond, Virginia: Virginia Diocesan Library, 1929) p. 24.

2 Lyon G. Tyler, "Isle of Wight County Records", William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, (1) VII (August, 1899), 208.

3 ibid., p. 206.



provided that the heirs of the said Christopher Lawne be no way prejudiced thereby . . .".<sup>4</sup> Sir Richard Worley, who came to Virginia in 1608 and later acquired land near that of Captain Lawne, was a native of England's Isle of Wight, and it is probable that through his influence the present name was chosen.<sup>5</sup> Despite these efforts to transplant familiar names into a strange land, the settlement was known as "Warrascoyack" until the county officially became Isle of Wight by an Act of the General Assembly in 1637.<sup>6</sup>

In reply to descriptions of Virginia stating that the "Plantations were generally seated upon meere Salt marishes full of infectious Boggs and muddy Creeks and Lakes", the planters replied (in 1622) that "the Plantations at Newports News, Blunt Poynt, Wariscoyake, etc . . . . . are very fruitful and pleasant states".<sup>7</sup> But a fate worse than "marishes" and "Boggs" lay in store for the settlers at Warrascoyack. It is estimated that a fourth of the Virginia colonists were killed by the Indians in March 1622. Fifty-three people in Warrascoyack lost their lives, and all of that settlement was temporarily abandoned, from Hog Island down the River for fifteen miles.<sup>8</sup> However, a vigorous effort was made to dislodge

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4 Alexander Brown, The First Republic in America, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1898), p. 419.

5 William and Mary Quarterly, op. cit., p. 206.

6 W. M. Clark, editor, Colonial Churches in the Original Colony of Virginia, (Richmond, Virginia: The Southern Churchman Publishing Company, 1908), p. 81.

7 Lyon G. Tyler, editor, Narratives of Early Virginia, 1606-1625, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907, p. 412.

8 William and Mary Quarterly, op. cit., p. 207.



the Indians from the lower part of the borough. The harvest was slender that year and the hostile Indians refused to trade; in the fall, Sir George Yardley led an expedition against them<sup>9</sup> which resulted in the "liquidation" of the Nansemonds and Warrascoyacks.

Though only thirty-one people were living at Warrascoyack and Basse's Choice (another settlement in what is now Isle of Wight County) in 1625, a census of 1634 reported a population of 522.<sup>10</sup> The years following the Indian massacre were evidently prosperous ones. When Virginia was returned to the Crown in 1624, there were a number of plantations and four forts across the River from Jamestown.<sup>11</sup> Ten different men were granted patents for land in Warrascoyack in 1626, the least amount granted to one man being one hundred acres.<sup>12</sup> Between that year and 1640, at least sixty-three persons received land grants in Warrascoyack. The minutes of the General Court at Jamestown in 1629 show that Warrascoyack (which by that time included Basse's Choice and other nearby settlements) was the only settlement which returned complete records of monthly court proceedings, parish levies, disbursements, christenings, marriages, and deaths. The fact that this report was submitted by its "nynisters and churchwardens" is an indication of a church in that county at a very early date.<sup>13</sup>

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8 William and Mary Quarterly, op. cit., p. 207.

9 ibid., pp. 207-208.

10 ibid., (2) XXIII, 42.

11 op. cit., pp. 622-23.

12 William and Mary Quarterly, op. cit., (1) VII, 28.

13 ibid., (2) XXIII, 42-43.

But ten years before, Governor Argall had defined the limits of the "Corporation and parish" of Jamestown; in 1623 the General Assembly provided that a public granary be erected "in every parish". In listing the public lands of the several corporations in 1625, Brown<sup>14</sup> says "there were also glebe lands in each Corporation". The early parishes were approximately ten miles square, but that they might be better able to support a minister, some were consolidated. As the population extended to the fall line and beyond, the average parish was from two to five hundred miles square, or about half as large as the average county.<sup>15</sup> Its population varied from two to four thousand, and the parish frequently included land on both sides of a river, the river being a connecting link rather than a barrier in Colonial Virginia.

Nineteen years after Jamestown the Elizabeth River parish was created and there was a church at "Mr. Sewell's Point".<sup>16</sup> In 1642 the people of Hog Island, on the Surry-Isle of Wight side of the River, because of their great distance from the colonial capitol, were released from the obligation of making any contribution toward the erection of the new church at Jamestown.<sup>17</sup> Certainly they were not expected to live completely apart from the church; it is quite

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14 Brown, op. cit., pp. 620-21.

15 The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, The Colonial Church in Virginia, (Milwaukee: Morehouse Publishing Company, 1927), p. 78.

16 Covington, op. cit., p. 24.

17 Philip Alexander Bruce, Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1910), I, 66.

probable that a church had been built near this plantation. In that year (1642) Warrascoyack was divided to form two parishes.<sup>18</sup> It was in the Lower, or Newport parish that the Old Erick Church was erected.

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<sup>18</sup> Clark, op. cit., p. 84.

We greatly commending and graciously accepting their desires for the furtherance of so noble a work, which may by the providence of Almighty God, hereafter tend to the glory of his majesty, be propagating of Christian religion to such people as yet live in darkness . . .; Do by these our letters patent, graciously accept of and agree to, their humble and intended desires.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, The Colonial Church in Virginia, (Milwaukee: Morehouse Publishing Company, 1927), p. 13- from the third paragraph of the preamble of the first Virginia charter.

## CHAPTER IV

## ISLE OF WIGHT'S CHURCH

In a petition to the Governor in 1791, Captain Hugh Campbell stated that some of the inhabitants of Isle of Wight, Nansemond, and Norfolk counties lived so far from the churches that they were seldom able to attend Sunday worship and asked that someone in each remote section be appointed to read prayers.<sup>2</sup> That there was a church in Isle of Wight long before that date is beyond question; there were, as mentioned before, 522 people in the county in 1634. And when Isle of Wight was divided in 1642 to form the Upper and Lower parishes, the Reverend Mr. Faulkner was not deprived of any of his salary. Though he is not listed among the ministers of Newport parish,<sup>3</sup> the Reverend Robert Dunster, of Isle of Wight bequeathed all of his books to his wife in 1656.<sup>4</sup>

There have been attempts to prove that the Old Brick Church was built in 1632 - by "tradition", by records, and by two dated bricks which were found when the building was restored around 1890. Some authorities interpret the figures on the bricks as "1632" while others are of the opinion that the three is an eight. For the erection of such a building the date 1682 seems more probable.

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2 Philip Alexander Bruce, Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), I, 70.

3 W. M. Clark, editor, Colonial Churches in the Original Colony of Virginia, (Richmond, Virginia: The Southern Churchman Publishing Company, 1908), pp. 84-85.

4 Bruce, op. cit., I, 173.



That its construction was superintended in 1632 by the father of the Colonel Joseph Bridger now buried in the chancel of the church is disproved by the fact that the first member of the Bridger family to receive a Virginia land grant is recorded in the Isle of Wight records of 1657.<sup>5</sup> Contrary to the opinion of earlier authorities, there is no mention on the tombstone of Bridger (which now forms a part of the floor of the church) that he was the son of the Joseph Bridger who directed the building of the church. Nor is there any mention of his service to that church on the tomb of either Colonel Bridger or that of his wife who is also buried there.

. . . . Sacred to ye memory of the Honorable Joseph Bridger, Esq. council of State in Virginia to King Charles ye 2d, Dying April ye 15: A.D.: 1686, Aged 58 years..... Here lies the great minister of state that Royal Virtues had and Royal fate to Charles his counsels did such honors bring, His own express fetched him to attend ye king.<sup>6</sup>

There is no one record or report of the Established Church in the early days of the colony.<sup>7</sup> And the early records of Isle of Wight's Newport Parish were destroyed during the Revolutionary War when Tarleton sent a detachment of soldiers to "Macclesfield", the home of Colonel Josiah Parker. The vestry books and other church papers were in his care, and some were apparently preserved

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<sup>5</sup> George C. Mason, "The Colonial Churches of Isle of Wight and Southampton Counties, Virginia", William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, (2) XXIII (January, 1943), 44-45,

<sup>6</sup> From the tombstone of the Colonel Bridger, which was moved from the White Marsh farm, then owned by the late J. T. Davis, soon after the building was restored.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Brown, The First Republic in America, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1898), pp. 622-23.

and remained in the possession of his daughter until the War of 1812. During that struggle a military force was stationed nearby, and needing paper for cartridges, it is thought the early vestry book was given to them by the servants.<sup>8</sup> A later vestry book, recording the activities of the parish from 1724 until 1771, refers to the Old Brick Church, but makes no mention of the probable date of its erection. A question might arise as to what was old in Virginia in 1724. Would a church built in 1682 be old forty years later? It is probable that it would; there were new chapels in other sections of the county, and since few of the early churches had definite names, the oldest soon came to be the "Old Brick Church".<sup>9</sup>

The principal sources of authority in regard to Virginia's colonial churches are Hening's Statutes and the old parish vestry books. Though the statutes deal primarily with civil law, the Legislature passed numerous acts regarding the relation of the people and the church. The vestry books seldom gave the date of the completed building; usually only the order for its erection is mentioned.<sup>10</sup> Apparently, few services were held commemorating the

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<sup>8</sup> Bishop Meade, Old Churches, Ministers and Families of Virginia, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1857), I, 307.

<sup>9</sup> Not until 1828 did Isle of Wight's Old Brick Church become St. Luke's Church, when the Reverend W. G. H. Jones, who had been holding services in the building referred to "St. Luke's Church" in a Diocese report. However, there is no reason why this name should not be retained.

<sup>10</sup> George C. Mason, "The Colonial Churches of Isle of Wight and Southampton Counties, Virginia", William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, (2) XXIII, (January, 1943), 44.

fiftieth or hundredth anniversaries of the colonial churches. Nor was a deed necessary for the building of a chapel; one was seldom drawn up until a more permanent building was needed.<sup>11</sup> In the records of the county it is evident that a church was standing at or quite near the present site of St. Luke's. A deed, dated September 6, 1683, states that "Michael Fulgehan warrents one acre of land to the churchwardens and vestrymen of the Lower parish of Isle of Wight whereon the church house now standeth by deep Swamps . . .".<sup>12</sup> The Old Brick Church is today located at the head of a creek, which is little more than a swamp; several years ago the stream was dammed to form a lake. That there was a church at or near the present site in 1683 is beyond a doubt; that there was a building used for worship years before that time is quite likely.

When we first went to Virginia I well remember we did hand an awning which is an old saile to three or four trees, to shadow us from the sunne; our walls were railes of wood; our seats unhewed trees till we cut planks; our Pulpit a bar of wood nailed to two neighboring trees.<sup>13</sup>

Thus wrote Captain John Smith describing the first worship services at Jamestown. In 1617 a church was built outside the old stockade; this building was erected upon a slender brick and cobblestone foundation which was discovered by excavation carried on by the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities in 1891. On this foundation the first church known to have been of brick was

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11 ibid., p. 46.

12 Lyon G. Tyler, "Isle of Wight County Records", William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, (1) VII (August 1899), 234.

13 op. cit., p. 18.

constructed.<sup>14</sup> In a letter from Governor John Harvey and the Council to the Privy Council in London on January 18, 1639, a statement was made that, "out of our owne purses we have largely contributed to the building of a brick church and both masters of ships and others of the ablest Planters have liberally by our persuasion underwritten to this worke".<sup>15</sup>

An act of the Assembly in 1631-32 provided that funds needed for constructing church buildings were to be paid by the people of the parish; the assessment, in the form of a regular tax was collected like the county levies.<sup>16</sup> The first parish churches were of rude construction - of planks or logs, followed a few years later by more pretentious frame buildings which lasted one or two generations, and were planned for a congregation of something like three hundred.<sup>17</sup> As the need arose these were replaced by brick buildings, designed to last indefinitely. The Old Brick Church near Smithfield shows every indication of being there another two hundred fifty years.

Though the majority of Virginia's seventeenth century churches were built of wood, a few were of brick. The church at Jamestown, Bruton Parish at Williamsburg, and St. Luke's at Smithfield are examples of the latter, more permanent construction. Jamestown's brick church was completed in 1639 - only seven years after the

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14 The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

15 Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

16 Philip Alexander Bruce, *Virginia: Rebirth of the Old Dominion*, (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1929), I, 243.

17 The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, *op. cit.*, p. 87.



traditional date of the building of St. Luke's. There is a certain resemblance between the two. The gable or east end of the Jamestown church (restored) and that of St. Luke's show the similarity in the corbie "steps". However, the church in Isle of Wight is the larger of the two, and was evidently designed at a later date on a more pretentious scale. The similarity is not necessarily an indication that they were built in the same decade, or even within three decades of each other, because today the architecture of public buildings, and especially that of churches, changes slowly.

Though not resembling it as closely as it does the Jamestown church, St. Luke's was, from all available evidence, erected at about the same time as the first brick church of Bruton parish. The order of the vestry, November, 1677, that a new church at Middle Plantation be built of brick implies that the earlier church was a wooden structure; this second Bruton church was completed in 1683.<sup>18</sup> In describing St. Luke's in Isle of Wight, Hamlin<sup>19</sup> writes:

It is perhaps the only true Gothic church in America. It is late debased Jacobean Gothic, to be sure . . . [but] it is late English Gothic seen through a haze of Jacobean Renaissance and built by untrained masons in a far-off land.

The separated chimneys of "Bacon's Castle" in Surry County are of English Tudor and Jacobean work.<sup>20</sup> Built in the early 1650's this house, like the Old Brick Church in Isle of Wight, has a feel-

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<sup>18</sup> The present Williamsburg church, however, was not completed until 1715, and it was enlarged in 1752, and a new steeple added in 1769. (Pamphlet, "Bruton Parish Church", Williamsburg, Virginia, 1942).

<sup>19</sup> Talbot Hamlin, Architecture Through the Ages, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1940), p. 532.

<sup>20</sup> ibid., p. 527.



ing of the pre-Wren architecture. The church at Smithfield is perhaps the best example of colonial ecclesiastical architecture now in existence in Virginia; sturdy, thick walled and of excellent material, the parish churches of England were not forgotten by its builders. When Bishop Meade visited the site in the middle of the nineteenth century, and many years before the restoration, he wrote that even though the windows and much of the interior were gone, he was certain the materials were of the best kind and the workmanship superior.<sup>21</sup> He described the thick walls which were strengthened by pillars which were quite wide at their base, and added that they had mouldered, allowing small trees to grow among the bricks. That good man tells of pulling one of the shrubs from the wall and re-setting it at his home where it grew to be a tree.

The cruciform or cross shaped building was the ideal of church builders in the early part of the eighteenth century. But St. Luke's was erected in the latter half of the seventeenth century, and it is of the plain, rectangular type. These early churches "were saved from ugliness by perfect proportions in length, breadth, and heights, by massive solidity of walls and roof, and by a severely classic taste in every detail of ornamentation".<sup>22</sup> The plans of the Old Brick Church prepared by the National Park Service give the following

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<sup>21</sup> Bishop Meade, Old Churches, Ministers, and Families of Virginia (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1857), I, 307.

<sup>22</sup> The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, op. cit., p. 87.

dimensions: inside the upper walls, it is sixty feet, six inches by twenty-four feet, three inches; the walls are twenty-six inches thick, resting on thirty-six inch foundations, while the tower is about twenty feet square outside, with walls nearly thirty inches thick.<sup>23</sup>

The earliest churches in Virginia might have had a bell in the tower; if so they were soon found to be of little use in a parish whose people were scattered over several hundred square miles. The tower of St. Luke's is certainly not a later addition.<sup>24</sup> Hamlin writes of the building ". . . it has a round arched door with a naive pediment [a white marble triangular plaque] above, but it also has true offset buttresses at the sides, a high pitched roof and traceried windows, . . . . . starting as though with pointed arches, ending in the center with a strange and awkward curve . . . . .".<sup>25</sup>

The only original furnishings now in the church are believed to be the wine-glass pulpit and its sounding board, which were found in an old barn at "Macclesfield" and restored in 1894.<sup>26</sup> The pulpits of Virginia's early churches were usually on one side of the church and were quite tall; that of St. Luke's, which is of paneled walnut conforms to this description. Two or three walnut trees stand in the churchyard today, and it is not impossible

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23 George C. Mason, "The Colonial Churches of Isle of Wight and Southampton Counties, Virginia", William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, (2) XXIII (January, 1943), p. 47.

24 ibid., p. 45.

25 Hamlin, op. cit., p. 532.

26 William and Mary Quarterly, op. cit., p. 47.

that it was made from local timber by a master cabinet-maker. The pews of colonial churches were square with sides so high that when seated one could not see into the neighboring pew. Those in the Old Brick Church today, however, though quite high, are rectangular rather than square. A family might have its own pew constructed or one would be given to a man who had contributed a large amount to the erection of the building, and for several generations it might be occupied by members of the same family. In 1740 the vestry of Isle of Wight's Newport parish ordered that "the corner Pew of the Chancel in the Brick church be allotted for the wives [sic] of the Jstices and vestrymen of the said Parish, and the pew that they formerly set [sic] in be allotted for the young women".<sup>27</sup>

Music was a popular in Virginia in the eighteenth century, and it was a customary part of the education of women. Robert Carter (1663-1732) had in his home a harpischord, a pianoforte, an harmonica, a guitar, and a flute, while he owned an organ at Williamsburg.<sup>28</sup> It is doubtful if there was an organ at St. Luke's in the early years; not until 1755 was an organ left built in Burton Parish Church.<sup>29</sup> If there was any singing, it was only one or two of the "psalms of David in Metre", which the clerk would lead with the aid, perhaps, of a tuning fork.<sup>30</sup>

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27 ibid., (1) VII, 269.

28 Thomas Jefferson Wertebaker, Patrician and Plebian in Virginia, pp. 126-27.

29 Pamphlet, Bruton Parish Church, (Richmond, Virginia: Whittet and Shepperson, Printers, 1942), p. 3.

30 The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, op. cit., p. 88.

Like most of Virginia's colonial churches, the chancel is at the east end, with a large stained-glass window (or windows) forming a great part of the gable wall. At the west or tower end of the building a gallery extends across the church. There, the negroes usually sat. But at Bruton Parish a gallery was assigned "for the use of the College youth of William and Mary, to which gallery there is to be put a door, with a lock and key, the sexton to keep the key".<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> W. M. Clark, op. cit., p. 90

## CHAPTER V

## THE CHURCH AS A VITAL PART OF COLONIAL SOCIETY

The author of Virginia's Cure, a pamphlet printed in 1661, wrote that "The families are despersedly and scatteringly seated upon the sides of rivers, some of which running very far into the country bear the English plantations above a hundred miles.."<sup>1</sup> In 1680 Virginia's frontier counties were Stafford on the Potomac, New Kent on the York, and Henrico on the James.<sup>2</sup> Seventeenth century Virginians were busy establishing large plantations. By the time of his death in 1704, William Byrd I, with that insticnt of the merchant, had built up a great fortune.

The emigrants to Isle of Wight were largely people from Birstol, where in the Civil wars, the Cavaliers were very strong,<sup>3</sup> and for many years, therefore, the Anglican church reflected the life of the people. Just as a favorable social position was a

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1 Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, Patrician and Plebian in Virginia, (Charlottesville, Virginia: Michie Company, printers, 1910), p. 35.

2 The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, The Colonial Church in Virginia, (Milwaukee: Morehouse Publishing Company, 1927), p. 75.

3 Lyon G. Tyler, "Isle of Wight County Records", William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, (1) VII (August, 1899), 212.



prerequisite for membership in the House of Burgesses, so it was in the choice of the local parish officials or vestrymen. Though it never played the vital role in the spiritual lines of the people as did the later evangelical churches, the Established church was a significant part of the "way of life" of Colonial Virginia.

From the meeting of the first General Assembly until 1662, over two hundred laws for the government of the church were enacted.<sup>4</sup> Though they were enforced until the Revolution, they were revised from time to time to meet the needs of a growing colony. In 1662, the Assembly required churchwardens to purchase for each church one large Bible and two common Prayer Books, a communion cloth and napkins, and a pulpit cloth and cushions.<sup>5</sup> That the church played an important part in the development of the colony is indicated by the fact that at one time the legislature passed a law requiring that the roads leading to the parish churches be at least forty feet wide and free of tree roots. In the very early days the people were dependent upon the church for most of their social gatherings. Funerals and weddings offered a feeling of community life to people in isolated sections of the parish. As early as October 1608, John Laydon, a laborer, married Anne

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4 The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, op. cit., pp. 76-77.

5 Philip Alexander Bruce, Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1910), I, 112.

Burras at Jamestown.<sup>6</sup> The Sunday services, too, offered an opportunity for social gatherings. The sermons were usually easy for the preacher, and restful, if uninspiring, for the congregation. They were often held twice during the Sunday, and there was slight mention of hell-fire and the sins of mankind.<sup>7</sup>

But the first Virginia Assembly had passed a law requiring the attendance of every citizen at divine services on Sunday. Should he be absent, a freeman was fined three shillings for each offense, while a slave was whipped.<sup>8</sup> As late as 1699, the General Assembly required that any adult failing to be present at some form of religious service be fined five shillings or fifty pounds of tobacco.<sup>9</sup> The House of Burgesses sometimes called for days of fasting or days of rejoicing, to be observed by services in all of the churches.<sup>10</sup> The churches were usually from

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6 W. M. Clark, editor, Colonial Churches in the Original Colony of Virginia, (Richmond, Virginia: The Southern Churchman Publishing Company, 1908), p. 20.

7 Maud W. Goodwin, The Colonial Cavalier, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1895), p. 199.

8 Bruce, op. cit., I, 28.

9 ibid., I, 34-35.

10 The Reverend G. MacLaren Brydon, The Established Church in Virginia and the Revolution, (Richmond, Virginia: The Virginia Diocesan Library, 1930), p. 9.

ten to fifteen miles apart in eastern Virginia while seven or eight miles was considered an easy walking distance.<sup>11</sup>

Not all of early America's strait-laced, pious souls were confined to New England. According to Fiske,<sup>12</sup> a man who was found drunk was privately reprovved by his minister; the second time he was publically reprovved; the third time he was placed in irons for twelve hours; and the fourth time he was punished according to the decision of the Governor and his Council. In 1678 Edward Hastell, of Lower Norfolk, was indicted for carrying a gun on Sunday, and in 1682, Sara Purdy of the same county was indicted for shelling corn on Sunday.<sup>13</sup> During the years from June 1772 until June 1783, the following misdemeanors (a total of 114) occurred in Isle of Wight County: profane swearing, 29 cases; common drunkards, 9; Sabbath breaking, 11; gaming, 13; adulting, 9; absence from church, 5; failure to pay the parish levy, 9; obstructing the highways, 2; and 73 surveyors of the roads were presented to the court for neglect of duty.<sup>14</sup>

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11 The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, op. cit., p. 88.

12 John Fiske, Old Virginia and Her Neighbors, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1897), I, 246.

13 Bruce, op. cit., I, 41.

14 William and Mary Quarterly, (1) VII, 271.

In Colonial Virginia "a witch caused more personal hostility than even a Catholic or an atheist...", but while many cases of witchcraft came before the court, there is no record of a death sentence's being imposed.<sup>15</sup> Grace Sherwood of Princess Anne County was accused (1698) of casting spells, and some years later was punished by "ducking".<sup>16</sup> But as early as 1655 an Act of the General Assembly had tried to discourage the "endless turmoil caused by charges and countercharges of witchcraft".<sup>17</sup>

Wills frequently provided that the children of the deceased be taught to read the Bible. Robert Hodge of Lower Norfolk bequeathed to each of his godsons and goddaughters living in Virginia (in 1681) a Bible and two volumes of sermons.<sup>18</sup> Nor were the people of the colony uninterested in the needs of the poor; in 1655 Captain John Moone of Isle of Wight left four cows "to remain for a Stock forever for poor fatherless children...".<sup>19</sup> Servants too, were usually well cared-for; certainly they occupied as favorable

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<sup>15</sup> Philip Alexander Bruce, Virginia: Rebirth of the Old Dominion, (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1929), I, 258.

<sup>16</sup> Philip Alexander Bruce, Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1910), I, 286.

<sup>17</sup> ibid., I, 281.

<sup>18</sup> ibid., I, 22.

<sup>19</sup> William and Mary Quarterly, (1) VII, 222.



a position in Virginia as the average servant in the mother country. In his will, Humphrey Clark, of Isle of Wight, gave to Mary Clark three years of her period of service.<sup>20</sup> He also requested that his servants be kept together.

The church was partly supported by a tax levied upon a man's apparel, as well as that of his wife. At times, that evidently proved a reliable source of income. Thomas Warnet, a prominent Jamestown merchant who died in 1629, bequeathed to different people: "A coif, a cross-cloth of wrought gold, a pair of silk stockings, a pair of red slippers, a sea green scarf edged with gold lace,....a vest, a sword, and a gold belt".<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, William Byrd I sent his wig to England—to be repaired.<sup>22</sup> Nor was the entire time devoted to entertaining and visiting. Colonel Richard Lee, who died in 1664, left a number of books, among which were Wing's Art of Surveying, a Greek Grammar, Praxis Medicinac, Caesaris Comentarii, Tulley's Orations, and works of Virgil, Ovid, and Livius.<sup>23</sup>

Horseback riding was both a pleasure and a necessity in the

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20 ibid., p. 221.

21 Philip Alexander Bruce, Economic History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), II 137.

22 Thomas Jefferson Wertebaker, op. cit., p. 138.

23 ibid., pp. 125-26.



colony. Few possessions were valued so highly as a good saddle horse. In 1678 Lieutenant Colonel John George of Isle of Wight willed to his son, "my horse Jading, with my Plush saddle and Bridle,...."<sup>24</sup>. Isle of Wight's Colonel Josiaph Parker rode behind two postillions "...in a new handsome Post chaise, the Body neatly carved and run with raised Beads and scrolls, the roof and upper panels covered with leather....."<sup>25</sup>. Though punishable by fines as mentioned above, drinking was indulged in. The will of Colonel John Pitt of Isle of Wight bequeathed (1702) his seal ring to his son, Henry and to James, his strong-water still and furniture.<sup>26</sup>

In general, women in Colonial Virginia lived the same sort of lives as did women in seventeenth century England. Among the practical merchants and farmers of the colony, however, there was probably less chivalry toward women than that which is popularly supposed to have been characteristic of Colonial Virginia. Thomas Pitt (who died in Isle of Wight in 1687) bequeathed "to deare and loving wife Mary Pitt her first choice of two of my negroes an alsoe the two diamond rings, her wedding Ringe and inamelled ring with all her wearing apparell and necklace of pearl".<sup>27</sup>

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24 William and Mary Quarterly, (1) VII, 241.

25 Paul Wilstach, Tidewater Virginia, (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1924), pp. 115-116.

26 William and Mary Quarterly, (1) VII, 253.

27 ibid., (1) VII, 244.

CHAPTER VI  
THE COLONIAL CLERGY

During most of the colonial period the church provided the only public means of religious, moral, and civic education for the common people. In the seventeenth century there were hardly a dozen public schools in Virginia and they were of a most limited capacity.<sup>1</sup> Education was largely under the direction of the church. The majority of its ministers were from Oxford, Cambridge, or the Scottish universities, and in the years preceding the Revolution many were trained at the College of William and Mary. Most of them taught school in their respective parishes. In 1753, Elizabeth Smith of Isle of Wight County left money for the establishment of a free school for poor children in Smithfield: "the boys to be taught 3 years, and the girls two, the boys to be taught reading, writing, and arithmetic and the girls reading and writing.....".<sup>2</sup>

It seems probable that each of the large expeditions sent out by the London Company carried one or more ministers, but few of their names have been preserved. The "unselfish fortitude and endurance" of the Reverend Robert Hunt, as well as his "good doctrine and

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<sup>1</sup> The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, The Colonial Church in Virginia, (Milwaukee: The Morehouse Publishing Company, 1927) p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> Lyon G. Tyler, "Isle of Wight County Records", William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, (1) VII (August, 1899), 266-67.

exhortation... [and] own devoted example"<sup>3</sup> were a great comfort to the colonists in the first difficult months at Jamestown. In the fire of 1608, "Good Master Hunt.....lost all his library, and all that he had but the cloathes on his back; yet none never heard him repine at his losse".<sup>4</sup>

The visit of Pocahontas to England after her marriage to John Rolfe aroused interest in christianizing the Indians, and movements were begun to further that enterprise. In 1619 the Virginia clergy were required to report all christenings, burials, and marriages every twelve months and to teach the young people of their congregation the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the catechism, and the Articles of Belief.<sup>5</sup> A law of 1641 provided that there be an annual meeting of all the ministers and church warden of the colony-- to be held at Jamestown.<sup>6</sup>

Seldom were the ministers of the colony designated by title in reports and records. It is not known how many were in Virginia in 1625, but Brown<sup>7</sup> lists six men as serving in that capacity at that

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<sup>3</sup> W. M. Clark, editor, Colonial Churches in the Original Colony of Virginia, (Richmond, Virginia: The Southern Churchman Publishing Company, 1908), p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> Philip Alexander Bruce, Virginia: Rebirth of the Old Dominion, (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1929), I, 251-52.

<sup>6</sup> Philip Alexander Bruce, Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1910), I, 187.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Brown, The First Republic in America, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1898), pp. 630-31.

time. The first record of a minister's serving in Isle of Wight is that of the Reverend Mr. Faulkner who was in the county when the upper parish was formed in 1642. The securing of ministers was not an easy task. Following the Restoration, the General Assembly appointed the Reverend Philip Mallory, chaplain of the Assembly to "undertake the soliciting of our church affaires in England".<sup>8</sup> In England vacancies in the pulpit were filled by the appointment of a man by his patron while the Virginia clergy were chosen by the vestry alone. They were bound by the terms of a definite contract and the vestry was free to refuse its renewal.<sup>9</sup>

The salaries of the ministers equaled the money that a certain amount of tobacco would bring. In 1623, the salary of the clergy in Virginia was fixed at ten pounds of tobacco and a bushel of corn for each tithable person in the parish.<sup>10</sup> Some years later, (1656), the clergyman and six of his servants were exempted from taxation--eith parish, county, or general. But the Assembly following Bacon's rebellion restricted that privilege to the clergyman alone.<sup>11</sup> Before 1700 the total amount received by a minister averaged not less than one hundred pounds which was equal in purchasing power to twenty-five hundred dollars today.<sup>12</sup> Besides that they were entitled to fees fixed by law.

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8 The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, op. cit., p. 80.

9 Philip Alexander Bruce, Virginia: Rebirth of the Old Dominion, (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1929), I, 249.

10 ibid., I, 250.

11 loc. cit.

12 loc. cit.



In addition to the salary and fees, a glebe<sup>13</sup> of one or two hundred acres was provided by law for the benefit of the clergy. The home of the minister differed little from that of the usual plantation home. In the absence of a minister, the glebe lands were cultivated by an agent of the vestry, or were rented out. Not infrequently the clergymen owned estates independent of the church lands. In 1635 there were recorded the patents for a thousand acres of land in Virginia by each of two ministers.<sup>14</sup> Beverley, the historian, stated that at the end of the seventeenth century the income of the clergy were as large as those of a planter who owned twelve working slaves.<sup>15</sup>

In the early years, the parish was unwilling to accept a candidate for its pulpit unless he should submit a testimonial to prove that he had received ordination from an English prelate. As mentioned above, the church in Virginia was under the direction of the Bishop of London, and it was he who usually ordained the ministers who came to Virginia. The Bishops of London were sometimes considered indifferent to the Virginia church and some people were strong advocates of Bishops for the colonies. But the church was established by law, and most of the people felt that there was no great need for a resident

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<sup>13</sup> In Colonial Virginia the glebe was that tract of land, on plantations, serving as a source of revenue as well as the home of the parish minister.

<sup>14</sup> Philip Alexander Bruce, op. cit., I, 251.

<sup>15</sup> loc. cit.

bishop. Consequently, all of the first clergymen were natives of England. So far as is known, not a single clergyman in Virginia during the seventeenth century was a native of the colony.

During those years the clergy of England occupied a position but little better than that of a higher domestic servant; yet the demand for ministers in Virginia was never met except during the Puritan Supremacy.<sup>16</sup> In 1660-61 there was a proposal for the establishment in Virginia of a college for the training of ministers. Even so, its graduates would have to be ordained in London.<sup>17</sup> It is generally believed that the training of ministers for the church was one reason for the chartering of the College of William and Mary thirty years later.

After Henry VIII had broken the power of the priesthood their prestige was never fully regained. Virginia's ministers were drawn from their one source—the mother country. In many respects the colonial period was an age of "irreligion and spiritual lethargy." The vestries kept more men of doubtful character from being sent to the colony, and if the minister did not meet the standards of spirituality and conduct set up by the vestry, he was asked to leave the parish.<sup>18</sup> That there were ministers of questionable reputation in

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16 Philip Alexander Bruce, Virginia: Rebirth of the Old Dominion, (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1929), I, 248.

17 ibid., I, 248.

18 The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, op. cit., pp. 92-93.

Colonial Virginia might be ascertained from the following restrictions imposed upon them by them by the Legislature:

Ministers shall not give themselves to excesse in drinking or ryatt, spending their tyme idelie by day or by night, playing at dice, cards, or any other unalawful game, but at all tymes convenient they shall heare or reade somewhat of the holy scriptures, or shall occupy themselves with some other honest studies or exercise, always doinge the things which shall apperteyne to honestie and endeavor.....<sup>19</sup>

Some small parishes were unable to support really able men. When together the clergy often interfered in political matters, but most of the time they led isolated lives, with but little intellectual or spiritual stimulus. Their work was routine and few demands for real spiritual leadership were made upon them. The "Reverend" Thomas Bayley, who was minister of Isle of Wight's Newport parish in 1724, was described by Governor Spotswood in his letters to the Bishop of London as a most wicked man; the reason for his statement is not known.<sup>20</sup> There were inefficient ministers who traveled from parish to parish to make a living by filling vacancies, but the majority lived throughout their ministerial lives in a single parish, where they held the respect and confidence of vestry and people.<sup>21</sup> Generally speaking, the clergy of seventeenth century Virginia were men of ability and excellent character. Of the one hundred twenty ministers who came to Virginia

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<sup>19</sup> John Fiske, Old Virginia and Her Neighbors, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1897), I, 248.

<sup>20</sup> Bishop Meade, Old Churches, Ministers and Families of Virginia, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1857), I, 301-2.

<sup>21</sup> ibid., p. 81.

before 1700, there were only twelve who could possibly be questioned as to their ministerial character.<sup>22</sup> During the eighteenth century, the majority of the most able ministers were natives of the colony.

In 1724 the Bishop of London sent to the clergymen of Virginia a series of questions for parochial reports. At that time there were less than fifty parishes in the colony, the number having grown little in forty years, because of the consolidation of the smaller parishes. Fifteen parishes were without a minister, but the reports of twenty eight were preserved.<sup>23</sup> The report of Mr. Bayley of Newport parish stated that there was in service, in the upper part of the parish, a chapel-of-ease and that it was nineteen miles from the mother church<sup>24</sup>—from every indication the Old Brick Church near Smithfield.

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22 ibid., p. 81.

23 ibid., p. 91 -- a study of the reports shows the following: average number of parishoners at church, 420; average number of families to a parish, 306; average number of churches and chapels to a minister, 2; average number of Holy Communions in each parish per year, 5; and the average number of communicants, 100.

24 George C. Mason, "The Colonial Churches of Isle of Wight and Southampton Counties", William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, (2) XXIII, (January, 1943), 56-57.



CHAPTER VII  
THE DISSENTERS

The people of Virginia did not choose the Anglican faith; from birth, everyone was a member of the Church of England. As time went on and as bonds with the mother country were weakened less deference was felt toward the Bishop of London. But during the greater part of the seventeenth century nearly all of the colonies placed rigid restrictions upon religious beliefs, and nonconformists were looked upon with disfavor.

When Jamestown was settled England was on the verge of accepting the authorized version of the Bible which was dedicated to King James in 1611. An atheist was seldom trusted and was forbidden to hold public office.<sup>1</sup> Edward Maria Wingfield, the first President of the Council of Virginia was tried for atheism in 1608 because of "the absence of a Bible from his belongings". He declared that in the course of his journey he found his trunk broken open and the Bible "ymbeasiled", but that excuse was not satisfactory and he was returned to England.<sup>2</sup> As late as 1683, Thomas Newhouse of Lower Norfolk

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1 Philip Alexander Bruce, Virginia: Rebirth of the Old Dominion, (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1929), I, 258.

2 Maud W. Goodwin, The Colonial Cavalier, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1895), p. 192.

was accused of asserting before an assembly that "a great part of the Bible was false", whereupon he was arrested, tried by the county justices, and sent before the General Court at Jamestown.<sup>3</sup>

The General Assembly of 1642 declared that all canons and constitutions of the Anglican church be rigidly obeyed and that all persons refusing to comply be expelled from the colony.<sup>4</sup> Dissent was abhorred and treated severely by Governor, General Court, and Assembly. But the Revolution of 1688 and the Toleration Act of 1689 were immediately recognized in Virginia, and though prejudice against non-conformers continued, they were seldom seriously molested.<sup>5</sup> According to an act soon passed by the legislature, people who attended worship service at one of the dissenting chapels were considered to be obeying an earlier law requiring church attendance. In order to meet legal requirements, dissenting chapels had only to obtain a license.<sup>6</sup>

Governor Dale, who served as Virginia's governor in 1611, was a Puritan, and it is necessary to remember that at that time the Puritans formed a political party as well as a religious group wishing to alter

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<sup>3</sup> Philip Alexander Bruce, Institutional History of Virginia in The Seventeenth Century, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1910), I, 277.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce, op. cit., I, 253.

<sup>5</sup> loc. cit.

<sup>6</sup> The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, The Colonial Church in Virginia, (Milwaukee: The Morehouse Publishing Company, 1927), pp.99-100.

certain phases of the Anglican church. Though members of the Puritan party, most of those early emigrants were loyal to the King. Under Governor Dale, religion like everything else, was subject to military law; order and godliness be enforced with bayonet and sword.

In the counties south of the James, a Puritan party soon developed; the first leaders were possibly Richard and Philip Bennett, who came to Virginia in 1625 and settled in Nansemond County.<sup>7</sup> Richard Bennett became a member of the governor's council and in 1641, he sent his brother to New England to ask that some Puritan ministers be sent to Virginia.<sup>8</sup> In 1638 the Puritans formed seven percent of Virginia's population.<sup>9</sup> In 1648 the Reverend Mr. Harrison of Lower Norfolk refused to administer the sacraments and because of his conversion to Puritanism deserted his ministerial office.<sup>10</sup> In the same year, a Puritan minister, very probably Harrison, was able to announce to Governor Winthrop that he had made seventy-four converts in Nansemond County." It is not unlikely that he was required to leave the colony; a number of Puritans left Virginia and went to Maryland where they settled in Anne Arundel County.<sup>12</sup> But "some of the noblest of the early

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7 Lyon G. Tyler, "Isle of Wight County Records", William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, (1) VII (August, 1899), 211.

8 loc. cit.

9 John Fiske, Old Virginia and Her Neighbors, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company), I, 301.

10 Philip Alexander Bruce, Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century, (New York: G. P. Putnam's sons, 1910), I, 166.

11 ibid., I, 256.

12 W. M. Clark, editor, Colonial Churches in the Original Colony Of Virginia, (Richmond, Virginia: The Southern Churchman Publishing Company, 1908), p. 133.

clergymen belonged to the Puritan wing of the Anglican Church".<sup>13</sup> Puritanism was the English version of Calvinism and was merely one of the forms in which John Calvin's idea of Protestantism was brought to America.<sup>14</sup>

When Virginia was settled, England was thoroughly Protestant, and Roman Catholicism was intensely disliked. Governor Wingfield described the Reverend Robert Hunt as "not in any waie to be touched with the rebellious humor of a papist spirit."<sup>15</sup> Lord Baltimore, who had planned to settle in Virginia, refused to take the oath of supremacy of the king as a spiritual head of the church and leaving the colony, he went to Maryland.<sup>16</sup> Even the oaths of the vestrymen indicated extreme opposition to the Catholic faith.<sup>17</sup> No Catholic could hold a public office in the colony and every priest was liable to immediate expulsion. Outrageous charges were brought against them, and in 1688 the rumor spread that the Catholics of Virginia and Maryland were conspiring with the Indians on the frontier to murder the Protestants.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Philip Alexander Bruce, Virginia: Rebirth of the Old Dominion, (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1929), I, 256.

<sup>14</sup> Perry Mille, "Puritanism", Dictionary of American History, 1940 edition, IV, 384.

<sup>15</sup> The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

<sup>16</sup> Philip Alexander Bruce, Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1910), I, 265.

<sup>17</sup> Bishop Meade, Old Churches, Ministers and Families of Virginia, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1857), I, 307.

<sup>18</sup> Philip Alexander Bruce, Virginia: Rebirth of the Old Dominion, (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1929), I, 257.



In 1691, Joseph Bridger,<sup>19</sup> of Isle of Wight, petitioned the court that a certain child be delivered into his possession. His claim was based on the fact that, as administrator of the estate left by the child's mother, he was under a solemn obligation to ensure for the child a Christian education, and that this was impossible so long as he remained in the custody of Peter Blake (of Mansemond), who was a "professed papist contemner, and slighter of ye public worship of God<sup>20</sup> as is established by ye law of England and Virginia".

While bitter animosity was felt toward Catholics, the Quakers and Presbyterians met less opposition. The former were founded by George Fox in England in 1647, and less than ten years later their faith had spread in America.<sup>21</sup> In 1656 two Quaker women who had come to Boston were sent from the colony, but when Fox came to America in 1672 he found Quakers from Carolina to New England.<sup>22</sup> The majority of Virginia's nonconformists in the seventeenth century were Quakers. The opposition which they met was not based entirely upon their religious beliefs. They assembled in great secrecy, refused to pay their share of the parish taxes, and declined to bear arms

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<sup>19</sup> evidently the son of the Colonel Joseph Bridger who superintended the building of the Old Brick Church.

<sup>20</sup> Philip Alexander Bruce, Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1910), I, 271-72

<sup>21</sup> Thomas E. Drake, "The Quakers", Dictionary of American History, 1940 edition, IV, 386.

<sup>22</sup> loc. cit.

during threats of invading Indians.<sup>23</sup> To most people they seemed disloyal to the government, and attempts were made to keep them from entering the colony.

A number of Quakers came to the Eastern Shore of Virginia around 1650, and there obtained a large following.<sup>24</sup> The General Assembly, in 1658, ordered that every Quaker leave the colony and that any sea captain bringing in a member of that sect be fined one hundred pounds; an earlier law requiring attendance at an Anglican service on Sunday was revived and they were fined for not complying.<sup>25</sup> But not everyone was so bitterly opposed to their presence. Colonel Bridger sympathized with them, and as early as 1657 there were Quaker meeting houses<sup>26</sup> in the eastern part of Isle of Wight. In 1671, William Edmundson, a friend of George Fox's preached in Nansemond and Isle of Wight counties to numerous congregations, and so powerful was his influence that a special order was issued for the suppression of their local meetings.<sup>27</sup> But after the Toleration Act of 1688 there were few prosecutions of Quakers, and when the sects were no longer illegal, they became negligible. After 1699 their meeting houses were licensed, and in 1736 the Virginia Gazette stated that the leading Quakers

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23 Philip Alexander Bruce, Virginia: Rebirth of the Old Dominion, (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1929), I, 254.

24 The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, op. cit., pp. 98-99.

25 Bruce, op. cit., I, 254-255.

26 George C. Mason, "The Colonial Churches of Isle of Wight and Southampton Counties, Virginia", William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, (2) XXIII (January, 1943), 56.

27 Philip Alexander Bruce, Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1910), I, 241.

"admit that they have nothing to complain of except their being taxed to support the State or Episcopal church".<sup>28</sup>

During the seventeenth century many Scottish Protestants (the Scotch-Irish) settled in Ulster, but by 1700 they were eager to leave. Their farms were owned by absentee English lords, and they were forced to help support the Anglican church—in which they refused to worship. Large numbers of them came to America where they established settlements in every colony. With them they brought the fundamental principle of John Calvin—that God is absolutely sovereign. In general, the Calvinist principles were accepted by the Congregationalists (the outgrowth of New England Puritanism), the Dutch and German Reformed Churches,<sup>29</sup> most of the Baptists,<sup>30</sup> and practically all of the Scotch Presbyterian bodies in America.

In 1684 Francis Makemie, who is usually known as the father of American Presbyterianism, founded a church at Snow Hill, Maryland.<sup>31</sup> Meeting houses had been erected in Norfolk County by 1692, and in that year the Presbeyterians were authorized by the local court to hold meetings at those places.<sup>32</sup> But for nearly fifty years they were

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28 Lyon G. Tyler, "Isle of Wight Records," William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, (1) VII (August, 1899), 212.

29 William W. Sweet, "Calvinism", Dictionary of American History, 1940 edition, I, 277.

30 William W. Sweet, "The Baptists", ibid., I, 161.

31 William W. Sweet, "The Presbyterians", ibid., IV, 332.

32 Bruce, op. cit., I, 262.



of little importance--numerically at least in Virginia. After 1740, however, many Scotch-Irish came to the Shenandoah Valley from Pennsylvania, and the governor of Virginia assured them that they would be undisturbed.<sup>33</sup> A more emotional, evangelical Presbyterian group under the leadership of Samuel Davies was formed in Hanover County around 1750.<sup>34</sup> From there they spread throughout eastern Virginia, though they never obtained a large following in Isle of Wight County. Davies insisted upon a more liberal interpretation of the Toleration Act, and it was that group which drew followers from the upper social classes.

By the time of the Revolution, the Presbyterians were the largest and most influential of the dissenting bodies in Virginia.<sup>35</sup> Their almost unanimous support of the patriot cause added to their prestige. The well-educated Presbyterian ministers gave an effective intellectual leadership to the colonies, and their frontier churches contributed much to western life. However, their relatively high standards of ministerial education proved a drawback in competition with those of the early Baptists and Methodists.

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33 The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, op. cit., p. 100.

34 John E. Pomfret, "Samuel Davies", Dictionary of American Biography, 1930 edition, V, 102.

35 William W. Sweet, "The Presbyterians", Dictionary of American History, 1940 edition, IV, 332.



The Baptists originated in England in the early seventeenth century and were an outgrowth of the extreme Reformers on the Continent, the Anabaptists,<sup>36</sup> who believed that one must be baptized again before joining their group. In Colonial America they settled especially in the Middle Colonies where there were numerous English and Welsh immigrants.<sup>37</sup> It is generally believed that sometime before 1714 a group of Baptists had settled on Ward's Creek in Prince George County, Virginia. These wrote to England for a minister and one was promptly sent by the Baptists of London; it is quite likely that he was Robert Norden<sup>38</sup>, who was ordained in London in May 1714 and sailed for Virginia.

From most available evidence the Baptists were the worst enemies of the Established Church. Because they did not obtain licenses to preach, they were frequently arrested by civil authorities. But only the Anglican church was legal in Colonial Virginia, so the magistrates were only performing their duty. The first Baptist Association was sworn to the destruction of the Anglican church in the colonies. The majority were narrow in thought and felt that "the word of God was first preached in this community when the first

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36 "Anabaptists", Encyclopedia Britannica, 1942 edition, I, 857.

37 William W. Sweet, "The Baptists", ibid., I, 161.

38 H. C. Bradshaw, "The First Baptist Preacher in Virginia", The [Baptist] Religious Herald, (Richmond, Virginia: The Religious Herald, Inc.), CXVI (April 1, 1943), 4.

Baptist minister came."<sup>39</sup> The early Baptist ministers were filled with an utterly un-Christian hatred of the Established church.<sup>40</sup> They were crude speakers who usually understood their audience well enough to appeal to their emotions. In some instances their sermons made those of the Anglican clergy seem hardly more than moral essays. But by 1740 there were more than fifty Baptist churches in the colonies, the majority being in New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia.<sup>41</sup> Their first great principle declared the necessity for the complete separation of church and state, and it was they who offered a great support to the fight for the dis-establishment of the church following the Revolution.

The Oxford students who met with Charles and John Wesley for spiritual fellowship around 1726 came to be known as Methodists. But not until 1766 did they exist in America in any organized form.<sup>42</sup> At that time there was a group in Maryland and one in New York. News of these beginnings caused John Wesley to send over two missionaries in 1769, and two years later two others were sent. One of these, Francis Asbury, became the leader of American Methodists until his death in 1816.<sup>43</sup> Because they were originally a group within the

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<sup>39</sup> The Reverend C. MacLaren Brydon, The Established Church in Virginia and the Revolution, (Richmond, Virginia: The Virginia Diocesan Library, 1930), p. 9.

<sup>40</sup> ibid., p. 12.

<sup>41</sup> William W. Sweet, "The Baptists", Dictionary of American History, 1940 edition, I, 161.

<sup>42</sup> William W. Sweet, "The Methodists", ibid., III, 380.

<sup>43</sup> loc. cit.

Established Church, they were never really opposed to the Anglican faith, and not until the time of the Revolution did they appear in Virginia.

Puritan, Quaker, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist -- the nonconformists introduced among the plain people of Virginia a new and more vital conception of Christianity.

That religion or the duty which we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence; and, therefore, all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience.....<sup>1</sup>.

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;.....<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> From the Virginia Bill of Rights, Article I, Section 18 of The Constitution of Virginia.

<sup>2</sup> From the first amendment to The Constitution of the United States.



## CHAPTER VIII

THE "CHURCH OF VIRGINIA" AND  
THE FINAL SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

After 1730 the population of Virginia increased rapidly, and the church followed the people westward; organized parishes were supplied with ministers as far west as Augusta, Botetourt, Bedford, and Pittsylvania counties.<sup>3</sup> That the Established Church played an important part in the spiritual lives of the people of Virginia is accepted by many authorities.<sup>4</sup> Why should the vestries have taxed themselves for the erection of chapels and more costly churches if few people attended?

That the position of the clergy was one of honor and respect is proved by their marriage into families of wealth and social prominence.<sup>5</sup> Many of the ministers were loyal to their parishes throughout the war. Though the salaries of most of the ministers stopped on January 1, 1777, there were fifty men serving the Established Church in Virginia in 1787; twenty-seven of those were in charge of the same parishes they had held in 1776.<sup>6</sup> Thirty-nine

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3 The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, The Colonial Church in Virginia, (Milwaukee: Morehouse Publishing Company, 1927), pp. 96-97.

4 The Reverend G. MacLaren Brydon, The Established Church in Virginia and the Revolution, (Richmond, Virginia: The Virginia Diocesan Library, 1930), pp. 8-9.

5 ibid., p. 11.

6 ibid., pp. 6-7, 17.

ministers in Virginia rendered active service to the Revolutionary cause, twenty-three of those serving on county committees of safety.<sup>7</sup>

The church was still established so no minister could serve his parish unless he took the oath of allegiance--to the Commonwealth of Virginia.<sup>8</sup> In regard to the clergy who were known as "Tories" or Loyalists, were they traitors to Virginia, or merely loyal to the Church of England and the British Empire? Heitman's "List of officers of the Continental Army" mentions eleven ministers who served as chaplains of Virginia regiments;<sup>9</sup> of those, nine were clergymen of the Established Church--which by that time was in reality if not in name--the Church of Virginia. It is surprising to find so many of the clergy in favor of the final revolt from the mother country. But, as mentioned above, Virginia's ministers of the seventeenth century were Englishmen, while the majority of those of the eighteenth century were natives of the colony.

To the General Assembly, the Established Church in 1776 was a Virginia institution. The convention which declared the independence of the colony revised the Prayer Book by replacing the prayers for the King and royal family with prayers for the magistrates of the Commonwealth. Though the church was deprived of state support, it could neither organize nor legislate for itself.<sup>11</sup>

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7 ibid., p. 18.

8 ibid., p. 17-18.

9 ibid., p. 18.

10 loc. cit.

11 The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, op. cit., p. 103.

It is sometimes said that the "Tidewater gentry might acknowledge that there were many roads to Heaven, but they were convinced that a gentleman could take only the Anglican way".<sup>12</sup> By the time of the Revolution the Baptists and the Presbyterians as well as the dissenting groups were becoming influential. A resolution of the Virginia Convention in August 1775, stated "that it be an instruction to the commanding officers of the regiments or troops to be raised that they permit dissenting clergymen to celebrate divine worship and to preach to the soldiers".<sup>13</sup>

That war came to Isle of Wight is indicated by a petition of the court "to his Excellency the Governor, and the Honorable Council in 1762 asking the suspension of the "act for filling up our quote of troops in the Continental Service", and offering as a basis of their claim," .....the unhappy situation of this country during the late Invasion, being a frontier county, we are constantly exposed to the depredation of the enemy, who landed almost dayly on our shores...".<sup>14</sup>

When Patrick Henry delivered his speech in St. John's Church, Richmond on March 23, 1775, bringing about the final separation of Virginia from the British Empire, John S. Wills and Colonel Josiah Parker represented Isle of Wight County. <sup>15</sup>

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12 Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, The Growth of the American Republic, 1763-1865, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1937), I, 48.

13 Brydon, op. cit., pp. 18-19.

14 Lyon G. Tyler, "Isle of Wight County Records", William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine (1) VII (August, 1899), 279.

15 ibid., (1) VII, 314.



The effect of the war on Isle of Wight is seen by a comparison of two orders of the county court. The first, recorded March 3, 1774 ordered ".....that the rates of Liquors, Diet, Lodging, Provender, Pasturage, and the Stableage for Horses for the ensuing year at which the several ordinary keepers in this county are allowed to sell be as follows ..... Good Barbadoes Rum, the gallon £0,10S., od.....". A court held in May, 1780, ordered ".....that the rates of Liquors, diet, lodging, pasturage, stableage and provender at which the several ordinary keepers in this county are allowed to sell for the present year be as follows ..... Good rum, per gallon, or for a greater or lesser quantity £72,0S., od.; Bad rum of any kind ..... £50, 0S., od."<sup>16</sup>

There was an act permitting the sale of the glebe in Newport Parish in 1748,<sup>17</sup> but during most of the years of the Revolution St. Luke's or the Old Brick Church, was served by a minister. And in 1780 the Reverend Mr. Hubbard came to the parish where he preached, usually to only one or two faithful members, until his death in 1802.<sup>18</sup>

As the beginning of the Revolutionary War only in Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware was there a

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<sup>16</sup> ibid., (1) VII, 270.

<sup>17</sup> E. G. Swan, editor, Virginia Historical Index, (Roanoke, Virginia: The Stone Printing Company, 1934), I. 1015.

<sup>18</sup> W. M. Clark, editor, Colonial Churches in the Original Colony of Virginia (Richmond, Virginia: The Southern Churchman Publishing Company, 1908), p. 85.



separation of church and state.<sup>19</sup> Despite the rapidly increasing number of nonconformists, the Anglican Church was still the official church of Virginia. It was John Witherspoon, a Scotch Presbyterian minister who became president of the College of New Jersey at Princeton, who set forth the idea the mere toleration implied superiority and condescension.<sup>20</sup> That the people should have complete liberty to worship in whatever way they chose - or not at all - became the democratic ideal of numerous leading citizens, many of whom were in Virginia. Because they did not conform to the Anglican Church, many of Virginia's leaders were spoken of as irreligious men. But that the character of the majority remained high "in spite of religious apathy".... is due to that social code, in obedience to which the Virginia gave an fuller and richer meaning to the name of gentleman."<sup>21</sup>

It has been estimated<sup>22</sup> that the number of dissenters in Virginia in 1790 included twenty thousand Baptists, and a group of sixty thousand were composed of Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists.<sup>23</sup> Members of the dissenting churches -- for the non-conforming sects by the end of the Revolution had abandoned their chapels and meeting houses and established churches -- were

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19 Morison and Commager, op. cit., I, 126.

20 loc. cit.

21 Clark, op. cit., p. 32.

22 Brydon, op. cit., p. 15.

23 According to the census of 1790, Virginia's population was 500,000; Brydon, loc. cit.

still legally members of the Episcopal Church of Virginia. Yet, tithes were paid to a church whose doors they never entered.

Thomas Jefferson's introduction of a bill for religious liberty into the Virginia legislature caused seven years of bitter criticism among the conservative Tidewater aristocracy. -Fearing the loss of their political influence and social prestige gained through a state-supported church, they denounced Jefferson as an atheist. But the destruction of the church was not his intention; he advocated the complete separation of church, or churches, from the control of the state. After nearly a decade of what he called the severest contest in which he was ever engaged, the General Assembly passed the Statute of Religious Liberty.<sup>24</sup>

Be it enacted by the General Assembly [December 16, 1785], that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever ... nor shall otherwise suffer an account of his religious opinions or belief.....".

In 1787 the Regular and Separate Baptists of Virginia joined, and it was they who insisted on the confiscation of the Episcopal glebe lands. Jefferson saw the inequality of the ownership of valuable plantations by one body while other groups claimed only the acre or two on which stood their church. By

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24 Morrison and Commager, op. cit., I, 126.

25 The Annotated Code of Virginia as Amended to Adjournment of the General Assembly, 1930, (Charlottesville, Virginia: The Michie Company, Low Publisher, 1930), pp. 16-17, section 34.

an Act<sup>26</sup> of the Legislature in 1802, the glebe land became the property of the state. A part of the funds secured by the state from the sale of those lands was used to establish the "Literary Fund" in 1810.<sup>27</sup> Until 1817, when under the influence of Jefferson a part of it was set aside for the annual endowment of a university, that revenue was used for the education of poor white children.<sup>28</sup>

The parish vestries were no longer the local government officials. An act of the Legislature in 1806 declared that all donations formerly handled by the vestries were to be managed by "the overseers of the poor of the county or council of the city or town, in which the said charity was intended by the donor to be exercised ... that could or ought to have been performed by the vestry, if it had continued to exist and been a corporate body.....".<sup>29</sup>

With their numbers, wealth, and Scotch respect for learning, the Presbyterians were prepared for independence, while the informal organization of the Quakers enabled them to adjust themselves to the idea of a church independent of state support.<sup>30</sup> The Catholics, too, readily accepted the change; as early as

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<sup>26</sup> ibid., p. 17, section 36.

<sup>27</sup> Royal B. Smithy, Civil Government in Virginia, (New York: American Book Company, 1898), p. 80.

<sup>28</sup> loc. cit.

<sup>29</sup> Code of Virginia, 1930, op. cit., p. 17, section 37.

<sup>30</sup> Morison and Commager, op. cit., I, 128.



1649 the Assembly of the Catholic colony in Maryland issued a decree granting complete religious liberty.<sup>31</sup> At the beginning of the Revolution, the missionaries sent to America by John Wesley, returned to England — **with** the exception of Asbury. But after the war two of Wesley's ordained ministers came to America, and in 1784 at a convention in Baltimore, the Methodist Episcopal church was formed.<sup>32</sup> In America the circuit system, which had been brought from England, proved well adapted to the frontier where the Methodist belief in individual responsibility won a ready response.<sup>33</sup>

But to neither of these well-known groups belongs the distinction of having originated in America. Alexander Campbell, the son of Thomas Campbell, a Presbyterian minister who came to America in 1807, became the leader of the Christian, or Disciples of Christ, Church. This group drew their members from several sources — one, a group of Methodists emphasizing a creedless gospel and led by James O'Kelly.<sup>34</sup> It was evidently a group of his followers who occupied the Old Brick Church near Smithfield sometime during the early 1800's.<sup>35</sup>

Until after the Revolution there were no bishops of the

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31 Guido de Ruggiero, "Religious Freedom", Encyclopedia of The Social Sciences, 1934, edition XIII, 249.

32 William W. Sweet, "The Methodists", Dictionary of American History, 1940 edition, III, 380.

33 loc. cit.

34 Henry K. Rowe, "Alexander Campbell", Dictionary of American Biography, 1928 edition, III, 446-48.

35 Paul Wilstach, Tidewater Virginia, (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1929), p. 115.



Established Church in America, and one could be ordained only by taking the oath of the supremacy of the King as head of the Church.<sup>36</sup> About 1784 the Established Church in Connecticut set one of its ministers, Samuel Seabury of New London, Connecticut, to England to be ordained as a bishop. But refusing to take the oath, he appealed to the bishops of the Episcopal Church of Scotland and was ordained as Bishop of the diocese of Connecticut.<sup>37</sup>

A general convention in the United States, organized under the leadership of William White and William Smith, formed the Episcopal Church under one government in 1789.<sup>38</sup>

For most of the members of the Established church it was difficult to conceive of an efficient church independent of state support; the idea of a church maintained by voluntary offering was strange.<sup>39</sup> The duty (or privilege) of supporting a church had never been a significant part of colonial life. And the clergy were unprepared to guide their people through those difficult years. But after more than a quarter of a century of almost complete failure, the Episcopal church of Virginia found a leader in William Meade, who was elected assistant Bishop of Virginia in 1829, and who served as Bishop of the

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36 John Fiske, The Critical Period in American History 1783-1789, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1902), p. 98.

37 ibid., p. 99.

38 W. W. Manros, "The Protestant Episcopal Church," Dictionary of American History, 1940 edition, IV, 366.

39 The Reverend Edward Lewis Goodwin, op. cit., pp. 102-103.

Virginia diocese from 1841 until his death in 1861.<sup>50</sup> "The revival of the church begun under Bishop Meade had extended in 1829 to about half of the former colonial parishes".<sup>41</sup> It was he who helped to put the Episcopal church on a new, self-supporting basis.

While investigating the churches of the Virginia diocese, Bishop Meade visited Saint Luke's, or the Old Brick Church.<sup>42</sup> But not until around 1890 was the restoration begun. Today the site is visited by an occasional tourist, and a small congregation attends the monthly worship service. But as a focal point for a brief insight into the life of Tidewater Virginia during the first two centuries after Jamestown, the building itself is alive with the traditions, the failures, and the victories of the past.

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40 G. MacLaren Brydon, "William Meade", Dictionary of American Biography, 1933 edition, XII, 480.

41 loc. cit.

42 chapter IV, note 22.

CONCLUSION

The devout Christianity of the Reverend Robert Hunt, the rights of the common man asserted by Nathaniel Bacon, the fiery speeches of Patrick Henry, the democratic philosophy of Thomas Jefferson -- the practices and beliefs of Anglican, Puritan, Quaker, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist made Virginia.

Today it is well to recall the belief, expressed by Jefferson in his Statute for Religious Liberty,<sup>43</sup> ".....that truth is great and will prevail if left to herself; that she is the proper and sufficient antagonist to error and has nothing to fear from the conflict unless by human interposition disarmed of her natural weapons, free argument and debate."

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43 Paul L. Ford, editor, The Works of Thomas Jefferson, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), II, 430-41.

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