

1995

## Religion in Seventeenth-Century Anglican Virginia: Myth, Persuasion, and the Creation of an American Identity.

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RELIGION IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY  
ANGLICAN VIRGINIA: MYTH,  
PERSUASION, AND THE CREATION OF AN AMERICAN IDENTITY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of History

by

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May 1995



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people to thank for offering me assistance, guidance, criticism, and support while I researched and wrote my dissertation. Charles Royster's blend of criticism and encouragement was very important, and I am also grateful for the freedom he allowed me in organizing the dissertation. Despite no longer teaching at LSU, Edward Muir offered perceptive readings of several chapters. Warren Billings likewise offered advice about chapter seven. Gaines Foster, Paul Paskoff, Ellis Sandoz, James Morris, and Anne Loveland also gave me advice and encouragement throughout the project.

Most of the research was done at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library. There John Ingram, Susan Berg, Gail Greve, Del Moore, Liz Ackert, George Yetter, and Lois Danuser helped me various questions related to my research. John Ingram was especially helpful in guiding me through the mysteries of the Virginia Colonial Records Project.

Kathleen Jenkins also read and commented on several chapters and, like my parents, offered encouragement. Her friendship has been important to me throughout my years at LSU.

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## ABSTRACT

This work examines the religious thought and the function of religion in colonial Virginia from first settlement to approximately 1725 by looking at the religious aspects of England's missions to the New World, the neglect and subsequent collapse of these missions, and the creation by Virginians of an Anglican religious establishment possessed of a self-identity different from that of the Church of England in the mother country. Virginia began as an extension of England into the world, a part of the English nation which, in its religious aspects, was shaped by the mythic idea that true Englishmen were Protestants. Virginia, however, proved to be an intellectual as well as a geographic space, and the colonists soon discovered that they were defined more by place and ethnicity than by European definitions of religious homogeneity. A Virginia myth, conditioned by the North American continent and its native peoples, emerged. This myth suggested that all Europeans were Christian when defined against the savagery of the land's natives. By the end of the eighteenth century, this myth had collapsed as well, and Virginians were openly accepting religion as a private persuasion rather than as a public possession.

Place rather than ideology came to shape Virginians' understanding of their religious identity. While they

readily accepted and participated in the Restoration Church of England's revival of its Catholic roots, Virginians had created different ways of organizing religion in the colony, and they reacted against English attempts to weaken their vestries or otherwise threaten Virginians' ways of structuring their Church. A large part of their religious identity emerged from the religious structures and practices that had emerged in response to the environmental exigencies of a new continent. For Virginians, this became part of their identity. Their identity as Virginians rather than as English people living in the colony first emerged out of their religious rather than their political worldview. In religious terms, the colony had begun as an extension of English religion into the world, but through English neglect and their own response to the continent, Virginians created a substantially different institution.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Historians have unduly neglected the religious life of Virginia's established church in the seventeenth century, concentrating instead on the Great Awakening and the rise of the evangelicals in Virginia in the eighteenth century. Religion is often seen as peripheral to the main themes of Virginia's colonial history, becoming important only after 1740 when dissenters emerged in opposition to the Anglican Church. It is well known that the Church of England was weak in Virginia and that it suffered a chronic shortage of ministers throughout the colonial period. Yet that does not also mean that religion was unimportant to professing Anglicans who lived there. Religion, in fact, continued to play an important role in Virginia, although it often lacked the outward fervor of that professed by the Puritans in New England with whom colonial Virginians are often compared unfavorably.

My dissertation attempts to answer the question: what role did religion play in the lives of individuals and in the communal life of seventeenth-century Virginia? Although my study focuses on Anglicanism, for the Church of England was the established church in Virginia throughout the colonial period, it is less an investigation of one denomination than an analysis of relationships and how religion informed those

relationships. It is the story of an English mission to the New World. The mission largely failed in its religious aspects; but, in the process of failing, it became something new which essentially changed the religious worldview of colonial Virginians, creating relationships which shattered European notions of national orthodoxy.

Virginia's religious life emerged out of England's mythic national religion, a national Protestantism born of the Reformation. The colonization of Virginia began as a national "good work" and symbolized England's own reformed faith as visible and tangible evidence of the nation's challenge both to Satan and Roman Catholicism. There were three facets to this national mission: to the North American continent, to the natives, and, less conspicuously, to the many nominal Christians in the colony.

In a new land, soon abandoned by the Church of England, Virginians began to redefine their religion, creating their own mythic religion in place of that of the English. They established their own relationship with God and created their own institutional arrangements. Defined by North America and its native peoples rather than the various contending European religious groups, Virginia's myth accepted all European people as Christians regardless of their theological preferences. By the end of the



seventeenth century, however, this myth had collapsed as well, and Virginians were treating religion as a private persuasion rather than as a public possession.

Denominational religion was no longer an organizing concept for their polity.

Religion in colonial Virginia early became less a matter of faith and doctrine than of ethics and behavior. This development marked a shift in the relationship among individuals and God. Excessive emphasis on fulfilling the moral law privatized traditional English religion based on faith in Jesus Christ crucified, leaving personal morality the central place in the colony's public and communal relationship with God. This desacralization of the European state church system which had been transplanted to Virginia made behavior more important than belief. Not until after the Restoration is there evidence that Virginians began to give a higher place to belief.

For this reason I have placed less emphasis on denominational identification than have previous historians of religion in seventeenth-century Virginia. In taking this approach, I have tried to be honest to what Virginians themselves revealed about their understanding of religion rather than taking the Church of England in the mother country as a model. Naming sects and denominations provides a convenient method of distinguishing between various religious groups, but I

believe this method of identification undermines our understanding of religion in early Virginia by transposing upon the New World a European religious context that did not necessarily survive the Atlantic crossing. Virginians defined themselves neither as Anglicans nor as Puritans, but simply as Christians, or occasionally as English Christians. Virginia's setting in the North American wilderness led to the development of relationships that strayed beyond the narrow confines of European denominational orthodoxy. Within fifteen years of first settlement some colonists had already identified a relationship between Virginia and God distinct from that between God and England. This subtle shift marked a different self-understanding. Over the course of the century this process accelerated, unwittingly encouraged by the Church of England. In their emerging religious self-identity, Anglican Virginians first broke with European myths of national identification. It may also have been how they first started to understand themselves as Virginians rather than as English men and women living in Virginia.

I hope my study will shed light both on the complexity of religion in seventeenth-century Virginia as well as on its importance to the colonists and the colony. For more than that of New England, I believe, Virginia's early religious life is what America's religious life became.

A study of religion in the colonial South touches upon the question of religion and slavery. This topic is not the concern of my study, and I have not addressed this issue.<sup>1</sup> Virginians in the period I studied rarely addressed this issue, so they left little evidence. I believe it is a question more properly--and adequately--addressed by investigating a number of southern colonies.

In organizing my dissertation I have started at the end rather than the beginning, by framing through one man's life the tensions and structures in the colony's religious life, of being both English and Virginian. The first chapter describes a world Virginians created in a land which shaped them and with which they identified. Virginia's Church did not have to develop as it did. There, in fact, need not have been something called Virginia's Church at all. But the land and the Church of England created it. The remainder of the study works toward this framework and is organized following the priority the English placed on their missions to the New World: to the land, to the natives, and--the mission neglected by historians and the seventeenth-century Church of England--to the English Christians in Virginia.

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<sup>1</sup>Those interested in this subject should consult Michael Anesko, "So Discreet a Zeal: Slavery and the Anglican Church in Virginia, 1680-1730," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography XCIII (July 1985), pp. 247-278.

There are two implications to my study that are not properly a part of my dissertation, but bear brief mention. First, place and the institutions created in response to that place defined Virginians more than ideology. Virginians retained the theology of the Church of England, but came to defend their own institutional arrangements. Their identity emerged out of their institutions rather than a particular theology. And second, the Great Awakening in Virginia was the natural consequence of the patterns of devotion encouraged by the religious establishment created in that place. Much of the piety practiced by colonial Anglicans took place away from the sacred space of the church building. It should not be surprising, then, that the Great Awakening in Virginia began in this manner, with people gathering away from the church to read religious works, and then coming to realize that they no longer accepted the doctrines of the established church.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE RELIGIOUS JOURNEYS OF A COLONIAL VIRGINIAN: TENSIONS AND STRUCTURES IN THE COLONY'S RELIGIOUS LIFE

Devereux Jarratt discerned at an early age that he would not earn a living tilling the fields of his native Virginia. "Very irksome" labor, he called it. Unlike exercising race horses or preparing gamecocks for matches, tasks he had enjoyed while working for one of his older brothers, Jarratt held no fondness for plowing and harrowing the soil. "I seemed out of my element," he later recalled, "while at the plough, or ax." Possessed of a ready intellect, a keen memory, and learning enough, Jarratt turned to teaching and for nearly a decade in the mid-eighteenth century earned a modest income as a schoolmaster. He taught first in Albemarle County and later in Cumberland County, usually boarding at the home of a wealthy planter and providing his and the neighbors' children with some rudimentary education.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Devereux Jarratt, The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt, ed. John Coleman (Baltimore, 1806; reprint, New York: Arno Press, Inc., 1969), pp. 20-28, 52. For a shrewd analysis of Jarratt see David L. Holmes, "Devereux Jarratt: A Letter and a Reevaluation," Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church XLVII (March 1978), pp. 37-49. Also on Jarratt see Henry G. Rabe, "The Reverend Devereux Jarratt and the Virginia Social Order," Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church XXXIII (December 1964), pp. 299-336. On education in colonial Virginia see Philip Alexander Bruce, Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century: An Inquiry into the Religious, Moral, Educational, Legal, Military, and Political Condition of the People Based on Original and Contemporary Records (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1910), I, p. 323; John C.

Although teaching may have spared Jarratt from the plow, he was not a very successful tutor. After a decade of dwindling enrollments and indifferent pay, the twenty-nine-year-old Jarratt chose to embark upon a new vocation: "It was in the spring, 1762, when I quit my school, and began to prepare for immediate entrance into Holy Orders." Jarratt's decision to become a minister in Virginia's established Anglican Church began a journey that would take him through the colony's backcountry, to the "metropolis" of Williamsburg, then across the sea to London and back. It was the beginning of one trip and the culmination of another, for Jarratt's spiritual journey had begun years earlier while he was still teaching school.<sup>2</sup>

During his second year as a tutor, Jarratt had boarded at the home of John Cannon of Albemarle County in the colony's piedmont region. Cannon's wife, a New Light

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Rainbolt, From Prescription to Persuasion: Manipulation of Eighteenth [Seventeenth] Century Virginia Economy (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1974), pp. 22-23; George MacLaren Brydon, Virginia's Mother Church and the Political Conditions Under Which it Grew, 2 Vols. (Richmond: The Virginia Historical Society, 1947-1952), I, pp. 388-391.

<sup>2</sup>Life of Jarratt, p. 55. For an account of the process of becoming an Anglican minister for Virginia during the colonial period, see Joan Rezner Gundersen, "The Anglican Ministry in Virginia, 1723-1776: A Study of a Social Class" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1972), pp. 35-68, esp. pp. 52-57; and Joan R. Gundersen, "The Search for Good Men: Recruiting Ministers in Colonial Virginia," Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church XLVIII (December 1979), pp. 461-463.

Presbyterian, soon included Jarratt in her nightly routine of reading a sermon. While she read aloud, Jarratt listened and "affected a very close attention," sometimes asking her to read a second sermon so as to impress her with his feigned piety. Their routine continued for nearly two months, one evening blending into the next "without any other effect on me, but fatigue and drowsiness." One night, however, while Mrs. Cannon read a sermon on the text "Then opened he their understanding," Jarratt perceived God acting upon him through her spoken words. "It pleased God," that evening, "to draw out my attention, and fix it on the subject, in a manner unknown to me before."<sup>3</sup>

Not that the young teacher was completely ignorant of religion. His parents had taught him the basic elements of the Christian faith when he was still a child. They had rarely attended the nearby parish church, despite a law requiring each inhabitant of the colony to do so at least once every four weeks, but Jarratt's parents had raised him and his brothers in the Church of England. They had taught their children "short prayers" and, as Jarratt recounted, "made us perfect in repeating the Church Catechism." They had also read to their children stories from the Bible, encouraging them to commit passages to memory: "Before I knew the letters of the

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<sup>3</sup>Life of Jarratt, pp. 33-34.

alphabet, I could repeat a whole chapter in the Bible . . . especially if the subject of it struck my fancy." He particularly liked the tale of Samson.<sup>4</sup>

It is not surprising that young Devereux received his early religious education from a book introduced to him by his parents rather than from the minister of the local parish. Virginia's institutional church was weak in Jarratt's day, as it had been throughout the colonial period. There were rarely enough ministers to fill the colony's vacant cures. And the colonists' "scatter'd manner of planting in that wilderness" also hindered the church's efforts to spread the Gospel. Virginians did not settle in towns like inhabitants of the mother country or England's other colonies. Instead, they scattered about the countryside, often settling along one of the many rivers which divided the tidewater and piedmont areas into a series of peninsulas. On their plantations or small farms they cultivated tobacco, and later, still more tobacco. In a letter read to the Royal Society in 1688, the Reverend John Clayton of James City Parish reported: "The Country is thinly inhabited; the Living solitary & unsociable; Trading confused, & dispersed; besides other Inconveniences." This style of living appalled many English commentators who believed the Virginians'

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<sup>4</sup>Life of Jarratt, pp. 16, 20, 35; Rhys Isaac, The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), p. 58.



dispersed method of planting themselves was an unnatural way of life and a threat to society, education, and religion.<sup>5</sup>

Ministers tried to accommodate themselves to these circumstances as best they could, but the colony's dispersed population weakened the influence of the established church. The colonists' insistence on living so far from each other disturbed many clergymen. Virginians lived like "Hermities" one minister complained, "as might make their due and constant attendance upon the publick worship and Service of God impossible to them." He compared members of Virginia's Anglican Church to plants that "grow wilde in that Wildernesse," untended by

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<sup>5</sup>Edmund S. Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975), p. 374; R[oger] G[reene], Virginia's Cure: or An Advisive Narrative Concerning Virginia (London, 1662) in Peter Force, ed., Tracts and Other Papers, Relating Principally to the Origin, Settlement, and Progress of the Colonies in North America, 4 Vols. (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1963), III, no. 15, pp. 4-5; Warren M. Billings, John E. Selby, and Thad W. Tate, Colonial Virginia: A History (White Plains, NY: KTO Press, 1986), pp. 65, 134-136; Henry Hartwell, James Blair, and Edward Chilton, The Present State of Virginia, and the College (London, 1727), ed., Hunter Dickinson Farish (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg, Inc., 1940), p. 67; T.H. Breen, Tobacco Culture: The Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of Revolution (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 41; "A Letter from Mr. John Clayton to the Royal Society," Force, III, no. 12, pp. 12, 21; John C. Rainbolt, "The Absence of Towns in Seventeenth-Century Virginia," Journal of Southern History XXXV (August 1969), pp. 347, 343. See also "John Clayton of James City, Afterwards of Crofton, Yorkshire," William and Mary Quarterly, 2d ser., I (April 1921), p. 114.

a gardener. Alexander Forbes, the minister of Isle of Wight Parish on the south side of the James River, expressed similar concerns: "the distance of the way may hinder many at sometimes who cannot be prepared to come X. XII. or XV miles, tho' that they might and would if they had but V. or VI." Consequently, Virginia's clergymen often acted more like missionaries than settled ministers. Parishes in Virginia were far larger than those in England, and most parishes contained more than one church. Colonial parsons served each on a rotating basis, officiating and preaching first at one church and then at the others in their turn on succeeding Sabbaths. Settlers were therefore lucky if a minister read divine service near their residences once every two or three weeks.<sup>6</sup>

These hindrances to the church's teaching ministry meant that much religious education became the

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<sup>6</sup>G[reene], pp. 6-8; Alexander Forbes to Bishop Edmund Gibson, July 21, 1724, in William Stevens Perry, ed., Historical Collections Relating to the American Colonial Church, Vol. 1 (Hartford, 1870; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1969), p. 328; Bruce, I, pp. 191-193; Richard Beeman, The Evolution of the Southern Backcountry: A Case Study of Lunenburg County, Virginia, 1746-1832 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), p. 21; Historical Collections, pp. 273, 284, 292, 299, 312, 327; Hartwell, Blair, and Chilton, p. 65. For the activities of colonial ministers see Arthur Pierce Middleton, "The Colonial Virginia Parson," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., XXVI (July 1969), pp. 425-440. For a similar view of Virginia's "novel environment" transforming traditional English patterns, but in law and legal practice, see Warren M. Billings, "English Legal Literature as a Source of Law and Legal Practice for Seventeenth-Century Virginia," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography LXXXVII (October 1979), pp. 403-416.

responsibility of private families rather than the public church. Late in the seventeenth century, Governor William Berkeley responded to an inquiry from the Crown regarding the instruction of the colonists in the "christian religion" by explaining that Virginians followed "the same course that is taken in England out of towns; every man according to his ability instructing his children." Jarratt's parents were no different, and they provided for their children's spiritual welfare as best they could.<sup>7</sup>

Jarratt probably learned his catechism from either the edition included in the Book of Common Prayer or from the Whiggish English minister John Lewis' popular The Church Catechism Explain'd by Way of Question and Answer. This volume was a favorite among Virginians just as it was in England, especially in the years after the first stirrings of evangelical dissent. The work proved so popular that in 1738 William Parks, who printed the Virginia Gazette, published an edition out of his Williamsburg press, advertising it as "being very proper for a New Year's Gift to Children." At no more than a shilling a copy, Lewis' Catechism was probably more affordable to middling folk like the Jarratt family than

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<sup>7</sup>William Waller Hening, ed., The Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia . . . 13 Vols. (Richmond, 1809-1823), II, p. 517.

the more expensive Book of Common Prayer, which sold for anywhere from six to eighteen shillings.<sup>8</sup>

Jarratt's parents, however, could have chosen from any one of several catechetical works to provide their children's early religious instruction. The Book of Common Prayer, Lewis' little volume, and Bishop Thomas Wilson's The Knowledge and Practice of Christianity Made Easy to the Meanest Capacities: or, An Essay Towards an Instruction for the Indians were all widely available in the colony. For in addition to dividing their time between the churches and chapels of ease in their

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<sup>8</sup>Virginia Gazette, December 15-22, 1738; February 9-16, February 16-23, February 23-March 2, March 2-9, March 9-16, 1738/39. England and the colonies did not adopt the Gregorian Calendar until 1752. Although the year did not change until March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, New Year's Day was often celebrated on January 1, the Feast of the Circumcision in the Church of England's liturgical calendar and a time when people exchanged presents in remembrance of the gifts brought by the magi to the Christ child at Epiphany. New Year's may have been a traditional time for Virginians to pass along religious works to their children. The devotional work John Page wrote for his son was given as a New Year's gift. The Gazette advertised Lewis's Catechism as a New Year's gift from mid-December through late March, aiming at both New Year's dates in the English calendar. See David Cressy, Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), p. 16. Jeremy Gregory, "The Eighteenth-Century Reformation: the Pastoral Task of Anglican Clergy after 1689," in John Walsh, Colin Haydon, and Stephen Taylor, eds., The Church of England c.1689-c.1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 72-73, 83. The prices for Lewis' Catechism and the Book of Common Prayer are from the William Hunter Printing Office Journal, 1750-1752 passim (typescript), Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library.

parishes, ministers spread the teachings of the established church by distributing these and other religious books to those who wanted the volumes. John Talbot, a missionary for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), wrote from Virginia requesting prayer books "new or old, of all sorts & sizes," explaining that if he received these books, he would "carry them 100 miles about and disperse them abroad to all that desired 'em . . . 'tis a comfort to the People in the Wilderness to see that some body takes care of them." For Alexander Forbes, books and tracts helped bring the Church's teachings to people in areas where ministers could not travel frequently. In 1724 he asked Bishop Edmund Gibson to send him "such books and printed sermons according to the doctrine of the Church of England . . . to be dispersed and read among such remote Inhabitants of the parish as live at a great distance from all Churches and chapels, where Gods word is commonly taught and read." And William Dawson, the commissary or representative of the Bishop of London in Virginia, reported in 1743 that he had recently distributed four hundred copies of Wilson's Essay throughout the colony. He later asked Virginia's ministers to put the bishop's essays "into the hands of every Schoolmaster, Scholar, and Person who can read, in your Parish." The Anglican Church did not lead the settlers into the Virginia wilderness.

Rather, it followed them, trying to bring religion to a people who in theory were already Christians, but in fact were often unchurched, by circumstances if not by choice.<sup>9</sup>

Books became substitutes for ministers who could not properly serve their parishes and for the general scarcity of clergymen. William Dawson admonished the clergy to be especially careful when they distributed books to their parishioners: "give some suitable Advice, and Instruction how to make use of this excellent Charity to the Purposes

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<sup>9</sup>John Talbot to Richard Gillingham, May 3, 1703, SPG Archives, ser. A, Vol. 1, f. 120, Virginia Colonial Records Project (henceforth cited as VCRP), Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; see also William Black to SPG Secretary, April 7, 1711, SPG Archives, ser. A, Vol. 6, f. 101, (VCRP). Alexander Forbes to Bishop Edmund Gibson, July 21, 1724, Fulham Palace Papers, Vol. XII, ff. 27-30, (VCRP); William Dawson to Henry Neuman, [?] 22, 1743, Dawson Papers, Library of Congress, Vol. I, f. 16; William Dawson to Dr. Bearcroft, July 12, 1744, Dawson Papers, Vol. I, f. 22. The commissary was the bishop of London's representative in the colony. Virginia's commissary's were: James Blair (1689-1743), William Dawson (1743-1752), Thomas Dawson (1752-1761), William Robinson (1761-1768), James Horricks (1768-1771), and John Camm (1771-1776). Warren Billings has argued that John Clayton, sometime minister of James City Parish, served as commissary prior to Blair. See his Virginia's Viceroy: Their Majesties' Governor General: Francis Howard, Lord Howard of Effingham (Fairfax, VA: George Mason University Press, 1991), p. 80. The vast bulk of manuscript sources pertaining to seventeenth-century Virginia can be found in the Virginia Colonial Records Project, a collection containing microfilm copies of materials relevant to Virginia's colonial history located in various English archives. Unless otherwise noted, all manuscript collections are in the VCRP. The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library in Williamsburg, the Alderman Library at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, and the Virginia State Library, Richmond, all possess copies of this collection. Anyone seeking convenient research access to the VCRP should consult the edition at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library.

of a Christian Life. For . . . the best of Books, when lightly given, will be lightly valued, and as lightly made us of." Yet ministers were not alone in their estimation of religious books. People then commonly believed that men and women should find happiness in God and religion. Some Virginians felt deeply the absence of the institutional church in their lives and responded by turning to English devotional materials for religious instruction and guidance. Although ministers often distributed religious tracts to their poorer parishioners, more well-to-do colonists purchased the same materials from England, or, after 1732, from the printing office of William Parks in Williamsburg. Post-riders for William Hunter, who succeeded Parks as publisher of the Virginia Gazette, frequently carried religious titles alone to sell on their travels throughout the colony.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>William Dawson to Henry Neuman, [?] 22, 1743, Dawson Papers, Vol. I, f. 16; Patricia U. Bonomi and Peter R. Eisenstadt, "Church Adherence in the Eighteenth-Century British American Colonies," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., XXXIX (April 1982), p. 245; James Maury Sermons, Sermon no. 90, p. 13, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; James Blair, Our Saviour's Divine Sermon on the Mount, Contain'd in the Vth, VIth, and VIIth Chapters of St. Mathew's Gospel, Explained; and the Practice of it Recommended in Divers Sermons and Discourses, 5 Vols. (London, 1722), I, p. 202, IV, p. 225; Robert Paxton Sermon Book, Sermon no. 20, "Of Man's Blessed End," p. 4, Houghton Library, Harvard University, (There is no pagination in Paxton's sermon book, but each sermon is precisely eight pages long. I have cited the appropriate page from one to eight for each individual sermon.); Richard L. Morton, Colonial Virginia, 2 Vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), II, pp. 515-516; Billings, Selby, and Tate, p. 215; William Hunter

In Virginia's "novel environment," English devotional works provided the colony's church with some measure of theological consistency. Virginians read the same religious volumes, and many ministers borrowed liberally from those works when preparing their sermons. The origin of many colonial sermons lay in the printed discourses of the great English preachers such as John Tillotson, the latitudinarian archbishop of Canterbury, whose works were a favorite in Virginia among laity and clergy alike. This connection with England, perhaps closer than with distant parts of the colony, gave Virginians a certain religious uniformity that prevented the colony's church from slipping into some form of Anglican congregationalism. Preaching at Paul's Cross in London to the Virginia Company in 1620, John King, the bishop of London, had referred briefly to the mother country's role in furthering the religious life of the colony: "Your English Colonie in Virginia (I name hir the little sister that had no breasts) hath drawne from the breasts of this Citty and Diocesse a thousand pounds toward hir Church." Financial contributions to help Virginia's church soon dwindled.<sup>11</sup> Yet even after English civil and religious

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Printing Office Journal, 1750-1752 passim, esp. June 3 and 17, 1751.

<sup>11</sup>"Anglican Ministry in Virginia," p. 183; John King, A Sermon at Paules Crosse, On Behalfe of Paules Church (London, 1620), p. 48, Virginia Historical Society. On Tillotson, see Louis G. Locke, Tillotson: A Study in



leaders abandoned Virginia's church in the 1630s and with too few ministers to serve the colony's parishes, Virginians throughout the colonial period drew spiritual sustenance from the religious literature that sailed from English ports.

An English author wrote the catechism Jarratt learned. Catechisms were formal works, designed to introduce individuals young and old to the basic tenets of the faith. They presented rudimentary elements of doctrine, theology, and duty in an alternating pattern of questions and answers that could be easily memorized.

Lewis' Catechism was much like others:

- Q. Why do you stile God, Almighty?
- A. Because he has Power to dispose of, and govern all Things as he pleaseth.
- Q. What is it to honour God's name?
- A. It is to use it with Reverence in our Oaths, Vows, Promises, Discourses, and Worship.

Edward Mashborne, a minister in Nansemond County, wrote to England that the catechism given him by an SPG minister had proved very useful in his parish: "Thro' God's Assistnce, I have fixt not only in Children but in those of Riper Years the Fundamentals of Religion, whereby they are able to give a Rational & well grounded Accott. of the Faith they were Baptized in." In the town of

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Seventeenth-Century Literature (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1954); Norman Fiering, "The First American Enlightenment: Tillotson, Leverett, and Philosophical Anglicanism," New England Quarterly LIV (September 1981), pp. 307-344.

Williamsburg, Commissary Dawson held a somewhat more elevated understanding of the catechism. He believed it could help "prevent the Temptations of the Devil, by . . . imprinting on their tender Minds, the Im[age] of Virtue, & the Beauty of Holiness." When Jarratt and his brothers set about memorizing the catechism, they engaged in a rational exercise in which they gave assent to, and gained understanding of, the doctrines and beliefs of Virginia's established church.<sup>12</sup>

Yet books did more than instruct individuals in virtue and introduce them to the fundamental beliefs of the church. Virginia's clergy believed that books could have a powerful influence in the lives of individuals. James Craig's view was typical of that held by other ministers in colonial Virginia. Conditions in the backcountry shocked him when he took charge of Lunenburg County's Cumberland Parish in 1759. Nearly thirty years earlier, William Byrd II had been struck by the area's rudeness, "describing it as a place "quite out of Christendom." Place-names in the region testified to the hardships of life there: Wolf Trap, Difficult, Wild Cat, and Terrible. Existence was often coarse as well; several

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<sup>12</sup>Life of Jarratt, p. 24; John Lewis, The Church Catechism Explain'd by Way of Question and Answer (London, 1712), pp. 36, 78; Edward Mashborne to SPG Secretary, April 25, 1716, SPG Archives, ser. A, Vol. 11, ff. 401-402, (VCRP); undated sermon notes, Dawson Papers, Vol. II, f. 301.

families had patented land along Fucking Creek and the Tickle Cunt Branch. Craig seemed to wonder how religion could thrive in such a setting. "There were many Settlements of People," he wrote, "which by Reason of their Distance from any place of Divine Worship, had never or seldom, been at Church, since they were baptized." Many of those people who did attend divine service he learned were "ignorant of the very first Principles of Christianity."<sup>13</sup>

Life among Lunenburg's settlers was harsh, marked by drunkenness, debauchery, and profaneness. County justices rarely meddled with such delicate issues as religion and morality. Bastardy, swearing, and violating the Sabbath usually went unpunished. Even in more settled and civilized York County offenders were not presented to the county court for not attending church unless they also had made themselves nuisances in some other fashion beforehand. Craig turned to religious books to help reform his parishioners: "the putting proper Books in their Hands will, I conceive, be one very good Expedient for this Purpose." To Thomas Dawson, then Virginia's commissary, Craig sent requests for volumes on baptism and the Lord's Supper, for tracts explaining the duty of God-

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<sup>13</sup>Beeman, pp. 15, 18; James Craig to Thomas Dawson, September 8, 1759, Dawson Papers, Vol. II, ff. 217-218. Cumberland Parish was identical in size to Lunenburg County: 5,000 square miles; see Beeman, pp. 46, 52.

parents, for Bishop William Beveridge's frequently reprinted sermon on the excellency of the Book of Common Prayer, and for a series of other texts. "I would freely give any Consideration," he wrote, "to have these & such other Books to distribute among the people NOW." It seemed as though religious books could help create a new world in the American wilderness. The ideas they conveyed might transform lives and lead people to act differently, to repent, and to reform. According to one historian, for people in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries "to read was to feel," for "reading involved the affective self--the heart, the will." Books were capable of arousing strong emotions and of persuading individuals to act and think in ways that might please God.<sup>14</sup>

Books might be dangerous, for they could persuade individuals to follow the teachings of a different denomination or to fall away from religion. "The Plain Account, a most dangerous Commodity, has been lately imported into this Country," William Dawson complained to the bishop of London in 1736, "Having mentioned the Bane, I hope Your Lordship will be pleased to furnish us with a

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<sup>14</sup>James Craig to Thomas Dawson, September 8, 1759, Dawson Papers, Vol. II, ff. 217-218; Beeman, pp. 44-45, 206-207; Leslie M. Kesler, "'For Thus His Neglect,' Grand Jury Presentments for Failure to Attend Church, York County, Virginia, 1750-1775" (M.A. thesis, College of William and Mary, 1992), pp. 77-81; David D. Hall, Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1989), p. 40.

proper Antidote against it." Dawson had responded in traditional Virginia fashion. Long before he had to worry about The Plain Account and the free-thought doctrines it espoused, Anglican ministers and itinerant Quakers had been spreading contrary religious works throughout the colony as they contended for Virginians' souls. Widespread dispersal of Anglican tracts made it difficult for the Quakers to attract converts. The Chuckatuck Quarterly Meeting confirmed in 1702, however, that they would continue their efforts "notwh standing these wicked Instruments yt hath sent soe many lying books out of England, wch the hireling Priests make it part of their Busines" to distribute. Two years later, the London Meeting suggested that Virginia's Quakers might be better served if they listed "ye Tytles of Adversaries Books that are disperced in your Province." Had the Meeting in London known what volumes were being used, "we could more Easily chosen answers suited to obviate their Calumnies."<sup>15</sup> As ambassadors for Christ, ministers of many persuasions spread the Gospel in Virginia by distributing English devotional works among the populace, trying to persuade the colonists to take what they believed was the safest course to heaven.

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<sup>15</sup>William Dawson to Bishop Edmund Gibson, September 14, 1736, Fulham Palace Papers, Vol. XII, ff. 249-250, (VCRP); Epistles Received, Vol. 1, f. 383, Library of the Society of Friends, (VCRP); Epistles Sent, Vol. 2, f. 16, Library of the Society of Friends, (VCRP).

Devereux Jarratt's experiences exemplified the role of books in the religious life of the colony. Like many other Virginians, he had derived most of his early spiritual learning from devotional works by English authors. One of the many religious volumes available in the colony changed his life. As he sat in the Cannon household listening to a sermon read aloud, Jarratt perceived God acting upon him, focusing his attention upon the discourse. "Then opened he their understanding." This experience was much different from the rote memorization of a catechism, at once wonderful and terrifying, involving invitation as well as damnation. The event opened to Jarratt the possibility of a personal relationship with the Christian deity. It called him to further discoveries of "spiritual illumination" and at the same time brought an understanding of condemnation for sin and the realization that "I was a stranger to that spiritual illumination and its consequent discoveries, and . . . was yet in a dark and dangerous state," unprepared "for death and judgment."<sup>16</sup>

Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century preachers called the sensation Jarratt experienced the fear of God: a feeling of awe. It attracted him to a deity of infinite power, at the same time making him aware of his own smallness and sinfulness and consuming him with

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<sup>16</sup>Life of Jarratt, pp. 34-35.

uneasiness. Early in the eighteenth century Robert Paxton had tried to explain the inner workings of this sensation to his Tidewater congregation at Kecoughtan (presentday Hampton, Virginia). "Fear is a passion yt is most deeply rooted in our nature, & flows immediately from yt principle of self-preservatn qch God hath planted in every man," he preached. Man has a "natural dread" of all things which can destroy him, "& the greatest danger is from the greatest power, & yt is omnipotency." "The fear of God," he explained, "is an inward acknowledgement of a holy & just being qch is armed wt an Almighty & irresistible power, God having hid in every mans Conscience a secret awe, & dread of his infinite power & eternal justice."<sup>17</sup>

Anglicans in Virginia often spoke of this sensation when they contemplated the mystery and wonder of nature. A great storm, the beauty of a flower, or the power of the sea which separated them from England all inspired this response, what one European philosopher called "a sudden surprise of the soul." John Clayton, a botanist and the first president of the Virginia Society for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge, knew this feeling. Governor John

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<sup>17</sup>Paxton, Sermon no. 19, "On the Wisdom of Fearing God," p. 1. For a sixteenth-century example of wonder and religion, see the quotation from John Foxes' Acts and Monuments in Richard Helgerson, Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 255.

Page wrote of Clayton: "I have heard him say, whilst examining a flower, that he could not look into one, without seeing the display of infinite power and contrivance; and that he thought it impossible for a BOTANIST to be an ATHEIST." The "most Dreadfull Hurry Cane" which struck Virginia in 1667 inspired a similar response in some people. The tempest destroyed half the colony's tobacco crop. Rivers and bays rose to such heights that even those who "lived not in sight of the Rivers yet were then forced to climbe to the topp of their houses to keep themselves above water." Another account described how "Trees in the Woods all over the Country were blown up by the roots in an innumerable quantity." Councilor Thomas Ludwell believed "all the Ellements were at Strife," contending to see "wch of them should doe most towards the reduction of the creation into a Second Chaos, it was wonderfull to consider the contrary effects of that Storme."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Stephen Greenblatt, Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 20; Edmund and Dorothy Berkeley, John Clayton: Pioneer of American Botany (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), p. 28; Morton, II, p. 831; Thomas Ludwell to Lord Berkeley of Stretton, November 7, 1667, Public Records Office, Colonial Office (henceforth cited as PRO CO) 1/21, ff. 282-283, (VCRP). For an account which interpreted the 1667 storm as a judgment from God, see Strange News From Virginia, Being a True Relation of a Great Tempest in Virginia (London, 1667), pp. 6-7. For an additional example of the wonder and awe with which Virginians viewed natural events, see the poetry by the Rev. Hartwell in the Virginia Gazette, January 25-February 1, 1739/40, p. 4.



Although less sensually dramatic than the forces of creation and the beauties of nature, the content of books too could arouse feelings of wonder and awe at the enormity of God's might. Far from the church or meeting house and in relative privacy, Jarratt was awakened to the deity's power. One minister explained such events as "a certain inward working of [God's] spirit, in & wt the minds of men." Several decades earlier a devotional work read in private had also stirred deep emotions in William Byrd II of Westover: "I read a sermon of Dr. Tillotson's which affected me very much and made me shed some tears of repentance." While Byrd responded to what he had read with an act of repentance, Jarratt soon turned to a series of religious "helps" to direct his growth in the faith. He attended sermons, borrowed devotional volumes, and discussed religion with friends, all the while cooperating with God in his spiritual journey.<sup>19</sup>

Sermons, a traditional part of Protestant worship, were important to colonial Virginians. Yet they were also a slippery means of spreading the Gospel message. Ministers often acknowledged limits to the effectiveness

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<sup>19</sup>Life of Jarratt, pp. 46-47; Paxton, Sermon no. 11, "Of Salvation," p. 1; Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, eds., The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709-1712 (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1941), p. 175. See also George Keith, The Power of the Gospel, in the Conversion of Sinners (Annapolis, 1703), esp. p. 11. For a good overview of wonder and awe and their religious context in the seventeenth century, see Greenblatt, esp. pp. 20-23, 78-80.

of the spoken word. George Keith, an SPG missionary active in Virginia in the early 1700s, claimed that without frequent repetition, spoken words were "as soon forgot as heard, for most part." Even with the plain sermons popular in Virginia, human speech passed the ear rapidly, and only the pithiest of sentiments could be expected to have much impact on a congregation. Jarratt admitted that he "understood not a tenth part" of the sermons Mrs. Cannon read to him. Byrd evaluated discourses he heard preached, rating them in his diary as good, very good, or poor. On at least one occasion, a minister alluded to contemporary events in Virginia while preaching, thereby leading Byrd to think about his own position in provincial politics and, thus, disrupting his devotions. Those sermons he read, however, Byrd noted as having edified him or having caused him to repent. Readings and devotions practiced alone away from public worship, one minister wrote, were "generally more serious and contemplative" because individuals were there less likely to be disturbed.<sup>20</sup>

Like Byrd, Jarratt also turned to books for religious edification, and they were a special delight as he

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<sup>20</sup>George Keith, The Notes of the True Church With the Application of them to the Church of England, And the Great Sin of Seperation [sic] from Her (New York, 1704), p. 8; Second sermon on Matthew 6:6, p. 4, James Maury Sermons, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. On the fleeting nature of hearing, see also William Dawson to Dr. Bearcroft, July 12, 1744, Dawson Papers, Vol. I, f. 22.

struggled to understand his evolving relationship with God. In the evenings, he later recalled, "my custom . . . was to sit down flat on the hearth, erect the volume on the end of a chest, which stood near, and, by the light of the fire, read till near midnight." He read numerous volumes, usually those written by dissenting authors such as Isaac Watts, Richard Baxter, and Philip Doddridge. He read Church of England authors as well--an eclecticism typical of colonial Virginians--and a borrowed copy of the churchman William Burkitt's work on the New Testament offered him much "light and instruction." More than any other work, Burkitt opened the Bible to Jarratt's understanding. It also led the young teacher to question the criticism he had heard directed at Virginia's established church. Gradually, Jarratt changed his opinion of the Anglican communion and its formal liturgy. He read the Book of Common Prayer and thought well of it, claiming: "it contained an excellent system of doctrine and public worship--equal to any other in the world." Although he had originally intended to seek Presbyterian orders, Jarratt decided to become a minister in the Church of England, despite the danger of sailing to London for ordination.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Life of Jarratt, pp. 46, 40, 58. The title of Burkitt's volume, not given by Jarratt, is Expository Notes, with Practical Observations on the New Testament. See Dictionary of National Biography (London, 1886), Vol. VII, pp. 371-372.

Having decided to enter the Anglican ministry, Jarratt needed to find a parish. Without title to a cure, Virginia's commissary would not send him to London to receive Holy Orders. Jarratt soon found a vacancy in Lunenburg County. By 1762, the Reverend James Craig had grown weary with conditions at Cumberland Parish and gave the vestry there notice that he intended to leave. Jarratt applied to the vestry--unlike contemporary English practice, in Virginia the vestry selected the minister--and probably met with them at the mother church located on Reedy Creek. In late May, Cumberland Parish's vestry granted a title to "Mr. Deverix Jarratte, a Candidate for Holy Orders," and recommended him both to the governor and the commissary.<sup>22</sup>

From Lunenburg Jarratt traveled to King and Queen County on the Middle Peninsula between the York and Rappahannock Rivers to present his credentials to Commissary William Robinson. He arrived in early June, carrying with him title to Cumberland Parish and letters from three clergymen of the established church bearing testimony to his piety and moral character. As the

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<sup>22</sup>Landon C. Bell, ed., The Vestry Book of Cumberland Parish, Lunenburg County, Virginia, 1746-1816 (Richmond: The William Byrd Press, Inc., 1930), p. 383; Clive Raymond Hallman, Jr., "The Vestry as a Unit of Local Government in Colonial Virginia" (Ph.D. diss., University of Georgia, 1987), p. 223. See also Joan Rezner Gundersen, "The Myth of the Independent Virginia Vestry," Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church XLIV (June 1975), pp. 133-141.

commissaries did with other postulants, Robinson examined Jarratt in some matters of faith and doctrine. Satisfied that he possessed at least a "Moderate share of Learning," the commissary wrote and signed a letter to the bishop of London approving Jarratt's candidacy for orders. As part of his feud with Governor Francis Fauquier, Robinson sealed the letter so that the governor would have to write his own recommendation when Jarratt called upon him in Williamsburg. Jarratt completed the thirty-mile trip south to Williamsburg within a few days, and like Robinson, Fauquier also wrote a letter urging Bishop Richard Osbaldeston to ordain him. The necessary bureaucratic paperwork taken care of, Jarratt sailed for England a few months later.<sup>23</sup>

The voyage to London caused Jarratt much anxiety, and he worried about the "peril and danger" of sailing to England and back. Any voyage across the Atlantic risked storms or privateers. Foul conditions aboard ship discouraged some from making the journey. Nicholas Moreau, an Anglican minister in Virginia who despised the colony, wanted to return "home," but did not think he could endure the trip: "My weakness makes me afraid of

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<sup>23</sup>Life of Jarratt, p. 55; Commissary William Robinson to Bishop Osbaldeston, June 8, 1762, Fulham Palace Papers, Vol. XIII, f. 54, (VCRP); Francis Fauquier to Bishop Osbaldeston, June 12, 1762, Fulham Palace Papers, Vol. XIII, f. 106, (VCRP).

not being capable to bear the ill smell of a ship, nor to digest the victuals wich commonly are afforded therein."<sup>24</sup>

Jarratt's voyage to Great Britain was uneventful until he reached the Irish coast. There he made land at Fair Foreland, the site where Roman Catholics had massacred Protestants during the reign of King Charles I. Jarratt had read of this event and believed the inflated estimate of 100,000 Protestant deaths. The sight of the town frightened him. This was a different world, and the European heritage of religious violence was foreign to the young colonist. Yet the denominational animosities of Europe's past seemed to linger: "The sight of that place, with the recollection of that massacre made such a deep and awful impression on my heart, as is not easily described." His Virginia had never known such religious fury.<sup>25</sup>

The source of Jarratt's fears changed once his voyage continued. A vessel in the distance was spotted by the ship's captain, who identified it as a French privateer.

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<sup>24</sup>Life of Jarratt, p. 58; Gundersen, "Recruiting Good Men," p. 462; Nicolas Moreau to Archbishop Thomas Tenison, May 29, 1700, Fulham Palace Papers, Vol. XI, ff. 119-120, (VCRP). See also Thomas Ludwell to Secretary Coventry, April 3, 1677, Coventry Papers, Vol. LXVIII, f. 28, (VCRP). For a travel journal noting conditions at sea during a voyage to Virginia, see Luther Anderson, ed., "Diary of Rev. Andrew Rudman, July 25, 1696-June 14, 1697," German American Annals IX (1907), pp. 9-17.

<sup>25</sup>Life of Jarratt, p. 60; R.F. Foster, ed., The Oxford History of Ireland (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 120-121.

All hands were called to arms, Jarratt taking his place at a nine-pound cannon. Although alarmed by the prospect of defending the ship, "to do honor to America, [he] declared that a Virginian had steel to the back, and would never flinch." The vessel turned away, and Jarratt did not have to prove his courage. Yet his journey to England revealed that he thought of himself as a Virginian. After passing the canonical examinations, Jarratt boasted that he, a colonial, had exceeded the marks of ordinands from Cambridge and Oxford.<sup>26</sup>

By the time Jarratt reached London, Advent had begun, and Bishop Osbaldeston refused to ordain candidates during this season of preparation. Sometime during the liturgical periods of Christmas or the season after Epiphany the bishop ordained Jarratt to the priesthood of the Church of England. The colonial church in which he would serve, however, was far different from that of the mother country. Although English catechetical and devotional writings contributed to the religious development of colonial Virginians, for dissenters as well as for members of the established church, they did so in an ecclesiastical world structured differently from that of England.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Life of Jarratt, p. 61; Holmes, p. 41.

<sup>27</sup>Life of Jarratt, pp. 71-72.

No Anglican bishop ever held a see in colonial North America. Thus, the young postulant had been forced to travel to London, for only a bishop could ordain a man to the ministry of the Anglican Church. But with the exception of conferring holy orders, Virginia's regular clergy performed many of a bishop's duties. They consecrated church buildings and admitted those who had reached the age for confirmation to the communion table, although they did not always make vigorous efforts to catechize the young before allowing them to receive the sacrament.<sup>28</sup>

Nor did ecclesiastical courts exist to try those who breached God's holy laws. In an effort to execute "Ecclesiastical discipline" more conveniently, James Blair--Virginia's first commissary--had attempted to establish church courts in 1690. He had intended to divide the colony into four regions, each with a surrogate commissary to "put in execution the Ecclesiastical laws against all cursers swearers & blasphemers, all whoremongers fornicators and Adulterers, all drunkards ranters and profaners of the Lords day and contemners of the Sacrament, and agt all other scandalous persons." The House of Burgesses balked at this proposal, and it died

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<sup>28</sup>Brydon, I, p. 407, n.8; Bonomi and Eisenstadt, p. 252. See also Graham Frank to Thomas, Lord Bishop of London, November 11, 1756, Public Records Office, High Court of Admiralty Papers 30/258, f. 161, (VCRP).



quietly. Henry Compton, the bishop of London, also disapproved of Blair's plan and later directed him not to "set up any Spiritual Court for the Laity."<sup>29</sup>

In 1725 the Privy Council discussed whether ecclesiastical courts should be established in Virginia, and they decided it would be a poor idea. "Many of the first Planters who went from hence," they reasoned, "may well be supposed to be Persons of unsettled Condition, and not over regular in their Methods of Life; and for many Years after their Settlement, they had no Ministers nor Churches, nor for a long time after the Settlement of Ministers and Churches had they any face of Spiritual Discipline among them." The Privy Council believed that establishing church courts among a people of such "great Looseness of Manners" would be imprudent. They recognized that in religious matters Virginia was not England, and that the weakness of the colony's established church throughout the seventeenth century had led to the

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<sup>29</sup>Report of the General Meeting of the Clergy, July 23, 1690, PRO CO 5/1305 ff. 94-95, (VCRP); Brydon, I, pp. 286-287; James Blair to Bishop Gibson, February 10, 1723/24, Fulham Palace Papers, Vol. XII, ff. 3-4, (VCRP). On ecclesiastical courts see also in the Fulham Palace Papers, James Blair to Bishop Robinson, November 18, 1714, Vol. XIV, ff. 221-222, (VCRP). See also Billings, Selby, and Tate, pp. 158-160; and Louis B. Wright, ed., "William Byrd's Defense of Sir Edmund Andros," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., II (January 1945), p. 62.

emergence of an ecclesiastical establishment somewhat different from that of the mother country.<sup>30</sup>

In Virginia, moral offenses were matters for the civil authorities. Churchwardens presented individuals to the county courts for drunkenness, swearing, fornication, and failure to pay their tithes to the church. Those found guilty were either levied a fine or whipped, although this latter punishment was usually reserved for servants and people thought to be generally disreputable. The traditional English practice of doing public penance for one's sins at the parish church was rarely prescribed after 1660. And in some backcountry counties where life was often violent and coarse, the courts rarely meddled with matters of morality.<sup>31</sup>

Jarratt held title to just such a backcountry parish, or so he thought. In the summer of 1762, after Jarratt's departure for London, James Craig had changed his mind about leaving Cumberland Parish. The vestry unanimously received him back as their minister and agreed to finish construction on his glebe house. When Jarratt landed in Yorktown in April 1763 and, as he phrased it, "had the pleasure of treading on my native soil," he had discovered

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<sup>30</sup>Action of the Privy Council to Bishop Gibson's Proposal, April 26, 1725, Fulham Palace Papers, Vol. XXXVI, ff. 63-66, (VCRP).

<sup>31</sup>Beeman, p. 44. The date of 1650 as an approximate end point for prescribing public penance at church comes from my survey of the York County Records, Vol. I-XI.

that he had no cure. He soon learned, however, of a vacancy at Bath Parish in Dinwiddie County, in the basin formed by the Appomattox and Roanoke Rivers on the Southside. In August, after hearing him preach three times, the vestry accepted Jarratt as their minister. He had returned to Virginia as a missionary--for that is how the Church of England saw its ministers in the colonies--to bring the Gospel to a people who earned their living through the "irksome" labor of harrowing and tilling the soil.<sup>32</sup>

The task Jarratt and other colonial ministers faced was similar to that of clergymen in England, bringing the Reformation to the English-speaking people, a process that as late as the mid-eighteenth century had not yet been completed. "At home and abroad," Jeremy Gregory has recently observed, "Anglican clergy were concerned to find the best ways of converting people to Anglicanism." Catechisms and other devotional works help them spread the Gospel to the many nominal Christians in England and the colonies. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, founded in 1699, and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, founded two years later, assisted colonial ministers by sending them religious volumes to distribute among their parishioners. Yet, as

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<sup>32</sup>Morton, II, p. 606; Bell, p. 383; Rabe, p. 314; Life of Jarratt, p. 79.

Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud had done in the 1620s and 1630s, the SPG and the SPCK showed more interest in those colonies where the Church of England was not established than in places like Virginia where the Church had been established but was nonetheless struggling.<sup>33</sup>

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Virginia's Anglican ministers worked to spread the Gospel and to save the souls of the colonists just as their English brothers did back in the mother country. But their world was a different place. Virginia had never known the religious violence of Europe, and even memories of those occurrences learned from books filled Virginians with unease. They seemed to see it as a European phenomenon. And despite being a part of the Church of England, Virginia's Church lacked the institutional structure and support enjoyed by Anglicans in England. The Privy Council recognized in 1725 what many historians

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<sup>33</sup>Gregory, pp. 69-74. See also, Craig Rose, "The Origins and Ideals of the SPCK 1699-1716," in John Walsh, Colin Haydon, and Stephen Taylor, eds., The Church of England c.1689-c.1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 172-190. Michael Anesko has argued that the SPG's work in Virginia was also hindered by the political battles between Commissary James Blair and Governor Francis Nicholson. Blair had helped forced Nicholson's resignation as the colony's Lieutenant Governor in 1704. After 1712 Nicholson served as a special agent for the SPG and used his influence to undermine the SPG's work in Virginia due to his continued anger towards Blair. See Anesko's, "So Discreet a Zeal: Slavery and the Anglican Church in Virginia, 1680-1730." Virginia Magazine of History and Biography XCIII (July 1985), pp. 272-273

have not: that Virginia's Church had developed differently than that in England, and that it was effectively becoming a separate institution. Devereux Jarratt's religious journeys, his sense of personal identity, and the established church he served testified to the tensions inherent in being both a Virginian and an Englishman.

### CHAPTER 3

#### ENGLAND, GOD, AND EARLY VIRGINIA: THE INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT OF A NATIONAL MISSION

". . . . they had all gone out on that stream,  
bearing the sword, and often the torch, messengers of the  
might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred  
fire."  
Joseph Conrad

"Because God hath so placed us Englishmen here in one  
commonwealth, also in one church, as in one ship together,  
let us not mangle or divide the ship, which being divided  
perisheth."

John Foxe

#### God's Friends

To the minds of English Protestants eager to see  
signs of providence in the world, God made it possible for  
England to colonize Virginia and propagate English  
religion in the New World. Some people associated with  
the expedition even claimed that the English were "friends  
of God." Preaching to the Virginia Company of London in  
1610, William Crashaw declared that the Virginia venture's  
"principall friend and defender is the Lord our God." Not  
every nation can say it has been befriended by God. This  
is no insignificant claim. By the early seventeenth  
century the phrase "friend of God" had a history reaching  
back to Plato. The ancient Greeks, however, were not the  
only ones who had used it. By the end of the fourth  
century, Christians had employed the term to describe holy  
men ranging from martyrs and bishops to ascetics like the  
hermit Antony. During the Middle Ages it was used to  
describe extraordinarily pious believers or those

possessed of saintly qualities, such as Meister Eckhart or Bernard of Clairvaux.<sup>1</sup>

The Old Testament also provided examples of God's friends, and Bible-reading Protestants like the English, found the phrase there. Exodus described Moses in such terms: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." Abraham, too, was known as a friend of God, who spoke to him just as He had to Moses. Yet God apparently spoke less directly to the English than he had to Moses and Abraham. They received no "plaine and personall charge" from God in speech. Rather God addressed His English friends metaphorically, through the elements of creation, thereby allowing human intellects the opportunity to interpret His will.<sup>2</sup>

Having God as a "principall friend" implies the existence of a relationship with the deity. God is a

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<sup>1</sup>Alexander Whitaker, Good Newes From Virginia (London, 1613), ed. Wesley Frank Craven (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1937), p. 22; William Crashaw, A New-yeeres Gift to Virginia. A Sermon Preached in London before the right honorable the Lord Laware, Lord Governour and Captaine Generall of Virginea (London, 1610), p. 12; Keith Thomas, Man and the Natural World: A History of the Modern Sensibility (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), p. 19; Sebastian de Grazia, Machiavelli in Hell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 53.

<sup>2</sup>The quotation from Exodus 33.11 is taken from The Geneva Bible, A facsimile of the 1560 edition (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969). Crashaw, D4; Robert Gray, A Good Speed to Virginia (London, 1609), ed. Wesley Frank Craven (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1937), C1.

notable friend for any nation to have, let alone an expanding nation like England. "A friend of God," according to one political theorist, "wishing to please God, does what he thinks God wishes him to do, and therefore the presumption might be that God reciprocates his friendship."<sup>3</sup> But God was not merely the venture's friend, He was its "principall friend and defender." This seems to indicate a heightened relationship of some kind. Perhaps God protects His special friends from their enemies so that they might continue their work. Perhaps He places greater responsibilities on them.

The phrase suggests the mood associated with the English colonization of Virginia; it conveys feeling more than any logic. It implies that the nation enjoyed a distinct relationship with God and that the same God was in the practice of choosing favorites.

#### **English Mythic Religion**

Early in the seventeenth century, scores of vessels crossed the sea from England to the new colony of Virginia. They departed from Bristol, London, and Plymouth, then rocked in the waters off the English coast, awaiting the fair winds that would carry them to the New World and thereby serve as tokens of God's favor upon the voyage. Aboard the Bonny Bess in 1623 one young man wrote to his mother about God's role in the first stages of his

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<sup>3</sup>de Grazia, p. 53



trip to "that hopefull, and happie soile" of Virginia. "Wee hauinge the wynd faire (that messenger of God)," he explained, "hoised vp saile this daye and sailed some part of our Journeye." Over a decade earlier Sir Thomas Dale, on his way to Virginia to fill the new position of marshall, had expressed similar feelings when he praised God for the "favourable South-East gale" that had hurried his vessel into the harbor at Point Comfort within the confines of the Chesapeake Bay.<sup>4</sup>

To people who traveled to Virginia as well as for Englishmen who crafted an ideology of colonization, the breezes that filled the sheets of their ocean-going vessels carried with them divine significance. To a colonist, the winds that sped a vessel to Virginia might reveal mankind's dependence upon God. William Weldon described his brief voyage to the colony as "a miraculous passage . . . wherein the lord plainly sheweth" His love. William Tracy knew about the poor condition of the ship on which he would make the crossing, and he expected a difficult journey. Before embarking, Tracy realized he would have to rely upon divine aid: "god is abel in ye

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<sup>4</sup>Anthony Hilton to his mother, May 4, 1623, in Susan Myra Kingsbury, ed., The Records of the Virginia Company of London, 4 Vols. (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1906-1935), IV, p. 164; Sir Thomas Dale to the President and Counsell of the Companie of Adventurers and Planters in Virginia, May 25, 1611, in Alexander Brown, Genesis of the United States, 2 Vols. (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1964), I, p. 489.

greatest weakness to help we will trust to his mercy for he must help beyond hope." While winds and high seas battered his ship during a violent tempest at sea, William Strachey recounted that he "had as little hope as desire of life in that storm," but that "Him who is the rich fountain and admirable essence of all mercy" miraculously preserved the lives of those on board." Frightened people offered prayers of praise and supplication. When all hope seemed to evaporate into the oblivion of a raging storm, a traveler could with confidence entreat the favor of a merciful God. After danger passed, a prayer of thanks and praise arose.<sup>5</sup>

Whether in danger at sea or safe on land, most men and women did not doubt the reality of God. They lived in a dangerous and mysterious world permeated with a sense of cosmic vulnerability. Their God was one certainty in an otherwise uncertain and transitory universe. According to their essentially medieval cosmology, God was ever present, and He made his will known through human history and the elements of creation. For people of the early

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<sup>5</sup>William Weldon to Edwin Sandys, March 6, 1619/20, Records of the Virginia Company of London (henceforth RVCL), III, p. 262; William Tracy to John Smyth, September 24, 1620, RVCL, III, p. 411; William Strachey, A Voyage to Virginia in 1609, ed. Louis B. Wright (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967), p. 9.

seventeenth century, the natural world became a stage on which to discern the will of God.<sup>6</sup>

How one interpreted God's actions on that stage depended upon the observer's perspective. When writing of their journeys to Virginia, travelers typically emphasized their own fears and frailties and their personal reliance on God. Others viewed the voyages from a slightly different perspective and spoke for the English nation. Propagandists of English expansion overseas and ministers who preached to the Virginia Company of London interpreted the voyages within the context of national rather than personal religion. England's relationship with God was their concern. They did not dwell on the hardships of a journey to the colony, such as the fetid air below deck, or the storms that could snap a mast and cripple a ship but, rather, rejoiced in how easy the voyage had become. Many of them spoke of God's having created a bridge between the Old World and North America. "This passage into Virginea," William Crashaw preached in 1610, "is in the true temper so faire, so safe, so secure, so easie, as though God himselfe had built a bridge for men to passe from England to Virginea." John Donne also used the

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<sup>6</sup>Perry Miller, "Religion and Society in the Early Literature of Virginia," in Errand Into the Wilderness (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), pp. 110-115; Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), ch. 4, esp. pp. 79-82, 107.

metaphor in a sermon delivered to the Virginia Company several years later. He spoke of making England, "which is but a Suburbs of the old world, a Bridge, a Gallery to the new; to ioyne all to that world that shall neuer grow old, the Kingdome of heauen."<sup>7</sup>

Whether Englishmen spoke of events in their personal lives or of the national drama of colonizing Virginia, religion provided a language for understanding and interpreting the world. That is not a measure of motivation. Individuals traveled to the colony for a variety of reasons. Adventure and the lure of riches encouraged some to board the vessels bound for Virginia. Some people bartered their labor for passage to the New World, hoping after a period of indentured service to make a new start in life. Still others hoped to make Christian converts of the natives, the "Naturalls, of that place" as the English called them. Adding souls to the kingdom of heaven constituted but one goal of the Virginia venture. The Virginia Company's charters contained exhortations to convert the natives, but these formed only a brief portion of a long document. King James I showed at least as much interest in the colonists' discovering "all manner of Mynes of Goulde Silver and Copper" as he did in making

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<sup>7</sup>Crashaw, E1; John Donne, A Sermon upon the viii. verse of the i. chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Preached to the Honourable Company of the Virginia Plantations (London, 1622), p. 44.

Christians of the land's inhabitants. Making the endeavor pay was paramount. Perhaps more accurate than arguing, as Perry Miller has done, that "religion . . . was the really energizing propulsion in this settlement, as in the others," is the suggestion that the colonization of Virginia should be understood as part of the territorial and economic expansion of the English nation within a deeply religious context.<sup>8</sup>

The Protestant Reformation had broken Christianity into fragments, and in the early seventeenth-century world of competing nations and rival religions, many Englishmen believed that a safe crossing to Virginia proclaimed God's approval of English efforts to establish colonies in North America. Samuel Purchas, one of the prominent authors of the vast literature promoting England's overseas colonies, devoted extensive space to the role of Virginia in his

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<sup>8</sup>Warren M. Billings, John E. Selby, and Thad W. Tate, Colonial Virginia: A History (White Plains, NY: KTO Press, 1986), pp. 37, 54-56; Miller, pp. 101-102; Ralph Hamor, A True Discourse of the Present [E]state of Virginia (London, 1615; reprint, Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1957), pp. 15, 3; Whitaker, p. 40; Philip L. Barbour, The Jamestown Voyages Under the First Charter, 1606-1609, 2 Vols. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), I, p. 28; Patricia Seed, "Taking Possession and Reading Texts: Establishing the Authority of Overseas Empires," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., XLIX (April 1992), p. 188, n. 16; William H. Seiler, "The Church of England as the Established Church in Seventeenth-Century Virginia," Journal of Southern History XV (November 1949), p. 479. For a slightly different view, one which places greater emphasis on the religious motivations, see Jon Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 7.

popular work Purchas His Pilgrimage. Purchas defined the colonization of North America as a contest between Roman Catholic Spain and Protestant England. Success of the Virginia colony would indicate God's favor on the English nation and demonstrate that the Roman Catholic "Adulteresse" was not the "only Darling of God and Nature." Other English writers also viewed the colonization of Virginia as part of a religious conflict with Rome. A justification for planting Virginia written by an anonymous author before 1609 argued that one of the chief adversaries of the attempt would be the "perfect Spaniards, who will defend yt title vpon ye donation, of [Pope] Alexander, wch is so grounded vpon the principles of theyr religion yt some of ther best authors haue pronounced yt Heresy to doubt yt." Early instructions to the colony's resident leaders also emphasized this element of religious conflict, routinely demanding "that all Atheisme Prophanes Popery or Schisme be exemplarily punished to the honor of god." Edward Maria Wingfield, the first president of Virginia's resident Council, claimed that one of his first acts after becoming a member of the Company was to recruit a "spirituall Pastor" who was not in "anie waie to be touched with the rebellious humors of a popish spirit."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Loren E. Pennington, "Hakluytas Posthumous: Samuel Purchas and the Promotion of English Overseas Expansion," Emporia State Research Studies XIV (March 1966), p. 7;

English authors, ministers, and letter-writers of the period did not explicitly state it, but the thought is there: God-damned Roman Catholics. It lay just beneath the surface of their writings, between the lines, probably articulated loudly away from the printed page. In the view of English Protestants, Roman Catholics refused to recognize the merits of reformed English Protestantism and aggressively tried to spread their own vain doctrines. Although English Protestantism in the late Elizabethan and early Stuart years was breaking into contending parties and was not always clear about what form of Protestantism it wanted to articulate, it knew what it was not, and English religion was not Roman Catholicism.<sup>10</sup>

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Daniel Price, Sauls Prohibition Staide (London, 1609), F2; A Justification for Planting Virginia, RVCL, III, p. 2; Instructions to Thomas Gates, Governor of Virginia, May 1609, RVCL, III, p. 14; Instructions to Thomas West Knight Lo: La Warr, 1609/10, RVCL, III, p. 27; Edward Maria Wingfield, "A Discourse of Virginia," in Edward Arber and A. G. Bradley, eds., Travels and Works of John Smith, President of Virginia, and Admiral of New England, 1580-1631, 2 Vols. (Edinburgh, 1910), I, p. xc; Richard L. Morton, Colonial Virginia, 2 Vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), I., p. 9. For a good survey of Purchas see Pennington, *passim*, and Miller, pp. 115-118. For a sense of religious animosity mixed with the political goals of the rising nation states, see Garrett Mattingly, The Armada (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959). On the Reformation in general, see Steven E. Ozment, The Age of Reform, 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), and Owen Chadwick, The Reformation (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1964).

<sup>10</sup>David Underdown, Fire From Heaven: Life in an English Town in the Seventeenth Century (New York: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 18-22; David Cressy, Bonfires

The early seventeenth century was a religious age, and religious questions mattered. In matters regarding foreign policy or international diplomacy, religious differences only added to the pride of growing and competitive nationalisms. Heresy was a political as well as a religious issue--an extremely dangerous form of treason. In such an age, the threat Roman Catholicism posed to Britain's political stability was no idle fancy of the English imagination. In fact, to English Protestants of the early seventeenth century, a series of significant moments when God had delivered the nation from popery filled the history of the previous seventy-five years: Elizabeth's accession to the English throne, the defeat of the Spanish Armada, the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot. One historian of early modern England has called these events "hinge-point[s] in time," moments when the English believed the course of their history could have shifted irrevocably in another direction had not a providential God intervened to protect the nation. These

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and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), esp. chs. 7 and 9; Leo F. Solt, Church and State in Early Modern England, 1509-1640 (New York: Oxford University Press); John Frederick Woolverton, Colonial Anglicanism in North America (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), p. 48; Felix R. Arnott, "Anglicanism in the Seventeenth Century," in eds. Paul Elmer More and Frank Leslie Cross, Anglicanism: The Thought and Practice of the Church of England, Illustrated From the Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century (London: S.P.C.K., 1962), pp. liii-lvi.



were events, the English people believed, in which an Anglophile deity revealed to the world which nation and which branch of the Reformation He favored. These same instances also revealed to the English nation its role in history as the defender of reformed Protestantism.<sup>11</sup>

Two of these "hinge-points" occurred within the twenty years prior to Virginia's founding, and they shed light upon the political context in which the colony's settlement took place. Less than two decades before the Virginia settlers set out for Jamestown in 1606, Spain's Armada had sailed up the English Channel, intent on invading the nation. English arms, fortuitous weather, faulty Spanish gunnery, luck, and confusion had all combined to foil the planned assault. The official prayer of thanksgiving, however, interpreted this deliverance from Catholic arms as an act of God. It praised the Christian deity for saving England from the invaders who had intended "wholly to suppress thy holy word and blessed gospel of thy dear Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Which they being drowned in idolatry and superstition, do hate most deadly." Only a year prior to the Jamestown voyage, the discovery of a plot conceived by papal agitators to blow up James I and his government at the opening of Parliament provided additional evidence of Roman

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<sup>11</sup>Butler, p. 12; Cressy, p. 109; Underdown, Fire From Heaven, p. 18. See also, Mattingly, Armada.

Catholicism's threat to England. Lancelot Andrewes, then bishop of Chichester, was but one of many preachers who likened England's deliverance to that of the Israelites, God's chosen people: "the destroyer passed over our dwellings this day. It is our Passover, it is our Purim." Preaching in 1606 on the first anniversary of the Gunpowder Treason, William Leigh linked that event with the threat of the Spanish Armada, hailing God's deliverance of England in 1588 "when the wind, the seas, the rocks and shelves fought for us."<sup>12</sup>

Just three years later, in a tract promoting the colony, Robert Johnson returned to the theme of a God who revealed his favor through the elements of creation. Johnson wrote of Virginia, and he implied that the natural world had created a path to the colony. The same rocks and seas and winds with which God had battled the Spaniards three decades earlier now beckoned the English to Virginia: "Our course and passage is through the great ocean, where is no fear of rocks or flats . . . most winds that blow are apt and fit for us. . . . When we come to the coast there is continual depth enough." God had further shown His benevolence, according to Johnson, for the route between the colony and mother country was not

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<sup>12</sup>Mattingly, Armada; Cressy, pp. 122, 141-142, 125.

"subject to the straights and restraint of foreign princes."<sup>13</sup>

Although sparsely populated and an ocean away from Europe's religious quarrels Virginia was not necessarily safe from the dangers posed by aggressive Catholic nations. Early in 1607 King Philip III of Spain directed his ambassador in England, Don Pedro de Zuniga, to "report to me what the English are doing in this matter of Virginia--and if the plan progresses which they contemplated, of sending men there and ships--and thereupon, it will be taken into consideration here, what steps had best be taken to prevent it." Over the next few years, Zuniga forwarded a series of dispatches to his king, frequently interpreting England's colonization of Virginia within the framework of religious conflict. God-damned English Protestants, did they not know that the Pope had given these territories to the Spanish over a century earlier? "It will be serving God and Y[our].M[ajesty]. to drive these villains out from there," he wrote during the first year of the colony's existence. Two years later after the publication of Nova Britannia, Robert Johnson's tract promoting Virginia, Zuniga wrote again to Philip: "They have printed a book . . . in which they call that

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<sup>13</sup>Robert Johnson, Nova Britannia. Offering Most Excellent Fruits By Planting in Virginia (London, 1609; reprint, Rochester, 1897), p. 9; Patrick Copeland, Virginia's God be Thanked (London, 1622), p. 9.

country New Britain and in which they publish that for the increase of their religion and that it may extend over the whole world. . . . It would be a service rendered to God, that Y.M. should cut short this swindle."<sup>14</sup>

Amid a world divided by denominational and national animosity, settlers came to Virginia, missionaries for the English nation and for English religion, going forth to plant the flag and the cross. In this great undertaking the English cooperated with God. The very ships on which the colonists sailed to Virginia provided evidence of human and divine cooperation. "God taught vs to make Ships," John Donne preached to the Virginia Company, "not to transport our selues, but to transport him." John Smith concurred with this reasoning, even comparing the church to ships at sea: "But to be excellent in this faculty [of shipbuilding] is the master-peece of all the most necessary workmen in the world. The first rule or modell thereof being directed by God himselfe to Noah for his Arke, which he never did to any other building but his Temple, which is tossed and turned up and downe the world

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<sup>14</sup>Philip III to Pedro de Zuniga, February 26, 1606/07, in Genesis of the United States, I, p. 91; Pedro de Zuniga to Philip III, March 5, 1609/10, in Ibid., I, p. 246. For the background of the animosities between Spain and England see Louis B. Wright, "Elizabethan Politics and Colonial Enterprise," North Carolina Historical Review XXXII (April 1955), pp. 254-269.

with the like dangers, miseries, and extremities as a ship."<sup>15</sup>

Provisions also filled the holds of the vessels bound for Virginia. Along with prayers, these sustained the settlers on their journey to the colony. Considering the poor conditions on many of the ships, the voyagers may have relied more on prayers than provisions. Travelers often complained of ships "victualed with mustie bred . . . and stincking beere." Even when supplied with tolerable food, planters bound for Virginia encountered other difficulties aboard ship. Writing in 1623 to John Ferrar, then deputy treasurer of the Virginia Company, William Capps railed against the unhealthiness of voyages to the New World: "Betwixt the decks there can hardlie a man fetch his breath by reason there ariseth such a ffunke in the night that it causeth putrification of bloud & breedeth a disease much like the plague." Three years earlier another passenger had complained about the crowded conditions below decks. He had thrown many of his own goods into the sea, "yet is ye midill & vpper deck extre[m]li pestered so tht ouer men will not lie like men & ye mareners hath not rome to stir." After enduring such trying conditions, it is not surprising that many

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<sup>15</sup>Donne, p. 3; John Smith, Advertisements for the Unexperienced Planters of New England, or Any-Where (London, 1631), in Philip L. Barbour, ed., The Complete Works of Captain John Smith, 3 Vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), III, p. 6.

individuals relied on God at sea and completed their voyage to Virginia with a brief prayer thanking Him for His mercies. That of Michael Lapworth in 1621 was typical: "thankes be to god I have escaped sickness at sea, and am now In good health of bodie."<sup>16</sup> Nor is it peculiar that people appealed to courage as well as faith as one of the motivations for carrying the Gospel to Virginia. The Virginia venture was an action at once both heroic and holy, the going out into the world of England and of English religion.

The first voyage to Jamestown lasted eighteen weeks. Under the command of Captain Christopher Newport, the colonists set sail from London on December 20, 1606. The liturgical calendar of the Church of England observed the day as the eve of the Feast of St. Thomas, the disciple who would not believe Christ's resurrection until he could touch his risen Lord's wounds. It is one of the ironies of history that the English often described their understanding of Virginia in similar terms. "And this I but mention," wrote Robert Johnson, "to note the blind diffidence of our English natures, which laugh to scorn

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<sup>16</sup>Council in Virginia to the Virginia Company, January 30, 1623/24, RVCL, IV, p. 451; William Capps to John Ferrar, March 31, 1623, RVCL, IV, p. 77; William Tracy to John Smyth. September 24, 1620, RVCL, III, p. 411; Michael Lapworth to John Ferrar, June 26, 1621, Ferrar Papers, f. 268, Magdalene College, Cambridge University, (VCRP). See also Susana Chidley to her Uncle [John Ferrar], October 10, 1649, Ferrar Papers, Box II, C-102, (VCRP).

the name of Virginia, and all other new projects, be they never so probable, and will not believe till we see the effects."<sup>17</sup>

Even before England fell below the horizon the colonists took to quarreling with one another. John Smith made the trip in chains, imprisoned for alleged conspiracy. Richard Buck, the minister who accompanied the first planters to Virginia, spent much of his time trying to quench the "many discontents" that broke out among the passengers. Conditions aboard ship hardly made difficulties between individuals easier to deal with. Oceangoing vessels in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did not provide comfort. Passengers shared space with cattle and chickens; excrement and debris filled the bilges and fouled the air. Men and women suffered seasickness, and in the same cramped spaces some travelers died. It is no wonder that Patrick Copeland, one of the few ministers who preached about the dangers of a voyage to Virginia, compared sea travelers to the three young men in the book of Daniel whom God had delivered from the fiery furnace.<sup>18</sup>

The three vessels in England's colonization venture sailed to Virginia by way of the West Indies, where they

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<sup>17</sup>Morton, I, p. 7; Johnson, Nova Britannia, p. 8.

<sup>18</sup>Billings, Selby, and Tate, p. 24; Copeland, pp. 18, 3-4.

arrived in late March 1607. There the colonists explored the islands and refilled their ships' casks with fresh water. Easter Day fell on April 5 that year, and the first group of settlers passed the day in the West Indies, still three weeks from their destination. As the voyagers approached the North American continent, the Old Testament lessons appointed by the Church of England to be read on the Sundays after Easter may well have held special meaning for the colonists. One spoke of Israel as a nation unlike other nations; another recounted the Israelites' murmurings against Moses during the journey to the promised land and warned about the dangers of faction within a community. On April 26, 1607, the ships dropped anchor off the Virginia coast, and the initial landing parties went ashore at Cape Henry. In the Church of England's liturgical calendar this was the Third Sunday after Easter. The Old Testament reading the Church had appointed for the day came from the fourth chapter of Deuteronomy: "Now therefore hearken, O Israel, vnto the ordinances and to the lawes wc I teache you to do, that ye may liue and go in, & possesse the land, which the Lord God of your fathers giueth you." For those settlers who heard the passage read, it must have come as a powerful



message to members of a nation already thought of as elect.<sup>19</sup>

The land they named Virginia made a great impression upon the first colonists. England had nearly been deforested. Early settlers described Virginia as Eden, a natural paradise created by God. Upon first seeing Virginia in 1607, George Percy responded with an emotion akin to awe. He wrote of the land's "faire meddowes and goodly tall Trees, with such Fresh-waters running through the woods, as I was almost ravished at the first sight thereof." Percy's wonder continued as he described a journey through the new land: "Wee saw the Woods full of Cedar and Cypresse trees, with other trees, which issue out sweet Gummes like to Balsam. Wee kept on our way in this Paradise." John Smith saw the land of Virginia as testimony to God's craftsmanship. He described it as "all overgrowne with trees and weedes being a plaine wildernes as God first made it."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>The passage from Deuteronomy is from The Geneva Bible; Morton, I, pp. 8-9; George MacLaren Brydon, Virginia's Mother Church and the Political Conditions Under Which it Grew, 2 Vols. (Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, 1947-1952), I, p. 12.

<sup>20</sup>Billings, Selby, and Tate, p. 22; George Percy, "Observations gathered out of a Discourse of the Plantation of the Southerne Colonie by the English, 1606," in Lyon Gardiner Tyler, ed., Narratives of Early Virginia, 1606-1625 (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1952), p. 16; John Pory to the Right Honble and My Singular Good Lorde, September 30, 1619, RVCL, III, p. 222; John Smith, A Map of Virginia. With a Description of the Countrey, the Commodities, People, Government and Religion (London,

Once on Virginia's shores, the settlers explored the Chesapeake Bay region and searched for a favorable place to establish a settlement. They soon chose a peninsula about thirty miles up the James River, far enough from the mouth of the river to offer protection from any Spanish ships that might chance to discover the colony. In honor of their king, the colonists named the rude settlement Jamestown, just as they had named the river after him. Within a week of their arrival at Jamestown, Captain Newport and several other of the men explored the James River to its falls near presentday Richmond. Here they planted a cross to mark the land for their king and for their Protestant God. "Upon one of the little Iletts at the mouth of the falls," Gabriel Archer recounted, "[we] sett vp a Crosse with this inscription Iacobus Rex. 1607. . . . At the erecting thereof we prayed for our kyng and our owne prosperous success in this his Actyon."<sup>21</sup>

Erecting crosses in the North American wilderness as a means of claiming land for God and country were dramatic symbolic actions filled with religious significance. They were not, however, the only methods the early settlers in Virginia employed to serve God. John Smith recalled that from the colony's earliest days the settlers worshiped God

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1612) in Barbour, John Smith, I, p. 145. See also Thomas, Man and the Natural World, pp. 17-18.

<sup>21</sup>[Gabriel Archer], "A Relayton of the Discovery of our River, 21 May--22 June 1607," in Arber, I, p. xlvi.

in a makeshift church. "Wee did hang an awning (which is an old saile)," he wrote, "to three or foure trees to shadow us from the Sunne, our walls were rales of wood, our seats unhewed trees, till we cut plankes, our Pulpit a bar of wood nailed to two neighbouring trees, in foule weather we shifted into an old rotten tent, for we had few better. . . . this was our Church." They soon constructed a more substantial building, "a homely thing like a barne," Smith called it. Even this edifice was a crude place in which to worship God, "yet," Smith recounted, "wee had daily Common Prayer morning and evening, every Sunday two Sermons, and every three moneths the holy Communion."<sup>22</sup>

The "common prayer" service that the colonists attended twice each day referred to the Book of Common Prayer, a volume containing the rites and offices of the Church of England. Along with the Bible (and to a much lesser extent, the Book of Homilies), the Book of Common Prayer provided the basis of worship throughout the Anglican communion. "Common" in this usage did not mean something low or contemptible but, rather, prayer that was corporate or held in common. It signified the unity of England's religion and of a people united by that religion.

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<sup>22</sup>John Smith, Advertisements, in Barbour, John Smith, III, p. 295.

Virginians participated in this common religion. For many years the settlers in Virginia lived on the fringes of two worlds, and for much of the colonial period the theological world they inhabited was closer to London than to the Alleghenies a few hundred miles to the west. The religious practices the English brought to the colony reflected this Old World orientation. Like their brethren back in England, they saw in the created world signs of God's favor and displeasure, they prayed that God would be merciful to them in times of trouble, and they thanked him when danger was passed. Virginians filled their letters with references to God and paraphrases of the Holy Scriptures; two of the colony's earliest law codes assigned religion a central place in the polity. Even their notions of time continued to mirror those of the English ecclesiastical calendar. And while some emphasized it in greater or lesser degrees than others, Calvinism occupied a significant place in the religion of early Virginia, just as it did in their homeland.<sup>23</sup>

Virginians, after all, were Englishmen, and their religion accompanied them to the New World. That was simply the way of the early seventeenth century. Church and state represented two indistinct corporations encompassing all members of English political society. Richard Hooker, the English minister who provided the

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<sup>23</sup>Woolverton, pp. 39-41.

intellectual defense of the Elizabethan Church Settlement, explained the principle in his magisterial work, Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity:

We hold that seeing there is not any man of the Church of England, but the same man is also a member of the Commonwealth, nor any man a member of the Commonwealth which is not also of the Church of England, therefore as in a figure triangular the base doth differ from the sides thereof, and yet one and the selfsame line, is both a base and a side; a side simply, a base if it chance to be bottom and underlie the rest: So albeit properties and actions of one kind do cause the name of a Commonwealth, qualities and functions of another sort the name of a Church to be given unto a multitude, yet one and the selfsame multitude may in such sort be both and is so with us, that no person appertaining to the one can be denied to be also of the other.<sup>24</sup>

Viewed in these terms, religion was an inescapable aspect of English life. English religion followed wherever English people traveled, including Virginia.

The Church of England, and hence English religion, was a very different institution in the early years of Virginia's founding than it would become just a quarter of a century later. Most Anglicans accepted the prescribed liturgies of the Book of Common Prayer and were generally content with the extent of England's reformation. Another group (actually a variety of groups) known as "precisians," held stricter views on doctrine and personal behavior, and hoped to reform the English Church still

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<sup>24</sup>Richard Hooker, The Works of that Learned and Judicious Divine Mr. Richard Hooker, With an Account of His Life and Death by Isaac Walton, 3 Vols., ed. John Keble (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887), III, p. 330. The material cited is in Book 8, i.2.

further away from Rome. With the exception of the Brownists, who had already forsaken the established church and separated from it, these groups carried on their debate within the Church of England. In the early years of the seventeenth century, most Puritans remained orthodox members of England's national church, the intensity of their particular convictions alone distinguishing them from other members of the English Church. David Underdown recently explained this aspect of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean Church: "We can distinguish between Puritans and non-Puritans within the Anglican church; but we cannot correctly speak of Puritans and Anglicans, because Puritans were Anglicans."<sup>25</sup>

This unity of national Protestantism rather than the controversy among England's various religious groups determined the role of English religion in the founding of Virginia. Churchmen with Puritan tendencies as well as those with high-church sympathies lauded the Virginia venture. For at least two decades prior to the Jamestown voyage, Protestant preachers had instilled in the English people the idea that their nation was beleaguered as well as elect. National Protestantism united the English people. Under its broad canopy Anglicans and precisians

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<sup>25</sup>Underdown, Fire From Heaven, pp. 18-21. See also, Peter Lake, Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterian and English Conformist Thought From Whitgift to Hooker (London: Allen & Unwin, 1988).

debated the direction the church would take, and individual Christians continued to attend public worship and offer their own private prayers to God. Unlike the later Puritans who settled New England or the Quakers who fled to Pennsylvania, Virginia's early settlers did not leave England to escape persecution or to create a more godly society. They did not feel compelled to leave their homeland in order either to save it or to avoid God's impending judgment upon the land. Nor did they think of themselves as the chosen remnant of God's elect, for they lived in an age when God's elect still meant the English nation as a whole and not one particular religious group. National Protestantism provided the English with a framework for understanding events, and, when necessary, for justifying actions. People spoke of England as an elect nation, articulated its goals, and wondered about what blessing or judgments God would send upon their country. As a unified state with one religion the English nation advanced Protestantism abroad and dueled with the Roman Catholic Spaniards, using military power to further either end when necessary. This same framework shaped the intellectual world of early Virginia.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Underdown, Fire From Heaven, pp. 18-19; David Underdown, Revel, Riot, and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 129; Brydon, I, pp. 3-4.

As an extension of England, events in Virginia also demonstrated the nation's relationship with God. During the early years of Virginia's existence, colonists as well as commentators back in London interpreted the settlement's relationship to God within the context of England's relationship to the deity. The story of Lord Delaware's arrival just in time to save the colony at Jamestown in 1610 illustrates how national Protestantism shaped the nation's understanding of Virginia. The winter of 1609 and 1610 had been a difficult one for the colonists. Nearly four hundred new settlers had arrived in August. Crops planted in the spring of the year were ready for harvest, and it was too late in the year to plant more for the new arrivals. As the leaves changed color and fell from the trees, autumn faded into winter. Bitter cold chilled the colony. The sick and the weak ate from meager supplies of food. At least one man resorted to cannibalism. Starvation, dysentery, and typhoid claimed many. A colony of about five hundred people in the fall was reduced to but sixty by springtime. Historians have followed the lead of one of the survivors, calling this period "the starving time."<sup>27</sup>

Governor Thomas Gates decided to abandon the settlement in the spring of 1610. Gates himself had arrived at Jamestown only recently. He should have landed

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<sup>27</sup>Morton, I, p. 26; Billings, Selby, and Tate, p. 38.



with the new settlers in August, but during a storm at sea his ship had become separated from the rest of the fleet, only to run aground in Bermuda. The small store of food he brought from the island helped stave off famine, but only for a brief time. Many people saw God's hand in this event. Alexander Whitaker interpreted Gates' timely arrival as a "singular prouidence of God." If he "had bin hindred but one weeke longer," Whitaker wrote, "it might be feared that the famine which had by that time deuouered the most of our contrimen heere, would have consumed the rest."<sup>28</sup>

The small group of survivors packed what supplies remained, along with the colony's arms, and set out for Newfoundland where they hoped to meet up with the English fishing fleet. Before the vessel reached the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, however, they received word that Lord Delaware, the colony's new governor, had reached Chesapeake Bay with men and supplies. The colony was saved, another "hinge point" in time. For men like the Reverend Alexander Whitaker, this was more than a coincidence. God had "opened the doore of Virginia, to our countrey of England," and He would not allow the English colony to fail. God had preserved Virginia in miraculous ways, and each deliverance served as proof that the Christian deity had set aside that section of North

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<sup>28</sup>Whitaker, p. 23.

America for the English nation and for English religion. Recounting in 1622 what he called England's "dangers and deliverances," Patrick Copeland linked these events in Virginia in 1610 with God's preservation of "our whole land in eightie-eight [from Spain's Armada]; and in the Gun powder-Treason."<sup>29</sup> In its starkest terms, Virginia's deliverance from famine and abandonment revealed God's favor toward the English mission to the New World.

The English people annually celebrated their deliverances from the Armada and the Gunpowder Treason by ringing bells and lighting bonfires. Throughout the seventeenth century, almanacs marked these dates in red letters, designating the events as some of the most important from the Biblical flood and the creation of the world. The celebrations were part of a process of anamnesis. Theologically, the term applies to the Eucharist and the recollection of Christian salvation history: Christ's passion, resurrection, and ascension. More generally, it can refer simply to recollection. By setting certain providential national days apart, the English recalled their national salvation history. Commemorating the nation's deliverances called to mind England's escape from the nightmare of popery.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Strachey, Voyage to Virginia, pp. 76-77; Billings, Selby, and Tate, p. 38; Whitaker, p. 21; Copeland, pp. 9-15.

<sup>30</sup>Cressy, *passim*, esp. chs. 7 and 9.

Linking the colonization of Virginia to these days created a powerful interpretation of the settlement's place in English salvation history. Elizabeth's accession to the English throne, the Armada, and the Gunpowder Plot all marked moments when England had been saved from Roman Catholicism. Yet Virginia's danger and deliverance in 1610 was not from popery. No Spanish vessels carrying an invasion force had entered the James River. No Catholic tyrant ruled the colony. No Roman faction attempted to overthrow the settlement from within. Virginia tottered on the verge of collapse and failure due to disease and to the colonists' own idleness and poor government. "But yet God would not have it so," wrote John Smith. The deity "would not this Countrie should be unplanted," he explained, for "this was the arme of the Lord of Hosts, who would have his people passe the red Sea and Wildernesse, and then to possesse the land of Canaan." For Captain Smith, as well as Alexander Whitaker, and others like them, Lord Delaware's timely arrival heralded "the revealed counsell of God."<sup>31</sup> Prior deliverances in Europe had gained England's salvation from Roman Catholicism; God's deliverance of Virginia in 1610 allowed the nation to continue its mission to the New World and to spread English religion abroad.

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<sup>31</sup>John Smith, The Generall History of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles (London, 1624) in Barbour, John Smith, II, pp. 233-235.

### **More About God's Friends**

The Old Testament described Moses and Abraham as God's friends. Both were simple men who became great men as friends of God. Moses, a Hebrew orphan left in the reeds by the banks of the Nile, was later known as a lawgiver and the leader of the Israelites' military attacks on Canaan, the promised land. Abraham, a childless herdsman advancing in years, traveled from his own land at God's command and received a threefold promise from God: that he would receive a land, become a great nation, and mediate blessings to other peoples.

The English described themselves as friends of God and urged those associated with the Virginia venture to emulate God's Old Testament friends, Moses and Abraham. Perry Miller recognized the nation's reliance on these models and argued that in Abraham the Virginia Company of London "found an ideal prototype." The ideal ruler for the colony, according to one promotional author, would be a man of "true humility, temperance, and justice, joined with confidence, valor, and noble courage, such as was in Moses, the man of God, whose justice exceeded and courage was incomparable, and yet the meekest man that went upon the earth." Being a friend of God in the manner of Abraham and Moses implied more than faith and a relationship with the deity. The Pentateuch testifies to the faith of both men, but they also represented action,

courage, and valor. Lawgiver, sojourner, and military leader are all examples of active individuals. In their Old Testament context, these designate heroic actions by a people in covenant with God. Moses and Abraham shaped, formed, led, traveled, and attacked. They were not contemplatives. Their lives do not so much provide models of individuals being formed by God as of persons acting upon the truths they already possessed in order to further God's ends.<sup>32</sup>

By the start of the seventeenth century England had developed a rich tradition of contemplative prayer evidenced by such works as The Cloud of Unknowing and the divine "showings" of Julian of Norwich. Yet English Protestants referred rarely, if at all, to this portion of their nation's religious heritage. "Short prayer pierces heaven," wrote the anonymous author of The Cloud.<sup>33</sup> Those who traveled to Virginia did not understand their faith and devotion in this way. They worked to effect a mission grounded upon faith. Deeds done in faith would earn them heaven and extend God's kingdom on earth. For those associated with Virginia's planting, Moses and Abraham provided examples of men who combined faith and courage to

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<sup>32</sup>Miller, p. 119; William Symonds, Virginia, A Sermon Preached at White-Chapel (London, 1609; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1968), pp. 8-9. 47; Johnson, Nova Britannia, p. 21.

<sup>33</sup>James Walsh, ed., The Cloud of Unknowing (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1981), p. 193.

act in the world for the glory of God. Those associated with the Virginia venture were not withdrawing from the world in order to pray, but going out into the world in order to celebrate what was good about England and to offer it as a gift.

### **Defining the Missions**

On the eve of colonization, the English people associated with the Virginia venture understood themselves as messengers of God, a people chosen to carry the English nation and English religion to the New World. They looked to the Bible for example, and that common text provided them the patriarchs, the prophets, and Moses. Like the Old Testament heroes they sought to emulate, they endured dangerous journeys and difficult conditions to carry the message of salvation to other lands. And like the Israelites in Canaan, with whom they often compared themselves, the English would also encounter problems with the native peoples of the land. The faith the English professed in regard to Virginia's colonization might best be described as Old Testament Christianity: aggressive, active, and martial, encompassing a people, not individuals, and patterned most clearly on examples from the Pentateuch. Their mission was a prophetic one, to announce the good news of England and English Protestantism, and to further that mission as a people united under God.

One of the dominant themes in the vast literature surrounding the colonization of Virginia is the appeal to courage and fortitude--what Renaissance authors called virtu--as a means of spreading Christianity to the New World. Many of the tracts promoting Virginia urged the English to act with courage. "Who can avoid the hand of God, or dispute with him? Is he fit to undertake any great action, whose courage is shaken and dissolved with one storm," asked the authors of the pamphlet A True and Sincere declaration of the purposes and ends of the Plantation begun in Virginia. Paraphrased from the book of Job, the question was at once a challenge and an admonition. Who can dispute with God? they asked. Moses (one of God's friends) did. Moses declined when God first called him, offering a series of objections: "But I do not know what God you are"; "No, I am a poor public speaker." He finally pleaded for God to send someone else because he simply did not want to take on the task. But Yahweh prevailed. Who then can dispute with God? God's friends. Who can avoid the hand of God? Not even God's friends if God is set in His choice. To Englishmen of the Stuart period, the message was clear. God had chosen England for a mission, and failure on account of cowardice would be tantamount to betraying God's choice.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>A True and Sincere declaration of the purpose and ends of the Plantation begun in Virginia (London, 1610),

Although he phrased it differently, John Smith also addressed the relationship between faith and virtu. He wrote: "Had the seed of Abraham, our Saviour Christ Jesus and his Apostles, exposed themselves to no more dangers to plant the Gospell wee so much professe, than we, even we our selves had at this present been as Salvages." Equating Christ with the Apostles was a telling parallel. For Smith and many other authors of the literature surrounding the colonization of Virginia, it was Christ's heroic action in making known to men that He is the world's redeemer which identified the Christian savior's central importance. Little distinguished this role from that of John the Baptist or any of the Old Testament prophets. They announced the means of salvation, often enduring hardships in order to fulfill their missions. Alexander Whitaker made this connection when he borrowed Biblical imagery describing the prophets to portray Christ as "the mouth of God to man." The Christ of the Virginia venture filled a prophetic role; He was the messenger of the redeeming Christ. Promotional authors likewise expected the colonists to be messengers of Christ to North America and its inhabitants, blending faith and courage to

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in Genesis of the United States, I, p. 347; Exodus 2.23-4.17.



spread the Gospel, a task that also implied the extension of English influence.<sup>35</sup>

The mixture of faith and virtu, however, was an uneasy combination, as was the spread of Christianity and the Old Testament concepts which framed that mission. Yet in the England of the early seventeenth century the combination not only made sense, it also provided meaning. The Reformation had shattered the unity of western Christendom, creating in its place numerous Christian denominations closely associated with the rising nation states. In this revised intellectual landscape, England sought to advance its own version of the Christian faith for reason both of religion and state. Thus, the world the Reformation made supplied national motivation for the movement of English religion to Virginia. Similarly, the classical ideals of the Renaissance--especially of virtu--provided the means of carrying that religion to the New World.

As good Protestants, the English took seriously the great commission at the end of Matthew's Gospel: "Go ye into all the world, & preache the Gospel to euerie creature." King James I indicated in the Virginia Company's first charter that propagating the "Christian religion to suche people as yet live in darknesse and

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<sup>35</sup>John Smith, Advertisements for the Planters of New-England, in Barbour, John Smith, III, p. 277; Whitaker, p. 10.

myserable ignorance of the true knowledge and worshippe of god" furnished one of the expedition's goals. Other Englishmen agreed with their king. Ralph Hamor suggested in a letter sent from the colony in 1615 that the natives would one day bless the God who "sent these English as Angels to bring such glad tidings amongst us."<sup>36</sup>

Some Englishmen thought God had set this task of converting the natives to Christianity aside as a particular mission for the English nation. Using language that reflected the Calvinist theology then popular among many English people, one author wrote of Virginia: "we may verily believe that God has reserved in this last age of the world an infinite number of those lost and scattered sheep, to be won and recovered by our means." Another preacher proclaimed that God had allowed the English the means of exploring the North American continent more fully than other nations so that English religion could more easily be established in the New World. The "faire, easie, and short passage" to the colony served as a sign of God's providence, "as though he had seated vs here and them there for such an entercourse." William Symonds, preaching to the Virginia Company of London in 1609, asserted that England's mission to offer the Gospel to the natives was a spiritual duty.

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<sup>36</sup>The Biblical citation is from The Geneva Bible, Matthew 28.19; Barbour, Jamestown Voyages, I, p. 25; Hamor, p. ii.

"What blessing any Nation had by Christ, must be Communicated to all Nations," including "the office of his Priesthood, to giue remission of sinnes to the sinnefull." The Jacobean anti-papist William Crashaw viewed this duty as a welcome and honorable attack on Roman Catholicism. "We by the blessing of God are conuerted from Popery," he wrote, adding that "the dv'y of all men who taste of that loue; when they are conuerted they must labour the conuersion of others."<sup>37</sup>

A variety of rewards awaited those who offered the Gospel to Virginia's "naturalls." Authors and preachers often pointed to the promise of eternal blessings in the twelfth chapter of the book of Daniel. Daniel Price quoted that scripture in a sermon about planting the colony delivered in 1609 on Rogation Sunday--a Sunday in the spring of the year devoted to prayers for the success of the fall harvest--assuring those who helped spread the word of God in Virginia that they would "recieue an vnspeakeable blessing, for they that turne manie to righteousness, shall shine as the starres for euer and euer." Some colonists took these promises seriously, at least when addressing individual Indians. John Rolfe and Thomas Dale both helped instruct and convert the Indian

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<sup>37</sup>Johnson, Nova Britannia, p. 13; Crashaw, C3, A3; Symonds, p. 52. See also Donne, pp. 24-41; Johnson, New Life of Virginia, pp. 1-2; George Benson, A Sermon preached at Paules Crosse (London, 1609), p. 92; Price, E2-F2.

princess Pocahontas to Christianity. Dale claimed: "were it but the gayning of this one soule, I will thinke my time, toile, and present stay well spent."<sup>38</sup>

Converting the natives might bring honor to the king and blessings to those who taught the natives God's plan for salvation. England benefitted from the mere offer of the gift. Virginia was a land of great natural bounty, described by one sea captain as "very fruytfull and apt to pduce any thinge wch England affords." And according to one observer in 1619, words were not adequate to describe the land: "if I had the eloquence of Cesaro or the skillfull art of Apellese I could not pen neither paint out a better praise of the cuntrie then the cuntrie it selfe deserveth." The Virginia Company of London, after all, had been established as a joint-stock company, and its members naturally expected to profit from the funds they had risked in the venture. Many of the settlers also hoped to make money. Part of their heritage taught them to look to the land for goods they could extract and sell.<sup>39</sup> Lumber, sassafras (widely believed to cure

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<sup>38</sup>Price, F3; Thomas Dale to the R. and my most esteemed friend Mr. D.M., June 18, 1614, in Hamor, p. 55. See also John Rolfe to Sir Thomas Dale, in Hamor, pp. 61-69. Rolfe's letter is also in Tyler, ed., pp. 239-244. The scriptural reference is to Daniel 12.3.

<sup>39</sup>Captain Nuce to Sir Edwin Sandys, May 27, 1621, RVCL, III, p. 455; Ferdinando Yates, "The Voyage," 1619, RVCL, III, p. 114; Wesley Frank Craven, The Dissolution of the Virginia Company: The Failure of a Colonial Experiment (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), p.

syphilis), tobacco, and other products of the land soon filled the holds of vessels returning to England.

The commercial motive, however, did not escape a religious context. Relishing the goods the land held and the uses they could be put to, William Symonds called Virginia "a Land more like the garden of Eden: which the Lord planted, than any part else of the earth." The land itself beckoned the English to Virginia, and several ministers saw the colony's bounty as part of a reciprocal relationship. In exchange for bringing their spiritual goods to North America, the English could take the continent's natural goods. Alexander Whitaker thought God had "inriched the bowells of the Country with the riches and bewty of Nature that we wantinge them might in search of them communicate the most excellent merchandize and treasure of the Gospell" to the land's natives. William Crashaw linked the mission to the natives with English foreign policy, thereby presenting a religious defense of mercantilism. In exchange for saving the natives "from the wrath of God" by bringing them the good news of Jesus Christ, the English could take from the land items the natives could spare, such as "Timber, Masts, Crystall (if not better stones) Wine, Copper, Iron, Pitch, Tar, Sassafras, Sopeashes . . . and who knows not we want

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24; William Cronon, Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), pp. 20-23, 75-79.

these, and are beholden to some of them [foreign nations], with whom it were better for vs if we had lesse to doe." Crashaw's sermon was not only a defense of mercantilism but an assertion that England's mission to the New World bestowed God's blessing on English national might. As important as the naval stores Crashaw mentioned might be to England's foreign policy goals, the products of Virginia would also fetch a fair price in European markets and make the English less dependent on other nations. Those eager for profit and national security from Virginia's products found scriptural warrant for their designs in a liberal reading of the eleventh verse in the ninth chapter of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: "If we communicate unto them our spirituall things, it is but a small thing if they impart vnto vs their temporall."<sup>40</sup>

Communicating their spiritual things among the natives of Virginia represented but one aspect of England's mission to the New World. Although taking Christianity to the natives of North America is "the most obvious theme" in the literature of colonization, the English were interested in conquering the North American continent as well and often suggested that it was their

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<sup>40</sup>Symonds, p. 26; Alexander Whitaker to Mr. Crashaw, August 9, 1611, Genesis of the United States, I, p. 499; Crashaw, D3, E1; Thomas, Man and the Natural World, p. 25. The Biblical reference is I Cor. 9.11.

Canaan, the land God's promises to his Old Testament friends Abraham and Moses had centered upon. "Believe Caleb and Joshua," Thomas Dale wrote, referring to the two Hebrew spies who returned an honest account of the promised land to Moses. William Symonds was not the only person who cited the account of Canaan in the book of Numbers when describing Virginia: "The land, by the constant report of all that haue seene it, is a good land." John Rolfe alluded to Caleb and Joshua's report of the promised land as well, when, like them, he reported that there were no "Sonnes of Anack," or giants, inhabiting the land to hinder an invasion. Claiming the land and then offering Christianity to the land's natives formed two facets of England's mission to the New World. Taken together they constituted England's national good work of planting the Virginia colony.<sup>41</sup>

While carrying the Gospel to North America fulfilled a Christian goal of spreading the good news of Jesus Christ, Old Testament concepts of nationhood and religious identity defined this mission. The English consistently mingled Old and New Testament notions as they attempted to define their mission to North America. They pointed to a

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<sup>41</sup>Miller, 101; Sir Thomas Dale to Sir Thomas Smythe, June 1613, Genesis of the United States, II, p. 639; Symonds, p. 24; John Rolfe, A True Relation of the State of Virginia lefte by Sir Thomas Dale Knight in May last 1616 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951), p. 41. The Biblical reference is to Num. 14.6-8.

New Testament goal of converting heathen peoples to true religion and an Old Testament goal of conquering and possessing a land set aside for them by God. The blend was not necessarily compatible. Christianity addresses individuals--in community with other like-minded individuals--but individuals nonetheless. Conversion, therefore, was a personal matter which changed an individual's relationship with God. Only on the most theoretical level, then, do nations or peoples convert other nations or peoples. Yet converting the natives, as distinct from carrying the Gospel to the New World, was never England's primary objective. Dominion over land--a land promised to the English people by their friend God--was always more important to the English than converting, controlling, or dealing with the people who inhabited the land. The Old Testament definition contained an ethnic element emphasizing a people rather than individuals. "He that was the God of Israel," William Crashaw preached, "is still the God of England."<sup>42</sup>

Taking possession of their promised land and there establishing the colony of Virginia on the North American continent provided Englishmen a way to demonstrate the faith of the Reformation without necessarily confronting the Roman Catholic Spaniards. In an age when professing the wrong religion meant treason, separating religion and

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<sup>42</sup>Seed, p. 186; Crashaw, Ll.



nationality was difficult. The settlers' act of claiming land for God and king illuminated this close relationship between the English nation and English religion. The falls of the James River was not the only place in the New World where the English marked land with crosses, thus claiming the land for both England and Christ. In 1609, the Sea Venture, en route to Virginia, ran aground in Bermuda during a storm. The crew and passengers survived and there built two new ships in which to continue their journey. Before setting out once again, however, they set up in a garden "a fair [memorial] in figure of a cross, made of some of the timber of our ruined ship. . . . In the midst of the cross, our governor fastened the picture of His Majesty in a piece of silver."<sup>43</sup>

At other times the crosses erected by the English served as signals to other ships at sea. During rough weather off the Virginia coast in 1610, the ship carrying Thomas West, the Lord Delaware, and the Blessing of Plymouth became separated. That night West's ship and the Blessing of Plymouth made anchor at Cape Henry, where, West recounted, "we went ashore, as well to refresh ourselves as to fish, and to sett up a cross upon the pointe (if haply the Hercules might arrive there) to

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<sup>43</sup>Strachey, Voyage to Virginia, p. 57.

signify our coming in."<sup>44</sup> At its simplest, the cross erected at Cape Henry testified that another group of English settlers had arrived safely in the New World.

Understood on another level, the cross planted by Delaware's crew as well as those set up by Captain John Smith and others when they claimed land for their king symbolized something greater. Many Englishmen considered North America the place "where Satans throne is." The Virginia Company of London's undertaking was primarily an economic venture operating within a profoundly religious context, but it also contained a martial element of religious battle against the forces of Satan. William Crashaw believed the devil opposed England's attempt to colonize Virginia, "for we go to disherit him of his ancient freehold, and to deliuer from out of his bondage the soules which he hath kept so many yeeres in thraldome." In 1609, William Symonds argued that the English sailed to Virginia in order to "set vp the throne of Christ" in North America. Preaching in the colony itself, Alexander Whitaker also emphasized the battle motif, comparing the English to the Biblical chosen people: "The Diuell knowing that where Christ wins, he loseth, doth will (sic) all his might and policie hinder the publishing, and propagation of the Gospell. Such was

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<sup>44</sup>The Governor and Council of Virginia to the Virginia Company of London, July 7, 1610, Genesis of the United States, I, p. 403.

his practice to discourage the Israelites from the conquest of Canaan."<sup>45</sup>

England's colonization of Virginia joined a greater spiritual battle, and Crashaw's interpretation reveals much about the nation's mission to the New World. The primary mission Crashaw described was not to the inhabitants of the land, but to the land itself. Taking the devil's land, his "freehold," liberated the souls of those enslaved by his vassalage and made possible their potential conversion to true Protestant religion. Canaan, setting up Christ's throne, the devil's freehold--these referred to land, not people. These English settlers, these missionaries for God and country, were not only claiming the continent for their king, but also redeeming the land for their Protestant deity. Christianity legitimized the English conquest of the North American continent; proselytizing the natives followed the redemption of the land. Each Indian converted and each acre of North America claimed by them was another portion of the continent Christianized. Whether they succeeded in converting a single native, even if they did not actively pursue the conversion of the Indians at all, the English

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<sup>45</sup>Crashaw, K3, H1; For the Colony in Virginea Britannia. Lawes Diuine, Morall and Martiall, &c. (London, 1612) in Peter Force, ed., Tracts and Other Papers, Relating Principally to the Origin, Settlement, and Progress of the Colonies in North America, 4 Vols. (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1963), III, no. 2, pp. 66-67; Symonds, p. 14; Whitaker, dedication, D2.

presence in Virginia carried with it the sacred light of the Gospel from the Ancient Near East. Those who "fight vnder the banner of Iesus Christ," as Alexander Whitaker described the action, had come to North America to wrest away the lands under Satan's dominion. It was an act of liberation.<sup>46</sup>

English religion faced enemies other than the devil or the natives. In 1613 Virginians learned of a settlement of French Jesuits at Mount Desert on the present-day coast of Maine. In two separate actions forces under the command of George Argall attacked the village, took several prisoners, and destroyed the settlement. They burned all French construction and tore down the cross planted by the Jesuits, replacing it with an English cross with the name of King James I carved in its wood. Since the English were more interested in controlling land than native populations, when the colonists placed a cross on the continent, it was a "political act directed not at the natives but at other Europeans."<sup>47</sup>

England itself was an expansive concept inherent in the English people. The Reverend Samuel Eburne wrote: "And it be the people that makes the land English, not the

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<sup>46</sup>Seed, p. 189; Whitaker, p. 44.

<sup>47</sup>Morton, I, pp. 35-36; Alexander Brown, The First Republic in America (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1898), pp. 191-193; Seed, p. 194.

land the people." Being English, as Richard Hooker suggested, also meant being Protestant. Control of the land therefore implied both the expansion of England and the spread of Protestant Christianity, no matter how nominally Christian the settlers may have been. When the English claimed land for God and king they testified to the relationship between England and English religion, spreading not only Christianity but also European politics to North America.<sup>48</sup>

Planting crosses carried a significance similar to the sacrament of baptism. Both marked something apart from the world and dedicated to Christ: in one instance land, in the other a soul. Both aggressively attacked the devil who held a person or the land in his bondage. Crosses placed by the English in Virginia played a least three distinct yet related roles. They warned European nations that this land was set apart for English Christianity, christened with English regnal names; they symbolized England's attack on Satan's "freehold" by bringing Christianity to the land; and they served as symbols of English territory from which the work of converting the natives could be effected. Standing in the North American wilderness, the crosses planted in

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<sup>48</sup>Karen Ordahl Kupperman, Settling With the Indians: The Meeting of English and Indian Cultures in America, 1580-1640 (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1980), p. 162.

Virginia's soil served as visual signs of the western expansion of English Christianity.

Spreading Protestantism and establishing an English colony as a bulwark against Roman Catholicism did not require the conversion of Virginia's native peoples. Even William Crashaw, one of the most ardent proponents of converting the natives, proclaimed that the venture's "high and principall end" was the plantation, of an English Church and Common-wealth, and consequently the conuersion of heathen." Founding an English polity was the primary national goal. Any missionary activity among the natives would be the work of individuals. As representatives of the English nation, an ecclesiastical polity, the settlers claimed land for their nation and its Protestant God. As individuals, however, some people sincerely hoped to save the Indians from Satan's grasp. The endeavors of pious individuals like John Rolfe and Thomas Dale to convert the natives showed their devotion and added names to the rolls of heaven, but they also brought fame to the nation. National Protestantism, however, was often more martial than benevolent. Saving souls was the work of religiously inclined individuals; defending reformed religion was the work of the nation. In the mercantilism of souls, should Europe's national and religious conflicts ever reach the New World, a Protestant Indian would be more useful than a Roman Catholic one.

Ralph Hamor also recognized the political implications of converting the natives to English religion. He believed the Powhatans "should at all times be ready and willing to furnish vs with three or foure hundred bowmen to aide vs against the Spaniards." Even the most strenuous proponents of conversion, John Donne and William Crashaw, realized that establishing an English polity took precedence over Christianizing the Indians. The apostolic action accompanied the heroic deed of crossing the sea, creating, and then defending an English commonwealth in the wilderness.<sup>49</sup>

Although national religion provided a context for the expedition to the New World and for understanding the drama of colonization, colonists who professed the faith of the Church of England probably worried more about their own personal relationships with God. Just prior to leaving for Virginia in 1610, a debt-ridden Robert Evelyn wrote to his mother: "I am going to the sea, a long and dangerous vo[yage with] other men, to make me to be [able] to pay my debts." For Evelyn, Virginia offered hopes of financial and religious redemption, not national glory: "I beseech God of His mercy to grant it, may be prosperous

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<sup>49</sup>Crashaw, G3; Seed, p. 188, n. 17; Hamor, p. 13; The Second Charter to the Treasurer and Company, for Virginia, erecting them into a Corporation and Body Politic, Genesis of the United States, I, p. 236. According to the colony's second charter, converting the natives was a way of excluding the Spanish from Virginia, and thus an extension of European politics.

unto me to His honour, and my comfort in this world and in the world to come."<sup>50</sup>

Virginians mentioned God often in their correspondence. They referred to Him in an almost casual way, interjecting brief prayers of praise and supplication. "I thanke god," "bie Godes assistance I shall goe forwards," "I hope so to be guided by his heavenly graice," "God, who guideth all things," and "[commending] you to the mercy and good ptectione of the Lorde" were typical examples.<sup>51</sup> Implied in these phrases was the assumption that God heard Virginians' petitions, cared about their individual troubles, and acted in the world. With this God they could easily converse.

Early Virginians thanked God for a great variety of mercies and often interpreted their afflictions as part of His will. Upon reaching Hampton Roads near the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay in 1610, Thomas Dale wrote home with obvious relief: "and this night (all praise be to God for it) [we] came to ancor under Pointe Comforte." "I thanke the Lorde and praysed be his name," Governor George

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<sup>50</sup>Robert Evelyn to his Mother, [December 1610], Genesis of the United States, I, p. 441.

<sup>51</sup>John Pory to Edwin Sandys, January 16, 1619/20, RVCL, III, p. 256; Lord De La Warr to the Earl of Salisbury, September 1610, Genesis of the United States, I, p. 415; John Rolfe to Sir Thomas Dale, in Tyler, p. 242; Elizabeth Dale to George Thorpe, in H. R. McIlwaine, ed., Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia, 2d ed. (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1979), p. 48.



Yeardley exclaimed after a period when the colony was short of food in 1620, "there is enough in the Country for all the people now Arived." John Rolfe offered broader thanks when he landed in 1617: "Wee found the Colony (God be thanked) in good estate and inioyng a firmer Peace [with the Indians] and more plenty." Colonists accepted God's judgments as readily as they thanked Him for His favors shown to the settlement. In the summer of 1623, with the colony nearly destitute of food, Delphebus Canne's letter to a friend back in England displayed this willing acceptance of God's will: "I pray God to be mercifull unto us and in his appointed tyme to send relife." "But what am I," Governor Yeardley wrote to Sir Edwin Sandys in 1619, "that I should be able to doe any thing against wch the Lord of Lords hath otherwise disposed, or what are wee all, that we should gaynesay the Allmyghty . . . yf the Lord will lay his hand upon vs and cross vs with sickness and mortality . . . what then shall he say vnto these things but that it is the Lord lett him doe what he please."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Sir Thomas Dale and the Council of Virginia to the Virginia Company of London, July 7, 1610, Genesis of the United States, I, p. 404; Sir George Yeardley to Sir Edwin Sandys, June 7, 1620, RVCL, III, p. 298; John Rolfe to Edwin Sandys, June 8, 1617, RVCL, III, p. 71; Delphebus Canne to John Delbridge, July 2, 1623, Public Records Office, Colonial Office, 1/2, f. 171, (VCRP); George Yeardley to Edwin Sandys, 1619, RVCL, III, p. 127.

Although God frequently sent afflictions upon the early settlers in Virginia, many continued to think of the Christian deity in a personal manner. One colonist described the relationship in intimate terms: "our friend god." The immediacy and activity that Virginians attributed to God reveal more than a personal deity. These qualities and their relational context suggest a vague notion of a covenant. Not as complex as that later developed by the New England Puritans, it was a covenant nonetheless. It resembled that of the ancient Israelites: follow the laws of God and prosper. Lapse, and die. Even as Virginians practiced their individual religious lives and devotions, they participated in a national covenant with God. On a personal level, prayers linked Virginians with family members and friends back in their homeland. As part of an expanding nation, England's sins--as well as those of the colonists--brought divine judgment upon the settlement. Writing to the resident governor and Council in 1622, members of the Virginia Company in London blamed the Indian massacre of that year on the "heavie hand of Allmightie God for the punishment of ors and yor transgressions." Three years earlier, George Yeardley had worried that "my sins and vnworthynes have gone together

with the rest both of the people here and company at home" to bring divine afflictions upon the colony.<sup>53</sup>

Sin and divine chastisements formed part of an early seventeenth century world dominated by the idea of divine causality. It was a world in which the wages of sin were clear: famine, sickness, faction, and military defeats at the hands of foreign armies. For Virginians to suffer for the sins of the English nation testified to the colony's place in England's national religion. God occasionally blessed Virginia with miraculous deliverances, and such events only heightened the colony's relationship to the national covenant.<sup>54</sup>

God played an important role in the personal religious lives of early Virginians. He could be thanked, prayed to, and expected to protect family and friends from temporal and eternal afflictions. He was real and interested in His creation, hardly the watch-maker God of the later Enlightenment theorists. Men and women of the early seventeenth century did not doubt the reality of

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<sup>53</sup>George Harrison to John Harrison, January 24, 1624/25, Public Records Office, Colonial Office 1/2 ff. 113-114, (VCRP); Treasurer and Council for Virginia to the Governor and Council in Virginia, August 1, 1622, RVCL, III, p. 666; George Yeardley to Edwin Sandys, 1619, RVCL, III, p. 127.

<sup>54</sup>For an English view of the nature of God's providence, although from a strongly Puritan viewpoint, see Paul S. Seaver, Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), ch. 3.

God. In their essentially medieval cosmology, God was ever present, making His will known through human history and showing his hand through the elements of creation. This was a God with whom Virginians had a relationship, both as individuals and as members of the state.

Personal salvation and national mission met on the plane of public religion, the Church of England as by law established. Sunday after Sunday individuals attended their parish churches and prayed the liturgy of the national church prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer. Intentions may have reached beyond the reality of the situation, but the Church of England was the English nation united and at prayer. The union of church and commonwealth formed a polity organized for action in the world based on a shared understanding of existential reality. The Church of England represented and symbolized this existential reality. The national church and the liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer represented the nation's religious unity. By worshiping in the established church, individuals not only practiced their own piety but also participated in the unity of a nation at prayer. Religious factions were so dangerous because they challenged the articulated view of reality and, therefore, threatened the nation's order, unity, and ability to act as a consolidated polity. Ironically, a nominal adherent of the national church could further the

cause of English religion more than the most devout dissenter. Virginia, too, participated in this unity. William Crashaw made this point in a sermon delivered to the Virginia Company of London in 1610. He asked his listeners to recall the time Henry V had led vastly outnumbered troops into battle against the French at Agincourt. King Henry put off battle until "nine of the clocke," then went among his troops, exhorting them to fight well and to remember: "at this houre they are praying for vs at euery Church in England." Crashaw's example no doubt overstated the actual situation in 1610, but his words expressed the nation's theoretical reality. English Christians were expected to live in harmony with each other, at the same time treating those confessing different creeds with circumspection or as potential threats.<sup>55</sup>

This national unity of public religion set the founding of Virginia apart from that of England's other early colonies. More clearly than in the Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, Maryland, or Pennsylvania colonies, the English nation established the colony in Virginia. It was founded as an extension of the nation as a whole, not as a refuge (or dumping ground) for religious minorities. Virginia was not the creation of a party, but of a nation.

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<sup>55</sup>Eric Voegelin, The New Science of Politics: An Introduction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), ch. 1; Crashaw, K1.

Perry Miller missed the mark when he argued that "Religion, in short, was the really energizing propulsion in this settlement, as in others." Religion was important to early Virginians, but it did not play the same role in the founding of Virginia as it did in the other colonies. Absent the religious motive, Virginia more than likely would still have been settled. Reduce the settlements in Massachusetts Bay, or Plymouth, or Pennsylvania to something other than their religious propulsions and there is little reason for those groups to have left England in the first place. Religion did not lead the English to Virginia as much as it followed them across the Atlantic. Like their language, it was something from which they could not escape, one of the inner qualities associated with their Englishness.<sup>56</sup>

A great paradox lay at the center of England's national religion and, hence, the colonization of Virginia. As Richard Hooker had pointed out, a member of the English commonwealth was also a member of the English church and thus symbolic of the nation's religion. Establishing and defending Protestantism abroad required no extraordinary piety, devotion, or religious zeal. These were helpful and positive qualities in a Virginia colonist, but they were not necessary. Therefore, the most nominally Christian of Englishmen, the sort of

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<sup>56</sup>Miller, p. 101; Kupperman, pp. 162-164.

individuals Thomas Dale claimed "give [no] testimonie beside their names that they are Christians," could further what was considered the holy action of planting a colony in Virginia. The intense and, to Anglicans, misguided, zeal of the Brownists could actually hinder the advance of national Protestantism by creating faction where unity was supposed to exist.<sup>57</sup>

Whether seen as a mission to the land or to the natives who inhabited the land, England's colonization of Virginia included an evangelical design of offering the Gospel to the New World. This intention formed part of a reciprocal relationship between England's past and present. By carrying the Gospel to the New World, the colonists became participants in a series of actions that stretched back to London and beyond, back to the shores of the ancient Mediterranean, back to Christ and the early church. Offering the message of salvation to the natives was not only a Christian duty but also a means of repaying a debt to the ancient Romans who centuries earlier had first brought Christianity to England. "The time was when wee were sauage and vnciuill," William Crashaw proclaimed, "then God sent some to make vs ciuill, others to make vs christians. If such had not been sent vs we had yet continued wild and vnciuill." In thanksgiving for the

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<sup>57</sup>Thomas Dale to the Earl of Salisbury, April 17, 1611, Genesis of the United States, I, pp. 506-507.

gift of Christianity brought to England by the Romans of old, duty demanded that the English offer the same to the "savages" in America.<sup>58</sup>

This apostolic action associated with the colonization of Virginia stands in marked contrast to the Puritans' later mission in New England. Virginia's settlement was the act of a nation, not of a group within the nation who believed they were more godly than the rest. An individual's national identity conferred Christian election more clearly than any personal belief or behavior. That same election demanded that the nation and its people act in the world by carrying the Gospel abroad. The Biblical examples they used to describe the action suggest this. Canaan, Abraham, Moses, the promised land, the prophetic Christ, Eden--all exercises in self-understanding. If Virginia's colonists ever asked who they were, the answer was clear. They were members of the English nation, messengers of God carrying the Gospel to a new continent. They were, as John Rolfe emphasized, "a peculiar people marked and chosen by the finger of God to possess" the land of Virginia, with all the religious significance these words implied in the early seventeenth century. The religious facet of Virginia's mission to the New World should be understood as an act of national

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<sup>58</sup>Crashaw, C3; Whitaker, pp. 24-25; Johnson, Nova Britannia, p. 13.



benevolence carried out at God's behest. They offered true Protestant religion to a new continent, even if it was often only offered to the Indians in a passive way. Their gift was not to England, but to the world. Virginia began in evangelism not in the reform of England's church and state.

Yet there were limits to national Protestantism. And while nominal Christian English men and women represented the nation abroad, English Roman Catholics and English Brownists, despite their nationality, were perceived as threats both to the nation and to Virginia. "Suffer no Papists; let them not nestle there; nay let the name of the Pope for (sic) Poperie be neuer heard of in Virginea," one minister preached, "suffer no Brownists, nor factious Separatists: let them keepe their conuenticles elsewhere." Theirs was a mythic religion born of the Reformation's shattered world. It prescribed the way England should be, united by religion and untainted by mixtures which extended beyond the legitimate boundaries of the national church.<sup>59</sup>

The religion the English brought to Virginia was national, like that of God's Old Testament friends Abraham and Moses, which identified nations by their religion. This prescriptive fiction, of which Hooker's example of "a figure triangular" is the best example, did not describe

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<sup>59</sup>Crashaw, LI.

the world as it existed, but prescribed the way philosophers and theologians hoped England would be, even when reality fell short. These mythic concepts of religion and nationhood framed England's mission to the New World. There is reason to wonder whether either the myth or the mission would survive the Atlantic crossing. Mythic national religion could provide motivation to confront other European nation-states, but it was an open question whether the loose and increasingly divisive ideal of national Protestantism could organize the colonists in the North American wilderness.

## CHAPTER 4

### ENGLISH MISSIONS IN VIRGINIA: POSSESSING THE LAND AND DEMONIZING THE NATIVES

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us"  
John 1.14

A sense of anxiety pervaded Elizabethan and Jacobean England's understanding of itself as a nation. Authors as diverse as Richard Hooker, Edward Coke, William Shakespeare, Edmund Spencer, and Richard Hakluyt struggled with England's identity, prescribing through their writings the united nation they wanted to exist while at the same time wondering if their prescriptions would ever come about. In the early 1600s nearly eighty years had passed since Parliament had severed the nation's connection with the Church of Rome and then gone on to declare England an empire. On the eve of colonization English people were still trying to prove that England was worthy of being termed an empire and still trying to define who they were as a nation. Settling Virginia was as much an assertion of English identity as of spreading England and English Protestantism. The Church of England too was trying to establish its identity, a task more difficult for it than for other denominations because it possessed no set body of doctrine and, unlike other reformed churches, no creedal statement. This anxiety would inform England's missions to North America. Like their brethren in the mother country, Virginians would

also ask questions about what groups would be included or excluded from the national--or in Virginia, colonial--community. The question they did not ask was the important one: would they remain English in Virginia? In this context of anxiety over meaning, would people in England and English people in Virginia answer the same questions in the same way? The land would provide many answers.<sup>1</sup>

North America fascinated the first colonists. When they arrived in 1607, the English found a bountiful land overflowing with a variety of plant and animal life. Their homeland nearly deforested by this time, the settlers thought Virginia seemed like paradise. Descriptions of the newly discovered land mingled awe and wonder. "We passed through excellent ground full of Flowers of divers kinds and colours, and as goodly tall trees as I have seene as Cedar, Cipresse, and other kindes," George Percy, one of the original settlers, related, "going a little further we came into a little plat of ground full of fine and beautifull Strawberries." Game species inhabited the forests, and several rivers teaming with fish flowed out of the continent's interior, emptying into a body of water the settlers called the Chesapeake Bay. Only occasional dwellings the natives had

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Helgerson, Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 1-11.

built interrupted the natural landscape. John Smith believed the colonists had discovered a land like that made by God at the creation of the world.<sup>2</sup>

After the colonists settled at Jamestown, about thirty miles up the James River from Hampton Roads, they entered the woods and began felling trees, some for splitting into clapboards to ship back to England, some for materials out of which to build a fort, others simply to clear a space for their tents. These were acts of creation. To found a colony was to emulate God in the "pleasant work of planting." By establishing a colony in Virginia the English were starting anew in Eden, figuratively forming a world in a place where to their minds one did not yet exist. Unlike God, however, the English did not create ex nihilo nihil but out of their own customs and history. Just as their polity would establish in North America a mental world shaped by traditional English political and religious views that would define the colonists' relationships with each other and God, by felling timbers and clearing land the settlers

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<sup>2</sup>George Percy, "Observations gathered out of a Discourse of the Plantation of the Southerne Colonie in Virginia by the English, 1606," in Lyon Gardiner Tyler, ed., Narratives of Early Virginia, 1606-1625 (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1952), p.11; John Smith, A True Relation . . . till the last returne (London, 1608), in Philip L. Barbour, ed., The Complete Works of Captain John Smith, 3 Vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), I, p. 145; Edmund S. Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975), p. 73.

began to create a peculiarly English space in the wilderness of the New World, a space which was English and Christian by virtue of the people who lived there. One minister wrote: "imagine that to be England where Englishmen, where English people, you with them, and they with you, do dwell." Whether or not all the colonists realized it, clearing a space in the New World was an expression of the nation's faith and part of England's mission to the North American continent.<sup>3</sup>

England's primary mission was to the land, and the colonists expanded England and English Protestantism by sacralizing the landscape as in their homeland. In the mother country, religion impressed itself upon the senses of ordinary men and women as they went about their daily and weekly routines. Churches dotted the English landscape. The tolling of their bells called people to worship, announced the arrival of important visitors, and commemorated occasions when God had delivered the nation

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<sup>3</sup>Richard L. Morton, Colonial Virginia, 2 Vols. (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1960), I, pp. 9, 11; Robert Johnson, The New Life of Virginia (London, 1612; reprint, Rochester, 1897), p. 12. A True Declaration of the estate of the Colonie in Virginia, With a confutation of such scandalous reports as haue tended to the disgrace of so worthy an enterprise (London, 1610), in Peter Force, ed., Tracts and Other Papers, Relating Principally to the Origins, Settlement, and Progress of the Colonies in North America, 4 Vols. (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1963), III, no. 1, p. 13; Karen Ordahl Kupperman, Settling With the Indians: The Meeting of English and Indian Cultures in America, 1580-1640 (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980), p. 162.

from popery. Although the Englishmen who settled Virginia did not sacralize the colony's landscape as fully as that of Old England, they set aside places for worship almost immediately. John Smith recounted how the colonists first worshiped God outdoors under an old sail, with fallen timbers for pews and a "bar of wood nailed to two neighbouring trees" for a pulpit. It was a simple place, barely a structure at all, but "this was our Church." The colonists soon constructed a more substantial building, and after Lord Delaware arrived in 1610, they built an impressive sixty-by-twenty-four foot edifice containing a "chancel of cedar and a communion table of black walnut, and all the pews of cedar, with fair broad windows to shut and open" depending upon the weather. At the governor's direction, the church was also "trimmed up with divers flowers" to make it more attractive. Bells located at the west end of the church called the colonists to worship twice daily. They rang at other appointed times as well, announcing when the colonists should gather to eat or return to the fields to work. The churches that the colonists constructed in Virginia marked the spread of institutional Christianity into the North American wilderness and provided tangible evidence of the English nation's evangelical mission to the New World.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Jon Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 13-14, 50; David Underdown, Revel, Riot, and

As more people emigrated to the colony and groups of settlers began moving to outlying plantations away from Jamestown, Virginians continued to establish holy places, a practice encouraged by the colony's General Assembly. The impulse to sacralize the landscape, in fact, usually came from Virginia's leaders. On separate occasions, both John Smith and Lord Delaware put the colonists to work rebuilding churches that had fallen into disrepair. In 1623/24 the House of Burgesses passed a law "that there shall be in every plantation, or settlement, where the people use to meete for the worship of God, a house or roome sequestred for that purpose, and not to be for any temporal use whatsoever." They also demanded that each plantation have a "place empaled in, sequestred only to the buryal of the dead." In 1636 the vestry of Accomack Parish on the Eastern Shore set aside "one part of the land of william Blower" so that people in a remote area of

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Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) p. 14; David Cressy, Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 69-70; John Smith, Advertisements for the Unexperienced Planters of New-England, or Any Where (London, 1631), in Barbour, John Smith, III, p. 295; William Strachey, A Voyage to Virginia in 1609, ed. Louis B. Wright (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967), pp. 80-81; For the Colony in Virginea Britannia. Lawes Diuine, Morall and Martiall, &c. (London, 1612) in Peter Force, ed., Tracts and Other Papers, Relating Principally to the Origin, Settlement, and Progress of the Colonies in North America, 4 Vols. (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1963), III, no. 2, p. 10.



that county might more easily receive Christian burial. Whether in the form of a church, a cemetery, or a room for the explicit purpose of holding divine worship, Virginians consistently set holy places apart from the rest of the landscape, emulating practices they had learned in England. These symbols of institutional religion represented a transformation of that portion of the North American continent inhabited by the colonists. The colonists had taken territory from Satan's dominion and marked it as both Christian and English. Preaching to the Virginia Company of London, Patrick Copeland called Virginia "that Heathen now Christian Kingdome."<sup>5</sup>

Construction of additional churches and cemeteries provided further evidence of England's continuing mission to the North American continent. These religious sites visibly demonstrated that the land had been Christianized and set apart for the use of a Christian people. This mission was an important one, for it marked the continent as a Christian land. The presence of certain church ornaments, however, indicated that Virginia was not merely a Christian land, but a land of Protestants. William

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<sup>5</sup>William Waller Hening, ed., The Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia . . . 13 Vols. (Richmond, 1809-1823), I, pp. 122-123; Susie M. Ames, ed., County Court Records of Accomack-Northampton, Virginia, 1632-1640 (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1954), p. 54; Butler, p. 44; Patrick Copeland, Virginia's God be Thanked (London, 1622), p. 2.

Strachey's description of the communion table in the Jamestown church as one of "black walnut" specified the material from which it was constructed and testified therefore to the church's Protestant nature. Roman Catholics built altars out of stone and there offered the sacrifice of the Mass. Protestants constructed tables out of wood and there shared a meal, the Lord's Supper. Thus, even without words to describe the ornament, to anyone who saw the object, it signified a Protestant church.<sup>6</sup>

Early colonists--or more accurately, their leaders--had claimed territory for England and the nation's Protestant people. Erecting Christian houses of worship, setting aside rooms for divine service, or guaranteeing sites for Christian burial marked the land as Christian to some degree, especially since Anglicans believed objects could be consecrated and dedicated to the service of God, their holiness determined by their function. The settlers worshiped in these buildings according to the common prayer of the Church of England. During Virginia's first two years, they refused to attend the sermons of a minister they believed was too much of a Puritan Separatist. The clergyman soon gave up and returned home to England. The early settlers had successfully carried England's mythic national religion to English spaces in

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<sup>6</sup>Strachey, Voyage to Virginia, p. 80; Leo F. Solt, Church and State in Early Modern England, 1509-1640 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 48.

the New World and by their presence had liberated the land from Satan.<sup>7</sup>

The mission to the natives was less successful. With the exception of John Rolfe, George Thorpe, Thomas Dale, and a few others the colonists never demonstrated the same zeal for converting the natives that continued to intrigue the Company's leadership back in England. From their pulpits and studies in London, ministers and propagandists urged the colonists forward toward this holiest of ends. In 1622 John Donne likened Virginia's colonists to John the Baptist: "Iohn Baptist was not bid to beare witness [for Christ] in Ierusalem, in the Citie, but in the Wildernesse." Over a decade earlier, Robert Tynley, preaching at Paul's Cross in London, had urged the Virginia venture forward in "the gaining and winning to Christ his fold . . . of so many thousands of those sillie, brutish, and ignorant soules, now fast bound witch the chaines of error and ignorance, under the bondage and slavery of the Diuell." But this formidable task was more easily proclaimed from the comfort of the homeland than

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<sup>7</sup>Horton Davies, Worship and Theology in England, 5 Vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961-1975), II, p. 19; John Beaulie to William Trumball, November 30, 1609, in Philip L. Barbour, ed., The Jamestown Voyages Under the First Charter, 1606-1609, 2 Vols. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), II, p. 287.

acted upon in a wilderness filled with "savage" people thought to practice witchcraft and worship the devil.<sup>8</sup>

The mission to the Indians in Virginia had begun poorly. When the English first came ashore at Cape Henry in April 1607, Indians inhabiting the area forced them to return to their ships. During a brief skirmish the natives wounded two men, Captain Archer in both hands and "a sayler in two places of the body very dangerous." Shortly thereafter Powhatan's warriors attacked the recently constructed fort at Jamestown. Only fire from English ships at anchor in the James River prevented the natives from destroying the settlement. These events established a pattern that would dominate Indian and

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<sup>8</sup>Morgan, p. 331; Bernard W. Sheehan, Savagism and Civility: Indians and Englishmen in Colonial Virginia (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 130; John Donne, A Sermon upon the viii. verse of the i. chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Preached to the Honourable Company of the Virginia Plantations (London, 1622), p. 36; Robert Tynley, Two Learned Sermons Preached, the one at Paules Crosse, the other at the Spittle (London, 1609), p. 67; Alexander Whitaker, Good Newes From Virginia (London, 1613), ed., Wesley Frank Craven (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1937), pp. 23-24; Alexander Whitaker to Mr. Crashaw, August 9, 1611, in Alexander Brown, Genesis of the United States, 2 Vols. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), I, p. 499; George Percy in Tyler, Narratives of Early Virginia, pp. 6, 12; William Strachey, Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania (London, 1612), ed. Louis B. Wright and Virginia Freund (London: Hackluyt Society, 1953), p. 95; Morgan, p. 56; George Percy, "Fragment published in 1614; [1608]," Barbour, Jamestown Voyages, I, p. 146; William White, "Fragments published in 1614; [1608]," Ibid., I, p. 147; "Francis Magnel's Relation of the First Voyage and the Beginnings of the Jamestown Colony," July 1, 1610, Ibid., I, p. 154.

English relations for at least the next fifteen years, and, in large measure, for the remainder of the century. Virginia's natives wanted little to do either with English civility or English religion. Nor did most English people want anything to do with the natives. In the words of one historian, both groups soon found "repelling attitudes indigenous" to the others' culture.<sup>9</sup>

The way in which English leaders envisioned the mission to the natives is as important as its subsequent failure in explaining the role of religion in early Virginia. Whether devout adherents of the Church of England or nominal Christians who avoided worship services whenever possible, the English people who came to Virginia represented English religion. The Englishmen who settled Virginia framed their Christianity with Old Testament definitions of nationhood, thereby reinforcing the idea of an ethnic religious identity. Citizenship in a Christian

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<sup>9</sup>Morgan, pp. 71-72; Warren M. Billings, John E. Selby, and Thad W. Tate, Colonial Virginia: A History (White Plains, NY: KTO Press, 1986), p. 28; David B. Smits, "'Abominable Mixture': Toward the Repudiation of Anglo-Indian Intermarriage in Seventeenth-Century Virginia," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography XCV (April 1987), pp. 167, 181, see also p. 175 where Smits discusses the "repelling attitudes indigenous to each culture"; Sheehan, pp. 142, 165. As late as 1697 little effort had been made to convert Virginia's natives. To a Board of Trade request that year asking for information about what efforts were being made to convert the Indians, Governor Edmund Andros responded: "None ever heard of." See W. Stitt Robinson, Jr., "Indian Education and Missions in Colonial Virginia," Journal of Southern History XVIII (April 1952), pp. 161.

nation made them in some way Christians themselves because they were Englishmen whose births defined them as members of the Church of England. Virginia Company leaders believed that a community of English Christians in the New World would attract the natives to Christianity. They instructed Governor George Yeardley in 1619 to take care that "his Maties people in Virginia be trained up in true Religion, Godliness, & vertue: that their example may be a means to winne the Infidells to God." A Company broadside published during the following year announced the intention that colonists in Virginia "be faithfully brought vp in the knowledge and seruice of Almighty God, and so learne to frame their liues and conuersations, as . . . by their good example, to allure the Heathen people" to Christianity. Earlier instructions had made similar demands of the settlers. Repeated for fifteen years, Company instructions prescribed the transfer to Virginia of mythic English religion, for whether they favored the ecclesiastical polity of Geneva or of Canterbury, English people abhorred religious faction. A state could have but one church. Company leaders envisioned Virginia's settlers establishing peaceable kingdoms knit together by religious devotion and sentiment. These settlements would then draw the Indians to the faith by presenting living examples of loving and charitable Christian society. Men and women in Jacobean England placed a high value on

communal harmony. The Virginia Company of London expected the harmony engendered by English mythic religion to serve as a tool of evangelism in the North American wilderness.<sup>10</sup>

That the English failed to treat each other with the charity and love their leaders had hoped for and failed to create gentle communities in Virginia--in short, failed to live up to the prescription given them--is not the point. The settlers were to introduce Christianity to the natives through the visual example of their society. This means of imparting Christianity to the natives of Virginia functioned far differently from that employed by Roman Catholic missionaries in New France, and the distinction is instructive. There the Jesuits went among the indigenous population to win converts, taking on their way of life, and instructing them as persons at least partially integrated into Indian society. Rather than

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<sup>10</sup>Davies, II, p. 7; Kupperman, pp. 162-164; Instructions to Governor George Yeardley from His Majesty's Council for Virginia, December 2, 1618, Ferrar Papers, f. 92, (VCRP); Treasurer, Council, and Company for Virginia, A Broadside, May 17, 1620, in Susan Myra Kingsbury, ed., The Records of the Virginia Company of London, 4 Vols. (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1906-1935), III, p. 276; Timothy L. Smith, "Congregation, State, and Denomination: The Forming of the American Religious Structure," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., XXV (April 1968), p. 160; Richard Helgerson, Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 253; Martin Ingram, Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 29-31.

living among the native peoples, the Virginia Company expected its settlers to encourage the Indians to give up their own ways and to come live among the English where the "naturalls" could then better learn the principles of civility and Christianity.<sup>11</sup>

The contrasting methods used by the French and English in their efforts to convert the native peoples of North America reflected two different relationships between faith and culture. For the Jesuits, faith or religion provided a means of reshaping native culture in subtle ways. Conversion took place within native society. The English associated with the Virginia venture, on the other hand, believed that Indian ways of life threatened Christianity. Culture, for the English, provided a context in which the Christian religion might take root. In 1609 the Virginia Company urged the colony's resident leaders to use all possible diligence to "endeavour the conversion of the natives to the knowledge and worship of the true god and their redeemer Christ Jesus." The method they suggested illustrates the central importance culture played in English ways of thinking about religion: "the

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<sup>11</sup>Sheehan, pp. 125-126; James Axtell, The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), ch. 5; Kupperman, pp. 164-165. For a similar approach to converting native peoples, but by the Spanish in New Mexico and by using plays, see Ramon A. Gutierrez, When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), pp. 83-86.



better to effect you must pcure from them some convenient nomber of their Children to be brought vp in yor language, and manners." English manners and language formed the grounding for English religion. A letter written to George Thorpe in 1618 suggested that the sacrament of baptism, the rite that marked an individual as a Christian, should only be offered to those natives who would continue to live among the English: "concerning the baptisme of Infidelle children. . . . after the manner of primitive guerre, such as mak servants or bondmen to Christians, and more xpetially to remane among them might be baptized."<sup>12</sup> The transformative power of sacramental grace, its effectiveness at all, seemed to be associated with English culture.

The English approach to converting the natives grew out of a pedagogy based on the potential of fallen mankind to learn virtue through education, ultimately relying upon the instructive abilities of English society. Robert Gray explained in his pamphlet A Good Speed to Virginia that human nature was malleable and could be guided in certain directions: "it is not the nature of men, but the education of men, which makes them barbarous and unciuill,

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<sup>12</sup>Instructions to Thomas Gates, Governor of Virginia, May 1609, RVCL, III, p. 14; John Smith, The Proceedings of the English Colonie in Virginia, [1606-1612] (London, 1612), in Barbour, John Smith, I, p. 237, n. 9; Richard Ferrar to [George Thorpe], December 13, 1618, Ferrar Papers, f. 93, (VCRP).

and therefore chaunge the education of men, and you shall see that their nature will be greatly rectified." Place the natives in the proper environment, one linked by the possession of true religion with the means of grace, and they could become Christian. Within that cultural environment, much learning took place through sight. In traditional societies, like those of the Indians and the English in early Virginia, sight conveyed knowledge. In the union between knower and known, the knower remains passive while the object which is integrated into the self takes the active role. The object thus "impresses itself upon the mind." Unless an individual was weak of mind or willfully perverse, what the person saw articulated the reality a particular event or object represented. This notion reflected the humanist theories of education popular then. Individuals could learn from others' experiences by reading histories or by witnessing examples. Their references to concrete events made history and visual experience better teachers than abstract philosophy. Writing at midcentury to Lady Berkeley, the wife of Governor Sir William Berkeley, Virginia Ferrar gave expression to this typical seventeenth-century concept: [I have] found that the sight of a thing brings menny times greate good Notice [to] a mans mind and understanding for the happy and more ready compliting of many good designes; farr better than

the hearring of it . . . alone." English people of the seventeenth century believed that what entered the mind by means of the eye left a more vivid and lasting impression than what entered through the ear. Demonstrated through actions, the customs and mores of a society played a significant role in educating members of that society. Living among a particular people and learning their ways by observing their actions therefore affected an individual's nature.<sup>13</sup>

Colonial and Company leaders interested in spreading the Gospel to the natives believed that exposing them to English society was an important step in the process of converting them to Christianity. Acquiring the attributes of English civility preceded the process of becoming

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<sup>13</sup>Robert Gray, A Good Speed to Virginia (London, 1609), ed. Wesley Frank Craven (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1937), C2; Treasurer and Council for Virginia to Governor and Council in Virginia, August 1, 1622, RVCL, III, p. 672; William J. Bouwsma, John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 69-71, 90; Paul H. Kocher, Science and Religion in Elizabethan England (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1953), pp. 29-32, 44; Harry S. Stout, "Religion, Communication, and the Ideological Origins of the American Revolution," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., XXXIV (October 1977), p. 529; Rhys Isaac, The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), pp. 52-57; Virginia Ferrar to Lady Berkeley, August 10, 1650, Ferrar Papers, f. 692, (VCRP). On the notion that virtue or civility could be taught, see also Jacques Revel, "The Uses of Civility," in Philippe Aries and George Duby, eds., A History of Private Life (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989), Vol. 3, Passions of the Renaissance, ed. Roger Chartier, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, pp. 168-185.

Christians who would serve God according to English forms of Protestantism. Indian children supposedly made better potential converts than their parents for, "theire minds not overgrowne wth evill Customes," they could more easily "be reduced to civilitie, and afterwarde to Christianitie." At its first session in 1619, the House of Burgesses instructed "eache towne, citty Borrough, & particular plantation do obtaine unto themselves by just meanes a certaine number of the natives Children to be educated by them in true Religion & civile course of life."<sup>14</sup>

The Indian school at the proposed College of Henrico offers the best example of this approach. At the college, Indian children would be immersed in Christian society, learning English religion along with English civility in a Christian environment. Classroom instruction would accompany the passive learning fostered by their new living arrangements in English territory. The plan collapsed following the Indian massacre of 1621/22, but that in no way changed the project's essential epistemological grounding. Even before the massacre, however, George Yeardley had reported to the Company that

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<sup>14</sup>Treasurer and Council for Virginia to the Governor and Council in Virginia, August 1, 1622, RVCL, III, p. 672; Wesley Frank Craven, "Indian Policy in Early Virginia," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., I (January 1944), p. 67; H.R. McIlwaine, ed., Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1619-1658/59 (Richmond, 1915), p. 23.

"The Spirituall vine you speake of will not so sodaynly be planted as it may be desired, the Indians being very loath vpon any tearmes to part with theire children."<sup>15</sup>

Only a minority of the colonists showed concern for the souls of the Indians and supported the Company's wish to convert the natives. Most people despised the people of the land. George Thorpe wrote: "There is scarce any man amongst us that doth soe much as afforde [the natives] a good thought in his hart and most men with their mouthes give them nothings but maledictions and bitter execrations." Virginians as a whole never embraced the mission to the Indians with the zeal of the Company's leaders and benefactors in England. Despite the House of Burgesses' orders to the contrary, most colonists did not want natives, even children, within their communities. In 1620 an anonymous benefactor, named only as "Dust and Ashes," donated 550 Pounds of the purpose of educating native children in English civility and religion. The colony's resident council pressured the proprietors of Southampton Hundred into accepting this gift, but not without resistance. The proprietors offered to pay the council 100 Pounds if it would relieve them of this burden. They preferred bribery to cultural evangelism,

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<sup>15</sup>George Yeardley to Edwin Sandys, 1619, RVCL, III, p. 128; Brydon, I, pp. 51-59; Morgan, p. 98; Richard Beale Davis, Intellectual Life in the Colonial South, 1585-1763, 3 Vols. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1978), II, p. 639; Robinson, pp. 152-168.

making their attitude toward the people of the land quite literally one of natives be damned.<sup>16</sup>

Although other proposals for raising native children in English homes or moving entire Indian families to English settlements also aimed at converting the natives by immersing them in English culture, cultural evangelism presented certain problems, for colonial English society held no monopoly on the ability to "draw" others to a certain way of life. Human nature was malleable, and there was no guarantee that Christian English people would not find native culture attractive. For a nation still trying to establish its identity, and doing so overseas, this problem created some anxiety among colonial leaders. Indians posed a threat as well as an opportunity. Scripture proclaimed the good news that converting heathen people to the Gospel ensured rewards in heaven for those who had offered the message of salvation. Yet Englishmen might just as easily forsake their own culture and "turn native" as induce Indians to become Christians. The Reverend Jonas Stockham complained: "We have sent boies amongst them to learne their Language, but they retorne worse than they went." By 1612 native culture had seduced some colonists who had begun marrying and living among the Indians. When a minister reprehended their practice, the

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<sup>16</sup>Morgan, pp. 99, 73-75, 331; Sheehan, p. 125; Brydon, I, p. 56.

colonists assaulted him, "seriously" wounding the parson "in many places." The clergyman likely worried that the colonists would draw down God's judgment by violating His injunction to the Israelites when they entered Canaan not to marry with the people of the land. Other ministers also perceived Indian culture as a threat to English ways of life. The Reverend Samuel Eburne argued against the colonists marrying Indian maidens on cultural rather than Biblical grounds. English mothers and wives traditionally transmitted English manners and morals to their children. It would not be "convenient," Eburne claimed, to marry Indian maidens. Since they "had no such breeding as our women, it cannot be."<sup>17</sup>

Clergymen may have been limited to persuasive appeals in their attempts to prevent Englishmen from "turning native," but civil authorities employed coercion. Brutal executions made examples of those who had forsaken English society to live in the wilderness among the natives. Unlike beasts, whose use of force is innocent, human beings resort to violence for a reason; they enter it rationally and with a design. The colonists could, for example, take up arms and make war against Indians in

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<sup>17</sup>Morgan, pp. 97-98; John Smith, Generall History, in Barbour, John Smith, II, p. 286; Pedro de Zuniga to Philip III, August 1, 1612, in Genesis of the United States, I, p. 572; Pedro de Zuniga to Philip III, September 22, 1612, Ibid., I, p. 632; Wilcomb E. Washburn, The Indian in America (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 93; Smits, pp. 177, 180.

order to effect a "fatall revenge" against a people who had murdered Christians. But the English also used great violence against their own countrymen in Virginia, specifically against those who violated the commandments or fled to live with the Indians. In short, their response to their own anxiety was force. Force was a compelling teacher in early Virginia. Its use and who it was directed against revealed what was right and what was wrong, who was a member of the community and who posed a threat to that same community. In 1612 Marshall Thomas Dale recaptured several men who had run off to join the natives. George Percy described their executions: "Some he apointed to be hanged Some burned Some to be broken upon wheles, others to be staked and some shott to death. All theis extreme and crewell tortures her used and inflicted upon them to terrify the reste for Attempting the Lyke."<sup>18</sup> Virginia's religious and civil authorities

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<sup>18</sup>Sebastian de Grazia, Machiavelli in Hell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 109; J. Frederick Fausz and Jon Kukla, eds., "A Letter of Advice to the Governor of Virginia, 1624," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., (January 1977), p. 108; George Percy, "A Trewe Relaycon of the Procedeinges and Occurrentes of Momente which have hapned in Virginia from the Tyme Sir Thomas Gates was shippwrackte uppon the Bermudas anno 1609 until my departure outt of the Country which was anno Domini 1612," Tylers' Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine III (1922), p. 280; Morgan, p. 74; Bouwsma, pp. 34-36. Even John Rolfe worried that marriage to Pocahontas might jeopardize the "civility" of his "present estate," see Smits, pp. 180-181. The Biblical citations are, for heavenly rewards to those who convert heathens, Daniel 12.3; for the injunction not to marry with the people of the land, Exodus 34.11-16, Numbers.6f,



feared the potential influence native culture might have on the colonists, reflecting a continuing Calvinist--if not typically English--fear of mixture and a desire for cultural purity, strengthened by the nation's understanding of itself as an early modern Israel. The natives threatened the English militarily as well as culturally. In the North American wilderness dominated by Indians, English civility could easily lapse into savagery.

In 1619, at its first meeting, the House of Burgesses addressed the danger posed to the English by Indian society, thereby illuminating the link between religion and culture. On the last day of the session, one of the colony's Indian interpreters, Robert Poole, brought charges against Captain Henry Spelman, accusing him of speaking contemptuously about the present governor in the presence of Opechancanough, chief of the Powhatans. Spelman's words threatened to "disesteem" the colony before the Indian leader and to put Virginia at the mercy of the native's "Slippery designes." Spelman, who had spent most of the previous ten years living among the Powhatan and Potomac tribes, was censured for his offense, stripped of his title of captain, and condemned to serve the colony seven years as an interpreter. He could have been executed. In his report of the proceedings, John

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Deuteronomy 7.3f, Ezra 9.1f, 10.2, 10, 14.

Pory described Spelman "as one that had in him more of the Savage then of the Christian." The colonists viewed Poole much as they did Spelman. As an interpreter, he too had lived on the margins of difference among the Indians and had adopted their ways. He was once called a person who had "in a manner turned heathen."<sup>19</sup>

Savage and Christian, it was a familiar dichotomy in early Virginia, having as much to do with ethnic origins as religion. Yet a religious element played a clear role in defining the two groups. Spelman, the Englishman who acted so much like the "savages," had become a man nearly abandoned by "Gods grace." And Poole, who had lived with the Patowomeke, was thought of as a "heathen," a term Virginians generally reserved for the natives. By living among a people reputed to be "savages," Englishmen perverted their Christian natures and reverted to savagery themselves. They picked up savage habits and potentially became the antithesis of what they ought to have been. Outside of English society, which had at its core a belief in true English religion, Christian colonists diminished in grace by cohabitating with the Indians. To anyone knowledgeable in theology--as the colony's leaders were--this presented a frightening prospect. To Virginians of the early seventeenth century, grace, the

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<sup>19</sup>House of Burgesses, 1619-1658/59, p. 15; Billings, Selby, and Tate, p. 23; Morton, I, pp. 78-80.

distinguishing mark of Christianity, faded as a person came closer to savagery. An English minister, John Brinsley, warned the settlers to be wary of native culture, "especially of falling away from God to Sathan, and that themselves, or their posterity should become utterly savage, as they are."<sup>20</sup>

Offering the Gospel to the natives was never the problem. Jesus Christ had died to redeem native as well as English souls. Alexander Whitaker expressed confidence that the same God Englishmen worshiped would "be mercifull also to these sonnes of Adam in his appointed time, in whom there bee remaining so many footsteps of God's image." Thomas Dale, who presided over the executions of several colonists captured after they had run off to live with the Indians, also helped convert Pocahontas to Christianity. Living among the natives, thereby running the risk of picking up and adopting their ways, presented the problem. Old Testament scripture commanded the chosen people not to marry and live with the people of the land, and the English viewed themselves as a seventeenth-century Israel. Ministers who preached and authors who wrote on

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<sup>20</sup>House of Burgesses, 1619-1658/59, p. 15; Sheehan, p. 63; Smits, pp. 178, 183; Craven, p. 73; John Smith, Proceedings of the English Colonie, in Barbour, John Smith, II, p. 263. Although this reading seems unlikely, Smits also suggests that a portion of the prayer appended to The Lawes Diuine, Morall and Martiall, p. 66, was directed at the potentiality of colonists running away to live with the natives.

behalf of the Virginia Company reminded their audiences of these facts. To protect their purity the English could offer gifts to, but never become part of, Indian culture. John Rolfe wrestled with this question before marrying Pocahontas, eventually deciding that joining with her was part of God's plan for bringing her to Christianity. He sometimes wondered, however, whether the temptation to marry the Indian princess derived from a "diabolical assault." Significantly, when Rolfe married Pocahontas she joined English society. At her baptism she took an English name, Rebecca, symbolically renouncing her native roots.<sup>21</sup> In its starkest terms, colonial leaders believed Christian Englishmen might become "savages" if they left English society. The underlying fear was one of actions. Indians were not Christians, and they acted differently than Christian Englishmen. For a Christian to live among them was to risk adopting their way of life, especially for the many nominal Christians in Virginia whom the colony's leaders believed needed civilizing nearly as much as the natives. English culture provided a context in which the Christian religion might take root, a context in which nominally Christian English men and women might become professing members of the Church of England.

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<sup>21</sup>Instructions to Thomas Gates, Governor of Virginia, May 1609, RVCL, III, p. 14; Whitaker, p. 27; John Rolfe to Sir Thomas Dale, 1614, in Tyler, Narratives of Early Virginia, p. 241; Morton, I, p. 36.

Indian culture represented the antithesis of the way the English leaders believed Christian people should live. From the English perspective, Virginia's natives lived in idleness, and some colonists found this a way of life worth embracing. The Church of England's Calvinist theology, however, taught that idleness was a particularly damning vice: "It is the appointment of and will of God that every man, during the time of this mortal and transitory life, should give himself to such honest and godly exercise and labour." Protestant reformers had denounced Roman Catholic orders devoted to prayer and contemplation for their alleged idleness. Upon reaching the colony in 1610, Lord Delaware condemned "the Idlenesse and bestiall sloth, of the common sort." John Smith complained about settlers who fled the colony "to live Idle among the Salvages" and enforced the Biblical injunction "that he that will not worke shall not eate." Alexander Whitaker conjured up images of idle monks living outside society when he likened Indian priests "to the popish Hermits of our age." The Book of Homilies, which Virginians used on occasion, evoked the many dangers of this sin, warning that "Idleness is never alone, but hath always a long tail of other vices hanging on," and "Where

idleness is once received, there the Devil is ready to set in his foot."<sup>22</sup>

Just as surely as they knew the Indians lived in idleness, Virginia's colonists believed with certainty that the natives also worshiped the devil. "Their chief god whom they worship is no other than the devill," wrote William Strachey, reflecting this popular opinion, and their "Priests haue conference and consult indeed with the Deuill and receaue verball answeres." Alexander Whitaker claimed the natives were "naked slaues of the diuell." He also wondered whether or not "there be great witches amongst them." In addition to worshiping Satan and practicing witchcraft, Virginia's colonists thought that the natives followed a religious regimen foreign and damnable to Englishmen. They neither offered grace before meals nor kept "any day as more holy then other." One observer complained that they kept no solemn fast or vigils. According to the English, the natives served their deity "more out of feare then love," a practice one might expect from a people reputed to worship the devil rather than the merciful God of Christianity. Serving the object of worship out of fear rather than love set the

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<sup>22</sup>Bouwsma, p. 61; Sermons or Homilies, Appointed to be Read in Churches in the Time of Queen Elizabeth of Famous Memory (New York, 1815), pp. 438-439 (henceforth cited as Book of Homilies); Morgan, pp. 61-62, 78; John Smith, Proceedings of the English Colonie, in Barbour, John Smith, I, p. 259; Whitaker, p. 26; Book of Homilies, p. 441. The Biblical reference is I Thes. 3.10.

natives apart from English notions of the relationship between God and mankind. Anglican theology of the early seventeenth century was grounded in God's prior and overwhelming love for mankind. Put another way, love provided the context for God's communications with all humanity.<sup>23</sup>

Indian and English culture in early seventeenth century Virginia, then, represented two different ways of life. Indians were "savages"; English people were Christian, whether or not they lived particularly righteous lives. English culture in early Virginia at least possessed the outward signs of Christianity: a church building at Jamestown, church bells that marked time, and laws that attempted to enforce the civility upon which a deeper faith might develop. English Christianity was as much--perhaps moreso--a matter of culture and the behavior that culture tolerated within a community as of belief, something "interconnected with all the other attributes of normal and proper men," in other words,

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<sup>23</sup>John Frederick Woolverton, Colonial Anglicanism in North America (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), p. 66; Strachey, Historie of Travell, pp. 88, 95-96; Alexander Whitaker to Mr. Crashaw, August 9, 1611, Genesis of the United States, I, p. 499; John Smith, A Map of Virginia. With a Description of the Countrey, the Commodities, People, Government and Religion (London, 1612), Barbour, John Smith, I, pp. 169-170; C. FitzSimmons Allison, The Rise of Moralism: The Proclamation of the Gospel From Hooker to Baxter (Wilton, CT: Morehouse Barlow Co., 1966), p. 4.

English notions of civility.<sup>24</sup> The natives threatened these English ideas. They worshiped the devil and practiced witchcraft. Their culture encouraged idleness. For English Christians who took their religion seriously, Indian culture was an abomination. In religious language, for an Englishman to flee his own culture and embrace that of the natives was apostasy, a willful forsaking of the truth. Cut off from Christian society, the sacraments, and corporate prayer, malleable human nature would begin to undergo a transformation. As grace diminished in the Christian soul, savage ways began to replace civilized habits.

The Virginians' mission to the Indians collapsed following the colony-wide massacre of the settlers by the Powhatans on Good Friday of 1621/22. Nearly a third of the colonists were killed during the uprising, and the attack terrified those who survived. One man wrote: "The truth is we dare scarce stepp out of our dores." Settlers responded to this outrage by pursuing a "holy war" against the natives who had shed "the inocent blood of so many Christians." The natives' assault in effect baptized the settlers, even those with nothing but their names to indicate that they were Christians. It solidified the emerging intellectual boundaries between native and

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<sup>24</sup>Winthrop D. Jordan, White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), p. 24.



English, thereby making room for new understandings of what it meant to be English and of who made up the English community. Colonial leaders and pamphlet authors had rarely before used the term "Christian" to describe the majority of settlers. They more often complained of the many rude people lacking manners and civility who inhabited Virginia. The Good Friday massacre had crystallized the differences between Christian and "savage."<sup>25</sup>

Company leaders advised the settlers as a Christian undertaking "to roote out [the natives] from being any longer a people. In the colony, poet George Sandys wrote that the settlers intended to "follow their Example in destroying them." The local Indians had rejected the gift of the Gospel. Rather than an offering to the natives, religion now became a justification for the use of violence against them and a delineation of the boundaries

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<sup>25</sup>William L. Shea, The Virginia Militia in the Seventeenth Century (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), p. 28; Fausz and Kukla, p. 108; Treasurer and Council for Virginia to Governor and Council in Virginia, August 1, 1622, RVCL, III, pp. 671-672; Billings, Selby, and Tate, p. 44. For an incident involving a practice despised by Puritans as a means of killing natives, see Robert Bennett to Edward Bennett, June 9, 1623, RVCL, IV, p. 221: "After a manye fayned speches the pease was to be concluded in a helthe or tooe in sacke which was sente on porpose in the butte with Capten Tucker to poysen them." For the Puritan opposition to the drinking of healths, a practice they believed was idolatrous, see Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), p. 66.

separating native and English culture. As a part of their own identity in Virginia's wilderness, the colonists had demonized the natives, seeing in them what one historian has called a "threatening Other." Native ways of life presented English people with a parody of the order and norms they had come to believe were acceptable. The identity the colonists fashioned would help shape their religion as well, for they were coming to believe that what was alien, what they defined themselves against, was not so much other European Christian denominations, but the native peoples of the land who were completely other in a way that rival Europeans were not. The natives came to fill the role played by Roman Catholics back in Europe. Gabriel Archer borrowed language typical of English attitudes toward papists to describe the natives: "They are naturally given to treachery."<sup>26</sup>

Early colonial attitudes had revealed this animosity toward the natives long before 1622. As Edmund Morgan has pointed out, The Lawes Diuine, Morall and Martiall under which the settlers lived between 1610 and 1619 made no provision for Indians to become part of the English community in Virginia. On extraordinary occasions, an individual Indian, such as Pocahontas, might become part

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<sup>26</sup>George Sandys to Samuel Sandys, March 30, 1623, RVCL, IV, p. 73; Stephen Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 9; Smits, p. 167.

of the English polity, yet those instances were rare. Even as John Rolfe and Thomas Dale labored to effect her conversion, Dale attempted to create a polity in which English and Indian would remain apart. The Lawes, in fact, had institutionalized the separation of Christian and savage. And funds donated by English Christians to support the College of Henrico in its holy work never reached that institution. The money was used instead to set up an iron works on Falling Creek in 1620.<sup>27</sup>

Not until the end of the century did organized efforts to convert the natives again emerge. Francis Yeardley of Accomack County on the Eastern Shore recounted an incident in 1654 which demonstrated the attitude many colonists held toward the natives. The king of the Roanoke Indians approached Yeardley during that year and asked about having his son baptized and brought up to read and write in English. Yeardley thought well of the idea and invited the child into his family, where he could be instructed in English civility and religion. Many people complained and did not treat the Indian boy civilly: "Some [of] our Justices of this place (my wife hauing brought him to Church in the Congregation) after sermon, threatned to whipp him and send him awaye." As late as

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<sup>27</sup>Morgan, pp. 80-81; Charles E. Hatch, Jr., and Thurlow Gates Gregory, "The First American Blast Furnace, 1619-1622: The Birth of a Mighty Industry on Falling Creek in Virginia," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography LXX (July 1962), pp. 267-268.

1678 colonial authorities were banishing settlers from Virginia "for living amongst the heathens." Hatred of Indians had become a habitual part of Virginians' world.<sup>28</sup>

The predominance of the mission to the natives in the literature of early Virginia conceals another mission, one that had existed from the beginning. When the mission to the natives failed in the aftermath of the 1621/22 massacre, the only mission remaining was the one that had been there all along: to the many nominal Christians who peopled the colony. Both missions had the same epistemological base. Individuals learned by sight and by immersion in a particular culture. "With the preaching of Gods word" and "seuere discipline," Virginia would fashion "new men, euen as it were cast in a new mould." These "new men" were then expected to draw the Indians to Christianity. But these same people, termed by one historian as "worthless and unruly," needed themselves to be reformed before they could draw the natives to true English religion. Separated by the Atlantic Ocean from the examples of idleness and sloth tolerated in the mother country, Virginia's polity would teach civility and

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<sup>28</sup>Francis Yeardley to John Ferrar, May 8, 1654, Rawlinson Manuscript A-14, Bodleian Library, Oxford University, ff. 84-87, (VCRP); Virginia Ferrar to Mrs. Yeardley, October 1654, Ferrar Papers, f. 691, (VCRP). H.R. McIlwaine, ed., Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia, 2d ed. (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1979), p. 519; Robinson, p. 161.

religion to the unruly colonists by Word and law and example. The colony would redeem England's dissolute, who, in turn, would draw the Indians to Christ. When Virginians in essence fenced the table against the natives, only the mission to the colonists remained, to make Christians of those people who by virtue of their birth were supposed to be Christians in the first place, the English settlers. Religion became something less than it might have been, but retained a quality it had possessed all along.<sup>29</sup>

The mission to the nominal believer had always existed; the failure of the mission to the natives merely gave it an additional ethnic arrogance. Christianity then became something English men and women possessed almost as a birthright that marked them apart and separated them from the natives. Instead of relying upon the Renaissance ideals of virtu to help them spread religion, the colonists used courage and valor as a means of defending their infant colony from an ungrateful people who had turned down the gift of the Gospel. Christianity became the private possession of the English settlers, no matter how nominally religious they might have been.

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<sup>29</sup>William Crashaw, A New-yeeres Gift to Virginia. A Sermon Preached in London before the right honorable the Lord Lawarre, Lord Governour and Captaine Generall of Virginea (London, 1610), F1; Morton, p. 31.

The English had brought Protestant Christianity to the land but not to its inhabitants. The plan had been to effect both missions in the same way, by establishing an English polity in North America. When the prophetic mission to the natives collapsed, only one mission remained--and it has often been overlooked--the pastoral mission to the English themselves. One historian has claimed that an organized missionary effort to take Christianity to the natives was nearly over by 1610, that the motivation existed (more strongly at home than in the colony) without the ecclesiastical machinery to implement it. The Church of England had never officially established a missionary venture to the natives.<sup>30</sup> They would not undertake such a mission to the colonies until 1701. The colonists had successfully expanded England, but they were still trying to define what it meant to be an English Christian. Like the mission to the natives, it was a task left to Virginia's polity.

By demonizing the natives Virginians began creating a mythic religion of their own, slightly different from, though more accurately reflecting the nation's variety. In the process they also took a step toward creating a religious identity distinct from the denominational and

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<sup>30</sup>John Parker, "Religion and the Virginia Colony, 1609-10," in K.R. Andrews, N.P. Canny, and P.E. H. Hair, eds., The Westward Enterprise: English Activities in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America, 1480-1650 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1978), pp. 268-270.

party identifications of Europe. Yet demonizing the natives did not fully tell Virginians who they were. As one author has argued, "to be is to mean, and meaning comes from difference." In religious terms, opposition to the natives only partially explained what it meant to be an English person in Virginia. Virginia's polity, the institution that secured the land and constructed a society which had been intended to teach Christianity to the natives, had much to say about this identity.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Helgersen, p. 22.

## CHAPTER 5

### BUILDING A POLITY: EARLY VIRGINIA AND THE GOD OF THE FATHERS

Virginia's polity developed out of England's relationship with God. And it began with the land, for without the land there could be no polity. "The country itself is large and great assuredly," the promotional author Robert Johnson wrote of Virginia, "it is commendable and hopeful every way; the air and climate most sweet and wholesome, much warmer than England and very agreeable to our natures." It was yet another argument encouraging the English to go in and possess their promised land. Had God not saved England from popery for a reason? He had endowed the English people with virtu to aid them in the dangerous work of crossing the Atlantic and establishing their colony. He had sent favorable winds to help guide the settlers to Virginia. He had planted the land's soil with goods sure to attract England's interest. And God had created a land peculiarly suited to the nature of His English friends, possessed of a moderate climate for a people who by nature wished to avoid extremes. The English people believed that God intended the Chesapeake region, if not all North America, for them. Many commentators of the period thought that at some level of reality an English ethnic identification



existed with that portion of the New World they named Virginia.<sup>1</sup>

The colony represented an extension of England into the world, a public and communal expression of national mission. By carving an English space out of the wilderness and there erecting habitations, the settlers had manifested their intention of possessing what they believed was England's promised land. But to English ways of thinking, dominion over the land required more than the intent to possess. Only occupation and settlement, the actual "taking possession" of the territory, could establish dominion over an area. And maintaining control over the territory had to involve more than the presence of a few rude buildings. Without laws and some means of enforcing those laws, thereby creating a social organization, the proposed English commonwealth in Virginia held little hope of success. The colony's first two years were testimony to the problems caused by the absence of stable government. Leaders bickered. Disease and starvation only increased the settlers' animosities. Company leaders openly worried that "the plantation went rather backwards than forwards." The polity envisioned

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Johnson, Nova Britannia. Offering Most Excellent Fruits By Planting in Virginia (London, 1609; reprint, Rochester, 1897), p. 10; Karen Ordahl Kupperman, Settling With the Indians: The Meeting of English and Indian Cultures in America, 1580-1640 (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980), pp. 162-163.

for the colony by resident leaders and Virginia Company officials was intended as a consolidation of the nation's continuing mission to the North American continent, the construction of an intellectual world in the physical space they had named Virginia.<sup>2</sup>

Religion necessarily informed the relationships which shaped and defined Virginia's infant commonwealth. The early seventeenth century knew no other way. That "no policie can stand long without religion" was a common assumption. In 1610/11 the Virginia Company admonished Lord Delaware, "First of all beinge to establish religion," only then did it instruct the colony's new governor "to establish good government and disciplyne." Order, in the minds of the company leaders, seemed to depend upon religion. People in early modern Europe presumed that all civil governments possessed divine sanction, even those of "savages" and willful idolaters. Civil authority existed "to restrain the evil passions" of sinful men and "actively to lead men in the paths of righteousness." Medieval schoolmen and Protestant reformers both believed Christian theology taught that God

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<sup>2</sup>Patricia Seed, "Taking Possession and Reading Texts: Establishing the Authority of Overseas Empires," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., XLIX (April 1992), pp. 191, 194; Warren M. Billings, John E. Selby, and Thad W. Tate, Colonial Virginia: A History (White Plains, NY: KTO Press, 1986), pp. 32-33; Richard L. Morton, Colonial Virginia, 2 Vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), I, p.19.

had ordained government to help maintain order in the world. By relating the people to God and introducing a supernatural coercive power, religion helped authorities restrain the destructive behaviors of sinful men and women.<sup>3</sup>

In Virginia, as in Massachusetts Bay, Spain, or any other early seventeenth century state, to speak of government was also to imply the existence of religious establishments or what one historian has called a "state church system." As Englishmen, Virginians inherited their nation's reigning notions of political and social organization which rested upon the premise that church and state were formally but not substantially distinct institutions. In other words, the same individuals comprised both church and state. Richard Hooker had made this point in his apology for the Elizabethan Church Settlement. Propagandists, preachers, and colonists did as well, but they more commonly framed the argument in Biblical language rather than philosophical concepts, frequently identifying the English nation with the Hebrew people of the Old Testament. Like that of the Israelites,

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<sup>3</sup>Robert Gray, A Good Speed to Virginia (London, 1609), ed. Wesley Frank Craven (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1937), D3; Remembrances to be sent to the lo: Delaware, [March 1610/11], Ferrar Papers, Magdalene College, f. 29, (VCRP); Perry Miller, "Religion and Society in the Early Literature of Virginia," in Errand Into the Wilderness (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 129.

English religion was shaped by the concept of ethnicity. As the Israelites by virtue of their birth were in covenant with God, so all English men and women became Christians. For people in early modern England, religion was not merely a matter of belief, but "a quality inherent in oneself and one's society." To Englishmen who fancied their nation a seventeenth-century Israel, a promised land, a chosen people, and a polity uniting nationalism and religion made a fitting combination.<sup>4</sup>

Following the Reformation, the shattering of Western Christian unity, and the accompanying identification of denominational religion with the rising nation-states, Christianity in many ways became the private possession of individual nations. Denominational Christianity created a social identification for the people of a particular state church system which set them apart from other groups of Christians. The religion practiced by early Virginians therefore reflected the national Protestantism of their homeland. In 1609 the Company instructed the colonists: "You shall take principall order and Care for the true and reverent worship of god that his worde be duely preached and his holy sacraments administred accordinge to ye consitucons of the Church of England in all fundamentall

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<sup>4</sup>Jon Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 261; Winthrop Jordan, White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), p. 24.

pointes." And England's established Anglican Church--an institution still searching for its own identity and defining itself most clearly against Rome--had accompanied the settlers to Jamestown from the colony's earliest days. There in the frontier wilderness Virginia's settlers participated in a liturgical regimen similar to that practiced in England. They attended morning and evening prayer daily and each Sunday heard a minister's sermon or a portion read from the Book of Homilies. The Church served as a symbol of true English religion, a form of Protestantism English people believed God favored over other expressions of the Christian Gospel. "Its teachings," historian Warren Billings has pointed out, "gave [Virginians] spiritual solace in an uncertain world." Yet Billings also recognized that due to the church's institutional weakness in the colony, "from its beginnings until the end of the colonial era it always had difficulty" satisfying these spiritual purposes.<sup>5</sup> As a part of the polity, however, religion was less a source of faith and solace, or even a means of salvation, than a source of order and definition. Within Virginia's polity

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<sup>5</sup>Instructions to Thomas Gates, Governor of Virginia, May 1609, in Susan Myra Kingsbury, ed., The Records of the Virginia Company of London, 4 Vols. (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1906-1935), III, p. 14; Billings, Selby, and Tate, p. 65. Billings' brief treatment of Virginia's church in the colonial period shows the best understanding of this institution in the secondary literature.

religion formulated a series of relationships that helped define and sustain the colony's political society.

Old Testament concepts of nationhood shaped Virginia's Christian polity. As expressed in Company instructions and the colony's laws, religion was something national or corporate, public, and directed at encouraging behaviors that might influence God to bless the settlement. Shortly before Captain Christopher Newport and the planters bound for Virginia left England in 1606 the Company advised them: "Lastly and chiefly the way to prosper and achieve good success is to make yourselves all of one mind for the good of your country . . . and to serve and fear God the Giver of all Goodness, for every plantation which our Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted out."<sup>6</sup> The colony's corporate relationship with God was paramount. Beyond establishing the Church of England "as near as may be" to that in the mother country and enforcing the stricture that compulsory worship follow the liturgy of the established church, Virginia's polity showed little concern with such peculiarly Christian notions as personal salvation. Through their correspondence some colonists gave testimony to their concern for personal salvation, but that was

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<sup>6</sup>Council for Virginia to Captain and Virginia Company going to Virginia, December 10, 1606, Alexander Brown, Genesis of the United States, 2 Vols. (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1964), I, p. 85.

largely a private matter. For the polity, salvation was achieved by ensuring the continued existence of the English settlement in Virginia.

Ensuring the colony's salvation meant pleasing God. And Virginia's early colonists did not inhabit a Christocentric universe. When they referred to God they meant the first person of the Trinity, God the Father, the creator of heaven and earth who revealed His favor and displeasure through nature. Certain behaviors pleased this God. "In ye first place," the Company advised Governor George Yeardley in 1623, "yu be carefull that Almighty God may be duly & daily served, both by yrselfe & all ye people undr yr charges, wch may draw down a Blessing upon all your endeavours." The instructions speak the language of influence, a concept not without precedent in English religious practice. To "draw down" God's blessings, like drawing down His judgments, implied that God acted in response to human behavior. The notion that the community at prayer could influence God reflected the medieval idea that communal processions could "induce God to show his mercy." It was an expression of influence rather than entreaty.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Instructions of the Privy Council to Sir George Yeardley, April 19, 1626, Public Records Office, Colonial Office 5/1354, f. 207, (VCRP); "Instructions to Sir Francis Wyatt," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography XI (July 1903), p. 54; "Instructions to Lord Culpeper," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography XXVII (July and October 1919), p. 326; "Instructions to Berkeley, 1642,"

This understanding shaped the colonists' view of the relationship between God and the polity. By acting in ways which God approved, Virginians might rally Him to their side and gain His blessings. But if God could send favorable winds to help guide the English to Virginia and seasonable rains to water the fields, He could just as easily smite the colony with disease and famine when the settlers' behaviors offended Him. Maintaining God's favor meant acting in ways that pleased the deity. As a functional aspect of the colony's governmental structure, religion in early Virginia began not from the theology or soteriology of England's established church, but from the premise that God existed and that He demanded certain actions from human beings. Faith in Christ crucified played no essential role in this relationship with God.

There is little doubt that most of Virginia's early leaders professed a sincere Christian faith and tried to keep the fear of God before their eyes. But men like John Smith, Thomas Dale, George Yeardley, William Strachey, and George Thorpe were not the only members of the colony. The majority of Virginia's early settlers were a rough lot, described by one historian as "the scum of England." They swore often, got drunk frequently, and worked little:

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Virginia Magazine of History and Biography II (January 1985), p. 281; Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), pp. 40-41.



not the sort of people best suited to founding a commonwealth that would please God. Colonial leaders sometimes seemed to compete with each other to see who could describe these nominal Christians in the most unflattering terms. Ralph Hamor thought most of his fellow settlers led dissolute lives and, like the natives, were guilty of the sin of idleness. He called them people "for the most part no more sensible then beasts, [who] would rather starue in idlenesse . . . then feast in labour." Sir Thomas Dale, the colony's marshall and a military officer who had seen action in the Netherlands, also based his description on external behaviors when he complained to one of the colony's supporters that few of the settlers "give testimonie beside their names that they are Christians."<sup>8</sup>

The colonists' immoral behavior posed a potential threat to Virginia's existence and thus to England's continuing mission to the New World. Ministers of the Jacobean Church regularly taught that the moral quality of a nation's citizenry determined the state's success or failure. Sin separated the polity from God, leading to strife and divine judgments. Possessed of an Old

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<sup>8</sup>Miller, p. 131; Ralph Hamor, A True Discourse of the Present [E]state of Virginia (London, 1615; reprint, Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1957), p.2; William Strachey, A Voyage to Virginia in 1609, ed. Louis B. Wright (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967), pp. 66-67; Thomas Dale to Lord Salisbury, August 17, 1611, Genesis of the United States, I, pp. 506-507.

Testament concept of nationhood, Virginians believed God punished the community for the sins of individuals. Trouble with the natives, a poor harvest, or an epidemic meant that something was amiss in the community's relationship with God. John Smith believed the colony's near failure between 1607 and 1609 was God's judgment upon the factions endemic to the aristocratic form of government under which Virginia was ruled in those years. Others saw God's chastisement in His allowing the people of the land to come upon the settlers with military arms. The Virginia Company, for example, blamed the Indian massacre of 1621/22 on "those two enormous excesses of apparell and drinkeing . . . and the neglect of Devine worship." "It is the heavie hand of God," they concluded in language that linked England and the colony under God, "for the punishment of ors and yor transgressions." Virginians agreed that the Powhatan massacre was a sign of divine indignation, but their perspective led them to interpret it differently. Like the Company leaders, they too believed God was punishing the colony for specific sins. But rather than interpret it as punishment for the settlers' drunkenness or failure to attend church, resident leaders thought God's vengeance had come in response to the Company's avarice. But both company leaders and colonists alike believed that if human actions could anger God, amendment of life could appease Him as

well. Amidst a devastating plague, Samuel Sharpe wondered what sin the colonists were guilty of to be stricken with such sickness and death. The remedy, however, was clear: "God grant that the cause may be found out and amended." "Whence the evill therefore sprung the remedy must first begin," the Virginia Company advised the colonists following the massacre, "and an humble reconciliation be made wth the devine Matie by future conformitie vnto his most iust and holie lawes."<sup>9</sup>

Moreso than the colonists' views on predestination or personal soteriology, what might be called a theology of the natural world which defined the link between sin and divine vengeance shaped Virginia's polity of English Christians during the colony's first few decades. The aristocratic government of 1607 through 1609, the military regime created by the Lawes Diuine, Morall and Martiall, as well as the less authoritarian "Great Charter," which led to the establishment of the House of Burgesses in 1619, all attempted to construct a society and government

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<sup>9</sup>Thomas, p. 92; John Smith, Advertisements for the Unexperienced Planters of New England, or Any-Where (London, 1631), in Philip L. Barbour, ed., The Complete Works of Captain John Smith, 3 Vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), III, pp. 295-296; John Smith, A True Relation of such occurrences . . . till the last returne (London, 1608), Barbour, John Smith, I, pp. 33-34; Treasurer and Council for Virginia to the Governor and Council in Virginia, August 1, 1622, RVCL, III, p. 666; Council in Virginia to the Virginia Company of London, January 20, 1622/23, RVCL, IV, p. 9; Samuel Sharpe to [?], March 24, 1622/23, RVCL, IV, pp. 233-234.

acceptable to a God offended by certain actions. This was the way to guarantee both the colony's success and England's continued presence in North America. Early Virginia's relationship with God was shaped by what might be called a soteriology of empire.

Colonial leaders and propagandists alike were familiar with ancient history, and they took comfort in the knowledge that great states had been built from "base and disordered" human materials like those who peopled Virginia. Rome and the Old Testament provided encouraging examples. "Remember who and what they were that came to Romulus and Remus, and were the founders of the Roman Citie & state, euen such as no man can without impudencie compare ours with them." Despite such base beginnings Rome had developed into "the Mistress of the world." Those "who kept with Dauid, and were the beginners of the kingdome of Iudah," were little better, a collection of malcontents, debtors, and men in trouble with the law. Crashaw's was an apt description as well of many of Virginia's settlers.<sup>10</sup> However much they talked about

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<sup>10</sup>Darrett B. Rutman, "The Virginia Company and Its Military Regime," in Darrett B. Rutman, ed., The Old Dominion: Essays for Thomas Perkins Abernethy (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1964), p. 10; William Crashaw, A New-yeeres Gift to Virginia. A Sermon Preached in London before the right honorable the Lord Lawarre, Lord Gouvernour and Captaine Generall of Virginea (London, 1610), E2-F1. Those pamphlets promoting Virginia which used in their titles the ancient Roman name for England, Britannia, also suggest the drive for empire.

converting the natives, the people associated with the Virginia venture presented a vision of empire that implied the salvation of the English state, a mission worthy of a nation trying to prove to itself its own claim of being an empire.

Old Testament morality and the notion that human nature was malleable and could be guided in certain directions through proper education informed the colonists' attempts to establish a suitable polity. Robert Gray, a supporter of the venture and rector of St. Benet Sherehog, was a chief proponent of instruction: "it is not the nature of men, but the education of men, which makes them barbarous and unciuill, and therefore chaunge the education of men, and you shall see that their nature will be greatly rectified." The Lawes embodied the idea that a polity pleasing to God could be crafted out of base human materials and threatened punishment of "all breaches of the sacred Tables, divine and morall, to GOD and man." The divine portion of the statutes, that part which defined relationships between individuals and the community's relationship with God, reflected the Deuteronomic code. With the exception of brief expansions suitable to the seventeenth-century context and a lack of clarity regarding the prescription to honor father and mother, the divine laws followed the Ten Commandments in precise order. Having outlined the major points, the

statutes, like those in Deuteronomy and Leviticus, then went on to define crimes and prescribe punishments for particular cases. Death was the penalty for a wide variety of offenses, from blasphemy to stealing vegetables while weeding a garden.<sup>11</sup> Statutory law and exemplary disciplinary measures would teach the colonists how to act in ways pleasing to God.

Perhaps Sir Thomas Dale's knowledge of Virginia's polity may explain why he could both complain about the number of vaguely religious persons in the colony with little more than their names to indicate they were Christians and at the same time inform Company officials that such people would help the colony. Although the goals of the colonists who were Christians in name only may have been far removed from propagating the Gospel, Dale realized their utility in furthering the "religious warfare" of the Virginia venture. In 1613 he wrote to a member of the Company, Sir Thomas Smythe, urging him to send more planters to the colony. Dale was chiefly

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<sup>11</sup>John Frederick Woolverton, Colonial Anglicanism in North America (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), p. 39; Robert Gray, A Good Speed to Virginia (London, 1609), ed. Wesley Craven (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1937), C2; Treasurer and Council for Virginia to the Governor and Council in Virginia, August 1, 1622, RVCL, III, p.672; For the Colony in Virginea Britania. Lawes, Diuine, Morall and Martiall, &c. (London, 1612), in Peter Force, ed., Tracts and Other Papers, Relating Principally to the Origin, Settlement, and Progress of the Colonies in North America 4 Vols. (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1963), III, no. 2, pp. 41, 9-12, 16-17. For the ten commandments, see Deuteronomy 5.

concerned with maintaining the colony's existence: "if the glory of God have no power with them and the conversion of these poor infidels, yet let the rich mammons' desire egge them on to inhabit these countries." Even the "superfluitie, or if you will, the very excrements," of England--as one minister termed the colonists--could help Virginia survive. For should they come to the settlement, they would live under the Lawes which Dale had brought from England. Through "sharpe laws, and seuere discipline. . . . together with the preaching of Gods word," even the most nominally Christian of colonists could learn to act in ways that did not offend the deity.<sup>12</sup> As a matter of policy, Virginia's continued existence--national salvation in time--framed the mission to the many nominal Christians in the colony.

Virginia's polity combined Old Testament morality and justice with a confidence in the power of education. In their distinct ways, church, court, and scaffold, each taught the behaviors expected of God's friends. Ministers preached, catechized, and celebrated the sacraments. Every Sunday afternoon as part of their catachetical instruction they were to read aloud the divine and moral portions of the Lawes to their parishioners, thereby

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<sup>12</sup>Thomas Dale to Sir Thomas Smythe, June 1613, Genesis of the United States, II, p. 639; Crashaw, F2.

covering the civil laws with divine sanction. Visual as well as oral forms of instruction taught the colonists. So that no one could claim ignorance of the Lawes and their punishments the statutes were written down, making it possible for everyone to see them, a fact that impressed several contemporary chroniclers. Men and women of the seventeenth century believed that what was seen made a greater impact on a person than what was heard. One minister wrote: "words spoken are soone come, soone gone; but that written withall, they make a deeper impression."<sup>13</sup>

Virginians held a special place in their culture for the role of sight. They had been instructed to draw the natives to Christianity through their community's visual example, for actions could speak across language barriers. The same epistemology also functioned within the colony. It would, in fact, help create the polity that had been intended to draw the natives to Christianity. Reflecting the social patterns of Jacobean society, the lives of religious and civil leaders--as social betters--were to provide virtuous examples for the lower orders to imitate. In the same way, the English community as a whole would then become an example to the natives. A supporter in England wrote that colonial parsons should "teach and

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<sup>13</sup>Lawes, p. 19; Hamor, p. 27; Patrick Copeland, Virginia's God be Thanked (London, 1622), preface, no pagination to preface.



instruct the people both by their life and doctrine in their dutie to God, and obedience to their rulers." And the Lawes directed the colony's governor to make "profession, and practise of all vertue and goodness for examples vnto others to imitate, it being true that examples at all times preuaile farre aboue precepts, men being readier to bee led by their eies, then their eare, for seeing a liuely pattern of industry, order and comlinessse, wee are all of vs rather swayed vnto the same by a visible obiect, then by hearing much more in wel instructed Arguments."<sup>14</sup> The lives of authority figures in colonial Virginia thus became visible sermons not only of Christian virtue but also of obedience to the civil authorities.

Appeals to the eye, to witness examples, rather than to the ear were typical of the seventeenth century. What struck the eye of a person was thought to "peirce his heart the better, and saue his soule the sooner." The punishments meted out in early Virginia for violating the colony's laws reflected this method of knowing. They were harsh, visceral, public, and visual--not unlike the sanctions prescribed in the legal codes of the Israelites.

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<sup>14</sup>Gray, D2-D3; Lawes, p. 30. For similar examples after the Lawes had been repealed, see Instructions to George Yeardley from His Majesty's Council for Virginia, December 2, 1618, Ferrar Papers, f. 92, (VCRP); William Waller Hening, ed., The Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia . . . 13 Vols. (Richmond, 1809-1823), I, p. 158.

In 1612 Thomas Dale captured several colonists who had run away to live among the native people of the land, thus perverting their Englishness. Some he ordered to be hanged, others to be burned, staked, broken upon wheels, or shot to death. George Percy reported: "All theis extreme and crewell tortures he used and inflicted upon them To terrefy the rest." Men who had robbed the store of supplies Dale had "bownd faste unto Trees and so sterved them to deathe." For stealing a few pints of oatmeal, another colonist "had a bodkinge thrust through his tongue and was tyed wth a chaine to a tree untill he starved." Historians agree that Marshall Dale enforced even the most "stringent provisions of the Lawes to the letter."<sup>15</sup>

Death was a common sanction under the Lawes. From the settlement's earliest days, the Company had ordered that profane and popish minded settlers be "exemplarily punished," implying that the sanctions served a pedagogical function. Colonial leaders intended that executions both terrify and teach. They were visual

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<sup>15</sup>Copeland, preface, no pagination in preface; George Percy, "A Trewe Relaycon of the Procedeinges and Occurrents of Momente which have hapned in Virginia from the Tyme Sir Thomas Gates was shipwrackte uppon the Bermudas anno 1609 until my departure outt of the Country which was anno Domini 1612," Tylers' Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine III (1922), p. 280; "The Tragical Relation of the Virginia Assembly, 1624," in Lyon Gardiner Tyler, ed., Narratives of Early Virginia, 1606-1625 (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1952), p. 423; Billings, Selby, and Tate, p. 39; Morton, I, p. 32.

experiences which revealed the reality of Virginia's behavioral norms, an additional method of instructing the colonists in virtue. Ralph Hamor described the persons put to death in Virginia as "dangerous, incurable members, for no use so fit as to make examples to others." The Anglican Book of Homilies termed this violence charity: "evil persons that be so great offenders to God and the commonweal, charity requireth to be cut off from the body of the commonweal, lest they corrupt good and honest persons." "The feare of a cruell, painefull and unusuall death," in the words of one colonist, could potentially modify the behavior of some individuals.<sup>16</sup> Human nature was malleable, and like native culture, the lives of evil-minded Englishmen taught lessons offensive to God. The punishments also served as lessons in self-identity. English people in Virginia did not violate God's moral laws and they did not cohabit with savages.

The goal of all this education was to create a stable and united community acceptable to God in the New World as an outpost of English national mission. Virginia was to tell but one story, a communal tale of the polity as a whole. Unity of religion, it was believed, would help

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<sup>16</sup>Instructions to Sir Thomas Gates, Governor of Virginia, May 1, 1609, RVCL, III, p. 14; Instructions to Sr Thomas West Knight Lo: La Warr, 1609/10, RVCL, III, p. 27; Hamor, p. 27; Sermons or Homilies, Appointed to be Read in Churches in the Time of Queen Elizabeth, of Famous Memory (New York, 1815), p. 55.

knit such a polity together so that it could more effectively act in the world. Before Lord Delaware left England to become Virginia's Lord Governor and Captaine General in 1610, the Company ordered him "to give genrall Comaundmt [to the colonists] that all forme private or publique Quarels, grievancs or grudgs be from thenceforth from amongst them be vtterly abandoned and forgotten and they willingly embrace peace and love as becometh xpians [Christians] wthout discension or hindrance to the common good or quiet."<sup>17</sup> But religious unity for Virginians did not necessarily mean theological agreement. The colonists rejected the impassioned pleas of English ministers not to allow Brownists or Roman Catholics into Virginia. Colonial leaders, then, redefined the concept of religious faction to suit their own ends. Within their Old Testament polity, behavior rather than consistent adherence to a certain theology maintained the community's relationship with God. In Virginia's wilderness behavior took on a sacramental character, an outward and visible sign of Englishness which distinguished colonists from natives.

In addition to the various methods of instruction, several elements of what has been called "the magic of the

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<sup>17</sup>Instructions to Sr Thomas West Knight Lo: La Warr, 1609/10, RVCL, III, p. 26. See also Privy Council to the Governor of Virginia, April 28, 1623, Public Records Office, Colonial Office 5/1354, f. 206, (VCRP).

medieval church" which also addressed behavior helped Virginia's leaders fashion a suitable English commonwealth in North America.<sup>18</sup> The settlers who peopled Virginia constituted neither a community of the "godly" nor a gathered church: they therefore lacked the unity of purpose such groups might carry with them. But the spiritual weaponry of oaths and banns, as well as the colonists' understanding of the Church of England's communion service, fostered the creation of a definable community out of the colony's disparate elements.

New colonists swore the oaths of allegiance and supremacy on the "holy evangelists" before settling in the colony, sometimes prior to embarking for Virginia. Their force enhanced if taken on a sacred object (which to traditional cultures represented the reality of the divine), oaths made God a witness and an avenging party to acts of disobedience. Virginians believed in the operative power of the oath. John Smith confirmed his friendship with the Pamunkey Indians in this way: "the promise I made you (before the God I serve) to be your friend, till you give me cause to be your enemy. If I keep this vow, my God will keepe me, you cannot hurt me; if I breake it he will destroye me." The day after arriving in the colony in 1610, Lord Delaware made God a partner in his government by administering the oaths of

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<sup>18</sup>Thomas, p. 44.

allegiance and supremacy "to every particular member of the colony," thus making God a witness to their pledges of obedience.<sup>19</sup> Oaths thus infused civil laws with supernatural authority and helped the community by placing all members under the same obligations.

Curses and banns also introduced God immediately into temporal affairs. The Lawes, in fact, prohibited private individuals from invoking "a curse, or banne," probably because the state preferred to remain the keeper of these spiritual sanctions. Private curses were a threat to unity. Concern over the use of this means of summoning the deity continued into the 1630s. A man described only as Mr. Parmor was indicted in 1635 for "cursing all those who wished well to the parish" of Elizabeth City. Governor John Harvey "reviled" the man and banished him to Maryland.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>H.R. McIlwaine, ed., Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia, 2d ed. (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1979), p. 6; Extracts from a Book of Licences to persons to pass the seas from 29 December 1634 to 29 December 1635, British Museum, Additional Manuscripts 24516, f. 120, (VCRP); Thomas, p. 44; Edward Maria Wingfield, "A Discourse of Virginia, 1608," in Edward Arber and A.G. Bradley, eds., Travels and Works of John Smith, President of Virginia, and Admiral of New England, 1580-1631, 2 Vols. (Edinburgh, 1910), I, p. lxxxviii; John Smith, The Proceedings of the English Colonie in Virginia, [1606-1612], (London, 1612), Barbour, John Smith, I, p. 253; Strachey, p. 85.

<sup>20</sup>Lawes, p. 10; Charges by the Virginia Company against Governor Harvey, 1635, Bankes Manuscript 8, Bodleian Library, Oxford University, f. 3, (VCRP).

The Communion service of the Church of England also served as a ritual method of fostering concord within the colony. Company members as well as colonists often marked the resolution of disputes by receiving the sacrament. In 1621, Governor George Yeardley and Captain William Powell engaged in a protracted disagreement, both parties sending charges and counter-charges to the Virginia Company in London. Yeardley and Powell resolved their dispute privately. "In pledge of wch reconciliaton they had both receyved ye Sacrament," John Pory reported, further commenting that they were "vnwillinge, that ye matter should be any way revyved; but rathr desirous that yt might be forevr buryed." This view had become so much a part of some Virginians' mindset that even when facts may have dictated a different interpretation they thought of communion as an "outward and visible pledge of reconciliation." John Smith related the standard series of events--conflict, resolution, communion--in the tale of his admission to the resident Council in 1607. He acknowledged that disagreements had existed between himself and other colonial leaders, but recounted: "the good doctrine and exhortation of our preacher Master Hunt reconciled them, and caused Captaine Smith to be admitted of the Councell; the next day all receaved the Communion." Smith erred in reporting the date of the communion. It was celebrated eleven days, rather than one, after his

admission to the Council. Yet to Smith's mind, that eucharist was associated with the resolution of a conflict.<sup>21</sup>

Early seventeenth-century Virginians thought of Communion as a method of maintaining or reforming their community. Perhaps that is why they celebrated this rite once every month, three times more often than most contemporary English parishes. It offered a symbolic means of suppressing past disputes and helped heal ruptures and factions in the social fabric. The Pentateuch, with which many colonists were familiar, described several instances when God's chosen people had ratified their societal cohesion by sharing a common meal. And there are numerous examples from early Stuart England of persons not in charity with their neighbors reluctant to receive the sacrament because they believed that to do so would be to eat and drink God's judgment upon themselves.<sup>22</sup> Like oaths, the eucharist imbued the polity

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<sup>21</sup>George Thorpe and John Pory to Sir Edwin Sandys, May 9, 1621, RVCL, III, p. 445; Lewis W. Burton, The Church at Jamestown: The Norm of American Christianity (Lexington, KY: J.L. Richardson & Co., [1907]), p. 4, Virginia Historical Society; John Smith, Proceedings, Barbour, John Smith, I, p. 207.

<sup>22</sup>Hamor, p. viii; Jon Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 39; Bernhard W. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament, 3d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975), p. 83.



as a whole with a common supernatural element intended to establish unity.

Virginia's polity began with religion and ended in force. The Lawes, like the colony's other early legal codes, brought the moral law of the Gospel to the many nominal Christians who lived in the colony and sought their salvation. Colonial leaders established the Church of England and made attendance at worship compulsory in the hope, in part, that through preaching and the habitual repetition of the prayer book liturgy, men and women might become Christians by choice rather than by birth. By saving their souls and acting in ways which the deity approved they could also draw God's blessing upon the colony, thereby ensuring the salvation of the nation and its mission. But neither law, nor preaching, nor the examples of virtuous leaders could compel a person to embrace the faith. If individuals chose not to embrace Christian religion and failed to act accordingly toward God and each other, harsh punishments might still force them to conform to the outward principles of Old Testament morality which defined the polity's relationship with God.

The Lawes harbored little notion of Christian ideas of penance or forgiveness of sins. Typically, the response to divine and moral offenses was to unsheathe "the sword of the magistrate" and then to sever the violator from the community. As a ritual removal of

impurity from the polity, executions reflected a Calvinist and Old Testament fear of mixture.<sup>23</sup> Unlike the Puritans, however, Virginians thought behavior and ethnic origin rather than belief formed the basis of the chosen community. If the deaths of malefactors deterred others from committing crimes that might draw God's judgments down upon the colony, they had helped further the ends of English national Protestantism.

After the Virginia Company repealed the Lawes Diuine, Morall and Martiall in 1619 and instituted the House of Burgesses, the severity of punishment for divine and moral offenses declined somewhat. Under the new code, adulterers and petty thieves, for instance, risked whippings instead of death. Yet the polity's relationship with God remained paramount, and colonial leaders continued to define it in terms reflecting Old Testament conceptions of nationhood. Certain behaviors were prohibited or encouraged less out of a concern for individual salvation than out of fear that these actions offended or pleased God. Colonial leaders continued to believe in the efficacy of oaths and the value of making God a partner in government. Wary that "men's affaires do little prosper where God's service is neglected," the

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<sup>23</sup>Alexander Whitaker to M.G., June 18, 1614, in Hamor, p. 60. What little mention there is in the Lawes of public requests for forgiveness has to do with crimes directed at colonial authorities, such as slandering or calumniating the resident leaders. See Lawes, p. 12.

Burgesses asked the Reverend Richard Buck to open their first meeting with a prayer. They then called upon God as a witness when each member of the Assembly swore the oath of supremacy.<sup>24</sup>

After 1619, however, the colony also began to develop a somewhat different religious orientation. Although the colony's relationship with God remained of chief importance, following repeal of the Lawes greater attention was focused on the individual's relationship with God. Specifically ecclesiastical sanctions such as penance and fines were instituted to deal with matters English church courts would have handled. Rather than severing malefactors from the community, penance was intended to "work for the health of the culprit's soul." Admonition followed by an opportunity for amendment preceded any physical punishments. Unlike punishments under the Lawes which harbored vague notions of atonement and retribution, penance focused on reforming individual sinners and reconciling them to the community more than on purifying the polity. One Virginian went so far as to suggest that as a form of "correction" penance was a means of grace.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>John Pory, A Reporte of the manner of proceeding in the General Assembly Convented (sic) at James City, July 31-August 4, 1619, RVCL, III, p. 155.

<sup>25</sup>Martin Ingram, Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 53, 3; General Court, p. 149.

Even with the greater emphasis on individuals, the community's well being remained the uppermost concern, and colonial leaders continued to worry that personal sins would lead to general chastisements. Those sins that could bring God's judgment upon the colony were most frequently punished. In 1631/32 the Burgesses explained that they had passed a statute requiring attendance at church each Sunday because "Almighty God may iustlie punish his people for neglectinge this good and wholesome lawe." Not attending church, extramarital sexual relations, and tale telling were all thought of as behaviors "hateful" to God.<sup>26</sup>

Penance was also understood as a public ritual which served to deter others from committing similar sins. The particular offense often determined the form of punishment. Failure to attend divine service usually resulted in a fine. But sometimes the punishment consisted of manual labor that would make it easier for other members of the community to get to church. For "goeing a fishing and for nor receiving the sacrament" Oliver Segar was ordered to "make a sufficient bridge" over a nearby swamp, it "being ye Church way." The standard penalty for most sexual sins involved confessing the fault before the congregation on one or more Sundays while wearing a white sheet and sometimes carrying a white

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<sup>26</sup>Hening, I, p. 155; Ingram, pp. 125, 154.

wand. Scolds, gossips, and tale tellers were usually ducked. Although intended to work for the soul's health, these punishments were also deeply humiliating public spectacles designed both to shame the offender and to serve as an example to other people.<sup>27</sup>

A visitor's account in 1634 of a ducking on Virginia's Eastern Shore sheds light on the dual purpose of public penance and the place of clerical admonition. Betsy Tucker, "who, by ye violence of her tongue had made . . . ye neighborhood uncomfortable," was ducked on that occasion. Typical of the pattern followed by many traditional communities, the Reverend William Cotton of Hungars Parish had fiirst several times attempted to persuade Tucker privately, outside the legal process, to cease her scolding and scandal mongering. Tucker persisted and was only then ordered to be ducked in a nearby pond. The parish owned a ducking machine, and it was a formidable device. The visitor described both the machine and the punishment:

It is a platform with 4 small rollers or wheels, and two upright posts between which works a Lever by a Rope fastened to its shorter or heavier end. At ye end of ye longer arm is fixed a stool upon which sd Betsey was fastened by cords, her gown tied fast around her feete. The Machine was then moved up to the edge of ye pond, ye Rope was slackened by ye

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<sup>27</sup>York County, Deeds, Orders, and Wills, 1645-1649, Book II, f. 386; General Court, pp. 31, 142; Butler, 42. There are numerous examples of this type of punishment scattered throughout Virginia's seventeenth-century county court records.

officer, and ye woman was allowed to go down under ye water for the space of half a minute.

Mrs. Tucker was ducked five times before she cried out, "Let mee go! let mee go! by God's help I'll sin so no more." Her words reflected part of a formula in which the individual publicly admitted guilt and called upon God for aid in preventing similar breaches of conduct in the future. The ritual complete, Mrs. Tucker was released and allowed to return home, an example to other gossips and, the visitor hoped, a penitent woman.<sup>28</sup>

Virginia's laws and the sanctions they promised taught morality by revealing the order of reality to the colonists. Government under the so-called "Great Charter" modified, but did not eliminate the use of force and visual experience in building a commonwealth pleasing to God. The new government's constraints, however, were often more psychological than physical. Economic sanctions combined with the discomforture of public humiliation and shame replaced fear of a painful death as deterrents, although physical coercions such as whippings and placing culprits in the stocks remained an option. Behavior rather than belief continued to define the

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<sup>28</sup>David Underdown, Revel, Riot, and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 17; "The Ducking-Stool," American Historical Record I (May 1872), pp. 204-206.

colony's public religious life, for behavior was what most visibly separated the English from the natives.

As a "state church system" Virginia's early leaders relied more on Moses than Aaron to shape the colony's relationship with the divine. They conceived of the English as a chosen people destined to possess a land of natural riches, if only the settlers acted in ways pleasing to God. Civil leaders turned to the harsh, coercive Lawes which attempted to guarantee the proper behaviors by introducing an element of necessity. But compelling actions with threats of violence or pain removed the element of choice necessary to make an act moral, thereby instituting a fundamental separation of doctrine and ethics, of faith and works. The Old Testament polity comprised of an ethnic chosen people could influence God through actions, gain His blessing, and merit continued life for the commonwealth. Yet the people who crafted the statutes could not ensure that those actions would be committed by choice or with the proper religious grounding necessary to lead a person to salvation. Whether Arminians or Calvinists, early seventeenth-century English theologians believed faith was necessary to salvation. John Smith wrote: "Our good deeds or bad, by faith in Christs merits, is all wee have to carry our soules to heaven or hell." The most stringently enforced laws, however, could not ensure that

deeds acceptable to God would be done in faith.<sup>29</sup> Laws could constrain, coerce, and restrain; they could compel the commission of good actions; they might even create good pagans. They could not on their own lead men and women to salvation.

Virginia's polity under the Lawes taught virtue in order to save itself from the judgments of God, not primarily to save individuals from the clutches of Hell. It institutionalized the Old Testament Christianity that so dominated the literature of colonization. Virginians' abiding concern with preventing and disciplining actions which offended God resulted in an emphasis on the behavior itself rather than on the motivation that compelled the action. The colony's leaders settled for the outward marks of civility, those that distinguished English people from "savages," rather than for a civility based on Christian faith and charity. This attitude continued to shape Virginia's public life throughout the rest of the century. Writing in 1670 to a friend in England who had sent a dissolute youngster to the colony, Governor William Berkeley claimed of Virginia: "This is an exelent school to make . . . disorderly wild youths lastly to repent of those wild and extravagant coarses that brought them

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<sup>29</sup>Sebastian de Grazia, Machiavelli in Hell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 108-111; John Smith, Advertisements, Barbour, John Smith, III, p. 277; Whitaker, pp. 7, 36.



hither."<sup>30</sup> Virginia's society could tame, order, and make unruly persons tractable. If Virginia's civil and religious leaders, of whom there were very few until the end of the seventeenth century, could not make good Christians of the colonists, they attempted to maintain the social context in which a sincere faith might take root by upholding the standards of English civility. Eternal salvation became a private matter between the individual and God, often outside the formal institutions of the established church.

The emergence of a private faith constituted a second development in the religious orientation of the colony after 1619. Some historians have argued that repealing the Lawes fundamentally altered the relationships which defined Virginia's polity. Individuals came to play many roles, their status no longer determined by their place in the organization as a whole. The colony's emerging religious orientation, seen most clearly in the use of specifically ecclesiastical sanctions for religious offenses, mirrored this development. Remnants of older patterns lingered, but the Old Testament polity was beginning to lose its grip on Virginia's society, and a person's relationship with God was no longer channeled primarily through the individual's association with the

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<sup>30</sup>William Berkeley to Sir Richard Browne, April 2, 1670, British Museum, Additional Manuscripts 15857, f. 40, (VCRP).

state. For a moment, the church had the opportunity to shape lives for the health of souls and the salvation of individuals rather than the behavior of men and women for the good of the polity, to build a state out of individuals who had a private relationship with God, to establish an active and sincere mission to the many nominal Christians in the colony. And the dedicated ministers sent by the Virginia Company may well have been the men to do so.<sup>31</sup>

But the timing was wrong. Expansion, commercialization, and lack of resolve on the part of the Crown following the dissolution of the Company in 1624 crippled the opportunity. The Company's goal all along had been to make the venture pay, and they had found the way in tobacco. Settlers began spreading out farther from Jamestown so they could plant the yellow weed on ever larger tracts of land. Governor Francis Wyatt complained in 1622 that the colonists were "so dispersed & [the] people so straglingly seated" that bringing them together for worship was nearly impossible. The tobacco boom of the 1620s also coincided with a period of instability in

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<sup>31</sup>Sigmund Diamond, "From Organization to Society: Virginia in the Seventeenth Century," in Stanley N. Katz, ed., Colonial America: Essays in Politics and Social Development (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), esp. pp. 19-20, 28; William H. Seiler, "The Anglican Parish in Virginia," in James Morton Smith, ed., Seventeenth-Century America: Essays in Colonial History (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), p. 129.

Virginia's church. Prior to 1620 ministers in the colony had enjoyed relatively stable tenure in their cures. After that, accidents, Indian attacks, and disease carried away clergymen with disturbing frequency. Between 1619 and 1630 no fewer than four ministers served Elizabeth City Parish. The same was true of parishes in Henrico and Martin's Hundred. In what would become a common refrain throughout the seventeenth century, the resident Council reported in 1621: "the Informations given you of the wante of wourthie Ministers heere is very trew . . . soe it is our earnest request, that you woulde bee pleased to send us ouer many more learned and sincere Ministers."<sup>32</sup>

Seven years later Governor John Harvey made a similar request to Charles I's Privy Council. Due to the "want of able and sufficient" clergymen in Virginia, he asked that "supply be made of six grave and conformable ministers" along with an allowance for their transportation. English authorities refused. They replied: "Such voluntary ministers may go over as will transport themselves at their own charge." It was a "hinge point," an occasion when Virginia's religious history began to develop in a different direction. In just over two decades, the

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<sup>32</sup>Sir Francis Wyatt, Commission to Sir George Yeardley, June 20, 1622, RVCL, III, p. 656; George MacLaren Brydon, Virginia's Mother Church and the Political Conditions Under Which it Grew, 2 Vols. (Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, 1947-1952), I, pp. 47-48; Council in Virginia to the Virginia Company of London, January 1621/22, RVCL, III, p. 583.

Virginia venture had gone from a prophetic mission announcing the Gospel to the New World to one in which religion hardly mattered, not even the Church's traditional pastoral mission to the English people. The land had been secured, and to authorities in England, that seemed sufficient. Two years after the Privy Council refused Governor Harvey's request, a bitter John Smith claimed that the whole venture had been a farce from the beginning. English leaders, he wrote, had made "religion their colour, when all their aime was nothing but present profit."<sup>33</sup>

Certain actions after 1629 support Smith's view. After the Privy Council turned down Governor Harvey's request for ministers, England began to neglect the Church's pastoral mission to English men and women living in an expanded England overseas. Fifteen years before the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay found they were "left alone with America," Virginians had been abandoned by the English Church. Harvey asked for ministers again in 1632. The next year Virginians began to develop their own religious institutions. As every student of Virginia's Church knows, the powerful lay vestries were one of its distinguishing features. The power of the laymen on the

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<sup>33</sup>"Governor John Harvey's Propositions Touching Virginia, [1629]," and "Certaine Answares to Capt. Harvey's Proposicons Touching Virginia," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography VII (April 1900), pp. 369-371; Bruce, I, pp. 118-119; Kupperman, p. 165.

vestry began in 1632, when the General Assembly passed statutes that began to give some shape to Virginia's Church. A year later they allowed ministers to appoint deacons from among the laity to read divine services from the Book of Common Prayer in remote areas of the parish.<sup>34</sup>

Under James I and then Charles I, England's state church system failed Virginia. After Virginia became a royal colony, the Crown appointed governors and members of the Council, usually trying to choose able leaders. No attempt was made, however, to secure ministers to serve the colony's growing population. And the nation's most powerful ecclesiastical leader, Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud, showed more interest in recalling the Puritans in Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth to the Church of England than in ministering to the conformable settlements on the Chesapeake.<sup>35</sup> The Church of England did not found a foreign missionary wing until 1701. The lack of clergy and the accompanying weakness of the church

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<sup>34</sup>Brydon, I, pp. 90-92; Clyde Raymond Hallman, Jr., "The Vestry as a Unit of Local Government in Colonial Virginia" (Ph.D. diss., University of Georgia, 1987), p. 36; Warren M. Billings, "The Transfer of English Law to Virginia, 1606-1650," in The Westward Enterprise: English Activity in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America, 1480-1560, eds. K.R. Andrews, N.P. Canny, and P.E.H. Hair, p. 240; Robert C. Johnson, ed., "Virginia in 1632," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography LXV (October 1957), p. 465; Hening, I, p. 208.

<sup>35</sup>Brydon, I, pp. 88, 108-110.

began a pattern that continued throughout the century. Yet neither religion nor the Church of England disappeared from Virginia. But the privatization of faith had begun. Along with the emphasis on public morality, it would become part of Virginia's religious identity.

By 1630 England had secured its promised land in North America. The nation had established an English commonwealth, marked it with Christian symbols, and defended it against its former native occupants. In short, they had pretty well secured the colony's temporal salvation. Those who had begun the venture could not have known that a successful mission to the land would diminish the importance of religion in the colony's public life. But the land's promise lay in tobacco.

## CHAPTER 6

### VIRGINIA'S RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENT, 1607-1660: TOLERATION AND TOBACCO

A strong element of evangelism accompanied England's early seventeenth-century effort to colonize Virginia. Not only did the English plan to reap the rich bounty of the colony's soil, but they also hoped to establish an English church in the New World and eventually to offer Christianity to the land's natives. Many ministers and promotional authors believed that planting the Gospel in North America constituted the venture's chief end. These grand religious designs, however, quickly faded in importance. As missionary zeal declined--and there was never much among Virginia's colonists--Christian religion became a society's identity, a possession which distinguished Englishmen from the "naturalls." As late as 1689, a Virginia minister wrote that "no great matter has been done there, as yet towards the conversion of the Indians." Ethnic identification rather than a particular faith or theology defined English men and women as Christian.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>William H. Seiler, "The Church of England as the Established Church in Seventeenth-Century Virginia," Journal of Southern History XV (November 1949), pp. 478-481; Edmund S. Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975), pp. 98-99, 331; Richard L. Morton, Colonial Virginia, 2 Vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960, I, p. 7; Stanley Pargellis, ed., "An Account of the Indians in Virginia," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., XVI (April 1959), pp. 228, 242.

Even before English civil and religious authorities began their policy of active indifference toward the Church of England in Virginia in the years around 1630, the colonists had already begun creating their own mythic religion. Despite what English ministers and propagandists may have written about the importance of Protestant purity and denominational animosities, Virginia's religious world was not shaped by opposition to Roman Catholics, Brownists, Anglicans, or Puritans. Virginians defined themselves against the natives of the New World instead of other Christian denominations.

Demonizing the natives was an accommodation to the land, the native peoples themselves constituting what church historian Paul Avis has recently called "occasions"--"the political, social and cultural context" which contributes to a church's outward form. Lacking a set body of doctrine or creedal statement, the Church of England is more dependent on its "occasions" than other churches, forced to respond anew to each set of historical circumstances with the prayer book, Bible, and church traditions. This was true of the Church of England in Virginia as well, especially if environment is included among the "occasions."<sup>2</sup> As an "occasion" of Virginia's

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<sup>2</sup>Paul Avis, "What is 'Anglicanism?'" in Stephen Sykes and John Booty, eds., The Study of Anglicanism (London: S.P.C.K., 1988), p. 406; John Spurr, The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. xiii-xiv.



Church, the natives created physical and intellectual boundaries that helped Virginians create their own mythic religion. As an intellectual event, establishing the natives as the other heightened Christianity's importance as an English possession and at the same time shattered the mythic European concepts of religious unity. Virginians' demonization of the natives allowed them to answer questions about national or colony-wide identity in ways different from people in England. It led to an expansive concept of religious unity.

Virginians understood the world in terms of Christianity and savagery, and this dichotomy was as much a geographic reality as an intellectual boundary. Virginians established segregated territories for themselves and the natives, setting aside English land for English settlers. In 1633, in an attempt to protect English settlements on the Peninsula from the Indians, they constructed a palisaded wall which ran from Archer's Creek on the James River, through Middle Plantation (Later Williamsburg), to Queen's Creek on the York River. Later treaties with the Indians also set clear boundaries between Christian English and savage native lands.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Winthrop D. Jordan, White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), pp. 27, 95; Bernard W. Sheehan, Savagism and Civility: Indians and Englishmen in Colonial Virginia (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), passim, esp. pp. ix-x, 116, 177-178, ch. 5; Warren M. Billings, John E. Selby, and Thad W.

Within the English areas of Virginia the colony's established church suffered its own "starving time" between 1630 and 1680. Colonists often complained that too few ministers served the colony's Church. Its pastoral function suffered as a result of this shortage. As he had done three years earlier, Governor Harvey in 1632 again pleaded with the Privy Council to supply Virginia with ministers. At mid-century a group of Charles City County residents wrote to the county court "intimating our unhappinesse in these our upper parts by scarcity of Orthodox ministers." This chronic shortage of ministers to read prayers, to preach God's Word, and to celebrate the sacraments, hindered the work of Virginia's Church throughout the colonial period. The problem had become so severe by 1656 that the House of Burgesses offered to reimburse settlers for any money they spent transporting ministers to the colony. Not only were there too few ministers to serve the colony's growing population, but most were overworked as well, serving two

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Tate, Colonial Virginia: A History (White Plains, NY: KTO Press, 1986), p. 44; David B. Smits, "'Abominable Mixture': Toward the Repudiation of Anglo-Indian Intermarriage in Seventeenth-Century Virginia," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography XCV (April 1987), pp. 185-186; Morton, I, pp. 123-124; Morgan, p. 331; Thomas C. Parramore, Southampton County, Virginia (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1978), p. 23.

or three parishes. And many parishes had one or more chapels of ease in addition to the mother church.<sup>4</sup>

Yet had ministers filled every vacant parish in the colony, the church's work still would have suffered, only to a lesser degree. In addition to the shortage of clergy, the colonists' settlement pattern hindered the public practice of religion. One colonial minister, Roger Greene, blamed the settlers' scattered "manner of seating themselves in that Wildernesses" for their failure to take more seriously the public worship of God. To Greene, their method of planting--essentially an accommodation to tobacco culture--was nothing short of the "Sin of Sacrilege." They had chosen to settle in ways that enabled them to plant tobacco rather than to meet for divine worship. Edward Johnson, the minister of Mulberry Island Parish, compared the colonists' infrequent attendance at worship to their stubborn reliance upon

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<sup>4</sup>Jon Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 42; Robert C. Johnson, ed., "Virginia in 1632," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography LXV (October 1957), p. 465; Charles City County, Court Orders, 1661-1664, f. 322; Susie M. Ames, Studies of the Virginia Eastern Shore in the Seventeenth Century (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1940), p. 217; William Waller Hening, ed., The Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia . . . 13 Vols. (Richmond, 1809-1823), I, pp. 418, 289-291.

tobacco as a cash crop: "You must expect as little of other commodities as there is worship of God among them."<sup>5</sup>

The shortage of ministers, the colonists' scattered settlement patterns, the continued separation of their world between Christians and "savages," and the colony's tobacco mentality led Virginians to worry more about behavior than theology. Many of the colonists were only nominal Christians to begin with, the sort of people Thomas Dale had once claimed had little but their names to indicate that they were Christians. James Blair would later term such people Christians by birth rather than choice. And one of Virginia's first ministers wondered how the Gospel could be planted in a colony filled with "Murtherers, Theeves, Adulterers, [and] idle persons." Despite the apparent irreligion of many colonists, the people were still thought of as Christians, so defined by their ethnic origins. Even as he criticized them for their lack of attention to religious worship, Roger Green

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<sup>5</sup>R[oger] G[reene], Virginia's Cure: or an Advisive Narrative Concerning Virginia (London, 1662), in Peter Force, ed., Tracts and Other Papers, Relating Principally to the Origin, Settlement, and Progress of the Colonies in North America, 4 Vols. (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1963), III, no. 15, pp. 4-6, 7-8; J. Franklin Jameson, ed., Johnson's Wonder-Working Providence (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), p. 266; George MacLaren Brydon, Virginia's Mother Church and the Political Conditions Under Which it Grew, 2 Vols. (Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, 1947-1952), I, p. 180; Edward Johnson to Virginia Ferrar, March 11, 1650/51, Ferrar Papers, Magdalene College, Cambridge University, f. 727, (VCRP).

maintained the familiar division between "heathen" and "Christian."<sup>6</sup>

In a Christian land with few ministers to serve a widely spread and often nominally religious population, the sacramental character of behavior as a visible sign of Englishness took on additional significance. Enforcing Biblical moral law through statutory enactments and the court system maintained a social context in which sincere religious faith might develop over time. And after 1632, colonial leaders were less concerned with actions offensive to God drawing down His judgments upon the colony than with behaviors that separated English and native ways of life. As a means of organizing the ecclesiastical polity, the soteriology of empire had given way to the sacramental role of behavior. County courts between 1630 and 1660 were filled with cases of bastard-bearing, fornication, and sexual slander. (These were also the crimes most likely to result in public penance.) Prosecution of sexual offenses not only upheld Biblical morality, but as Kathleen Brown has pointed out, English sexual notions also served as a "litmus test for barbarism that enabled the English to distinguish themselves from

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<sup>6</sup>Thomas Dale to Lord Salisbury, August 17, 1611, in Alexander Brown, Genesis of the United States, 2 Vols. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), I, pp. 506-507; Patricia U. Bonomi, Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 16; R[oger] G[reene], pp. 6, 8.

native peoples."<sup>7</sup> Virginians were creating their own mythic religion, based on the idea that all English people--all Europeans--were Christians, relying upon behavior and ethnicity rather than theology as its distinguishing features.

Although throughout the first six decades of the seventeenth century churchwardens routinely presented moral offenders to the courts, there was a near absence of cases involving heresy. Prior to 1650, Virginia's courts entertained only two cases of heresy or "false doctrine," and one of those was treated more as slander than as a theological matter. Nor was the colony's religious establishment united, at least as such unity was understood in contemporary Europe. A shared idea of what constituted acceptable moral behavior did not extend to shared theological views or liturgical actions. Through mid-century, Virginia's mythic religion was based on the essential Christian identification of its ethnic English inhabitants rather than on the partisan theology of a particular English religious party. Virginians tolerated a variety of religious expressions, a situation probably

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<sup>7</sup>John Walsh and Stephen Taylor, "The Church and Anglicanism in the 'Long' Eighteenth Century," in John Walsh and Stephen Taylor, eds., The Church of England c.1689-c.1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 26; Kathleen M. Brown, "Gender and the Genesis of a Race and Class System in Virginia, 1630-1750" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin--Madison, 1990), pp. 73-74.

encouraged by the weakness of the colony's church and the settlers' demonization of the natives.<sup>8</sup>

Most historians, however, have continued to stress the denominational aspect of the colony's religious life. Patricia Bonomi, for example, has argued that "Anglican dominance was never in doubt in Virginia, where until the mid-eighteenth century most inhabitants had no wish but to conform to their comfortably low version of the mother church." Other scholars have tried to narrow Virginia's "ecclesiastical complexion" even further. Perry Miller suggested that the colonists were "low church Anglicans" who held much in common with the Puritans. Richard Beale Davis made a similar assertion in attempting to distinguish between Puritans, Anglicans, and puritan-Anglicans in England's Southern colonies. Like Miller, Davis tended to emphasize "the puritanism of Anglicans" in Virginia.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>H.R. McIlwaine, ed., Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia, 2d ed. (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1979), p. 88; Morton, I, pp. 152, 164; Philip Alexander Bruce, Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century; An Inquiry into the Religious, Moral, Educational, Legal, Military, and Political Conditions of the People Based on Original and Contemporary Records, 2 Vols. (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1910), I, chs. 20-24.

<sup>9</sup>Bonomi, p. 42; Rhys Isaac, The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), pp. 58-68; Perry Miller, "Religion and Society in the Early Literature of Virginia," in Errand Into the Wilderness (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 112; Richard Beale Davis, Intellectual

While there is much truth in these assertions, they also distort our understanding of religious life in the colony, implying the prevalence of a theological or party homogeneity, a mythic European religion, that did not exist in seventeenth-century Virginia. Such an emphasis is misleading and detracts from the broader Christian unity, which, with few exceptions, dominated Virginian's view of religion in the seventeenth century. Puritan and Anglican differences that later convulsed the church mattered less during the years of Virginia's founding than Puritans' and Anglicans' sharing the established English Church and adhering to the Book of Common Prayer. The practice followed in the early 1630s by some English west-country parishes of choosing "one Puritan and one non-Puritan churchwarden," and thus of institutionalizing the theological diversity encompassing the elusive notion of English religious uniformity, provides a better model for understanding Virginia's own religious organization than the use of denominational labels.<sup>10</sup>

Virginia's ecclesiastical tone reflected what one historian of worship in the English Church has called the "rich ecumenical potentiality" of the Church of England's

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Life in the Colonial South, 1585-1763, 3 Vols. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1978), II, pp. 632-633.

<sup>10</sup>David Underdown, Revel, Riot, and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 131.



liturgical regimen. Whether by design or accident is unclear, but with few exceptions Virginia's church experienced what might be called an English ecumenism during the first half of the seventeenth century. Puritan, Anglican, even occasional Roman Catholic practices all found room in the colony's established church. The richness and variety of Virginia's institutional church, in a context in which an individual was by ethnic origin either Christian or savage, contributed both to the separation of public faith from morals and to the development of the colony's own version of the Church of England. As a result of its breadth and its weakness, Virginia's institutional church created a religious establishment tolerant of various theologies and liturgical practices.<sup>11</sup>

Planted on a marshy and mosquito-plagued island by the banks of the James River, Virginia stood as a symbol of the English nation and of its movement out into the world. Institutional religion accompanied the settlers to the colony. Following instructions from the mother country, the colonists attempted to establish the "religion of the church of England as near as may be." In a land the colonists had visibly marked as Christian by setting aside places for public prayer and cemeteries for

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<sup>11</sup>Horton Davies, Worship and Theology in England, 5 Vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961-1975), II, p. 224; Morgan, p. 331.

Christian burial, worship followed the rites and ceremonies of England's established church.<sup>12</sup>

The Church of England formed a peculiar branch of the Reformation, adhering to an episcopal form of government and combining Calvinist theology with the yearly Christological cycle of the Roman Catholic liturgical calendar purged of some of its Marian festivals offensive to all Protestants, and, with the exception of Paul, limiting celebrations of saints' days to those Biblical saints who had witnessed Christ's resurrection. Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Ascension came each year, although strict Protestants found no scriptural justification either for the seasons of the church's calendar or for any of the approximately two dozen holy days celebrated throughout the year. In addition to the liturgical feasts and fasts, the church also observed two holy days to commemorate those occasions when God had shown his mercy to the English nation. Beginning in 1606, the English people annually celebrated Gunpowder Treason Day on November 5 as a day of prayer and thanksgiving. Following the Restoration, Anglicans marked January 30 as

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<sup>12</sup>Hening, I, pp. 114, 123, 149, 155, 180, 277. For a mid-century description of conditions at some areas bordering the James River, see Governor William Berkeley and the Council in Virginia to Charles II, ca 1667, Public Records Office, Colonial Office 1/21, f. 112, (VCRP): "and is all the Summer time so infested with Mosquetos & other troublesome flyes, that it will be impossible for men to live there."

a day of humiliation and fasting in remembrance of Charles I, king and martyr. Containing set forms for prayer services and the celebration of the sacraments, the Book of Common Prayer served both as the Church of England's essential service book and as a symbol of its unity.<sup>13</sup>

The settlers in Virginia not only used the Book of Common Prayer but also other traditional English religious attitudes to organize their world. Some Virginians continued to measure time by reference to customary religious holy days, especially during the years prior to the English Restoration. William Strachey noted that the tempest which had separated his ship from the rest of the fleet sailing to Virginia in 1609 struck "on St. James his day." Fifteen years later Francis Epps testified before the colony's General Court that a dispute over whether or not to move a church from one house to another had occurred "vppon Sct Stephens dye in the morninge." Another witness, Robert Partin, pointed out that the feast day fell on a Monday, and "divers of the Congregacon [had] mett to say and heere divine service." The English church observed the Feast of St. Stephen on December 26, the day immediately following Christmas. That certain colonists marked the day by attending church explains something of

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<sup>13</sup>David Cressy, Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in ELizabethan and Stuart England (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 2-6. 13-33; Davies, II, pp. 224-228.

those colonists' liturgical regimen, as does the deponents' referring to the feast day rather than to the day after Christmas.<sup>14</sup> They attended daily common prayer or they were attending a special celebration of a saint's day.

Patterns of sacred time also governed aspects of the colony's secular life for some Virginians. An indentured servant and his master, for instance, wagered a year's service on the month in which Easter fell that year, both parties thereby demonstrating their confidence in the date of a moveable feast.<sup>15</sup> In 1645 George Puddington of Northampton County let 100 acres of land "upon the snake poynt neck" to William Shatell for a yearly lease payable "att the Feast of the Circumsision."<sup>16</sup> Contracts often ran from Christmas to Christmas;<sup>17</sup> ships were expected to

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<sup>14</sup>William Strachey, A Voyage to Virginia in 1609, ed. Louis B. Wright (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967), p. 4; General Court, pp. 88, 159.

<sup>15</sup>General Court, p. 97. The servant won the bet. See also, Governor John Harvey to Viscount Dorchester, April 15, 1630, Public Records Office, Colonial Office 1/5, ff. 176-177, (VCRP).

<sup>16</sup>Susie M. Ames, ed., County Court Records of Accomack-Northampton, Virginia, 1640-1645 (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1973), p.460.

<sup>17</sup>York County, Deeds, Orders, and Wills, 1645-1649, Book II, f. 178; York County, Deeds, Orders, and Wills, 1657-1662, Book III, ff. 57, 123; Susie M. Ames, ed., County Court Records of Accomack-Northampton Virginia, 1632-1640 (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1954), pp. 40, 63; Ames, 1640-1645, pp. 124, 349; Norfolk County Records, Minute Book, 1637-1646, f.

arrive "before the feast of St. Thomas ye Apostle next comeing";<sup>18</sup> a steer was to be ready for sale "two days before Whitsontide";<sup>19</sup> a parish's vestry would meet for the first time "upon the feast day of St. Mychael the Arckangell."<sup>20</sup> The governor and his Council even determined the dates of their quarterly meetings with reference to the liturgical calendar. They met at James City to conduct the colony's business on the Monday evenings immediately following "the ffeaste of Sct Michell," "the feast of the nativitie of Christ," "the Ancyations of the Virgin Mary," and "ye feast of sct John Baptist."<sup>21</sup>

These references represent far more than the "discrete Christian survivals" one historian has claimed

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126; Charles City County, Deeds, Orders, Depositions, Volume I, 1655-1658, f. 6; General Court, pp. 10, 20, 89, 163, 173; Northumberland County Court Order Book II, 1652-1665, f. 33; Cressy, pp. 46-47. These examples and those in the following three notes could easily be multiplied.

<sup>18</sup>General Court, pp. 171, 175, 20; York County, Deeds, Orders, and Wills, 1633-1657, 1691-1694, Book I, f. 46.

<sup>19</sup>York County, Deeds, Orders, and Wills, 1645-1649, Book II, f. 132; York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills, 1657-1662, Book III, ff. 2, 123, 127, 170; General Court, p. 16; "Lower Norfolk County Records, 1636-1646," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography XL (January 1932), p. 41.

<sup>20</sup>Ames, 1632-1640, p. 40; Northumberland County Court Order Book II, 1652-1665, f. 18; "Lower Norfolk County Records, 1636-1646," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography XL (July 1932), p. 237.

<sup>21</sup>General Court, p. 106.

of them.<sup>22</sup> Far from home in a world becoming secularized, the traditional rhythms of the liturgical calendar gave some Virginians a sense of security, its familiar invitations to devotion and contemplation coming regularly throughout the year. Neither laws nor a lack of ministers to celebrate divine service could steal saints days and traditional notions of religious time from a person's conscience. Private devotions were always possible. Some Virginians needed the liturgical calendar; it offered them a familiar form of order and meaning in the New World.

Although at least some of Virginia's settlers continued to measure time according to the annual cycle of saints' days and events in the life of Christ, the colony's leaders nevertheless began to alter the traditional rhythms of religious time. In 1623/24, and again in 1626, Virginia's General Assembly modified the number of fast and feast days in the Church of England's liturgical calendar that the colonists would be expected to observe. "In regard of our necessities," the Burgesses reasoned that when two holy days fell "together betwixt the ffeast of the Annuncyation of the Virgin Mary and Sct. Michell the Arkeangell, then only one to be kept." Retaining the majorities of "hollidays" devoted to Biblical saints and referring to them as feasts testified

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<sup>22</sup>Butler, p. 42.

to the Anglican nature of Virginia's early church, because Puritan members of the Church of England believed the only festival with "explicit Biblical warrant" was the weekly Sabbath.<sup>23</sup>

The dates chosen were not arbitrary. Even as the statute demonstrated the colony's adherence to the traditional church calendar, it marked a subtle but significant shift away from contemporary English practices. Between the Feast of the Annunciation, March 25, and the Feast of St. Michael, September 29, colonists were likely expected to devote most of their energies to planting, tending, and harvesting crops.<sup>24</sup> An additional portion of the law directed "That the xxiith day of march be yeerly Solemnized as holydaye" in observance of God's deliverance of the colony during the Powhatan massacre which had occurred on that date two years earlier. In combination with another statute enacted at the General Assembly's 1623/24 session which referred to Virginia's

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<sup>23</sup>Hening, I, p. 123; General Court, p. 106; Davies, II, p. 126. Whether the act referred to in 1626 implies that the Burgesses thought the original statute was not being followed is a matter of conjecture. James I dissolved the Virginia Company in 1624, after the colony's Assembly had met for the year, and another meeting of the Burgesses was not authorized by Charles I until 1627. Reference to "another Acte of ye late generall assembly" in 1626, then, may be to the law passed two years earlier. See Morgan, pp. 101-102, 143; Brydon, I, pp. 63-66.

<sup>24</sup>Brydon, I, pp. 85-86. A 1631/32 law directed the colonists to have their corn and tobacco planted by March 25. See Hening, I, p. 161.

established church as "our church," this law marked an important moment in the colony's religious life.<sup>25</sup>

By decreasing the number of traditional English holy days to be observed during Virginia's growing season and by creating a holy day peculiar to the colony, Virginians were beginning to assert their own religious identity in response to their "occasions." Just as churches and cemeteries marked sacred space, holy days represented sacralized time, significant days the English people set apart from ordinary time. Richard Hooker elaborated on this notion in Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity:

The sanctification of days and times is a token of that thankfulness, and a pattern of that public honour which we owe to God for admirable benefits. . . . The days which are chosen out to serve as public memorials of such his mercies ought to be clothed with those outward robes of holiness whereby their difference from other days may be made sensible.

Holy days were devoted to God in remembrance of His special favors, times, as historian David Cressy has observed, "when lawful bodily labour could be set aside."<sup>26</sup>

By observing March 22 annually, the colonists testified to an emerging relationship with God that transcended the traditional red-letter days in the liturgical calendar of the Book of Common Prayer.

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<sup>25</sup>Hening, I, p. 123; General Court, p. 106; Brydon, I, pp. 85-86.

<sup>26</sup>Cressy, pp. 7, 35.



Although the Company claimed that the massacre had signified God's judgment on the colony for the sins of both settlers and Company members, Virginia's legislature identified a different relationship with the Christian deity. Virginians had been delivered from the danger of the Indian uprising in 1621/22. To their minds, March 22 was a day when God had demonstrated His "admirable benefits" to the settlers by preserving the colony from destruction. Unlike November 5 or the year 1588, sacred times which belonged to the English nation as a whole, Virginians did not interpret March 22 as a possession of all England. As sacralized time, it had emerged out of the colony's particular circumstances, and it belonged to Virginia alone.

Reducing the number of holy days during the spring and summer months also arose out of the colony's immediate environment. Although this law denoted a shift away from traditional English practices (therefore implying that in Virginia, the full complement of English sacred time would exist in memory rather than law) it also represented an accommodation to the environmental exigencies of a separate continent. Virginia's leaders believed that too many days setting aside "lawful bodily labour" might harm the production of crops necessary to the colony's survival.

In seventeenth-century Virginia, crops primarily meant tobacco. By 1600 England's upper classes had acquired a great fondness for smoking, and they often made it an elaborate social ritual complete with a large number of affectations: "the ring," "the whiffle," "the gulpe," "the retention," "the Cuban ebolition," and "putting the fume through the nose." They were also willing to pay high prices for this weed, and desperate for money, Virginians soon began pandering to this whim of the English elite. And since 1614 when John Rolfe shipped four hogsheads of tobacco to England aboard the Elizabeth, that "joviall weed" had become Virginia's staple crop. Within three years of the first shipment to England, the colony's production of tobacco had increased over twentyfold. As early as 1618, the colonists could be found "dispersed all about, planting Tobacco." The colony's future rested upon a weed and the vice of smoking it. At mid-century one of the colony's ministers complained about Virginia's reliance on this yellow leaf: "Virginia's like to end, as she began, in smoake: but gods will be done."<sup>27</sup>

Tobacco was a labor-intensive product. From seedlings in the spring to shipping in the fall, it

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<sup>27</sup>Morton, I, pp. 39-40; William L. Shea, The Virginia Militia in the Seventeenth Century (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), p. 23; Edward Johnson to Virginia Ferrar, March 11, 1650/51, Ferrar Papers, f. 727, (VCRP).

required nearly constant attention. Realizing this fact, Virginia's leaders apparently believed that setting aside "lawful bodily labour" too often in order to observe holy days would interfere with the colony's ability to produce this necessary export. But tobacco was not merely a crop. In seventeenth-century Virginia colonists also used it as a medium of exchange for goods and services and as a means of obtaining the manufactured goods that they did not--and under England's mercantilist policies, could not--provide for themselves. In short, tobacco served as the colony's entrance into the market and economic survival.<sup>28</sup>

The General Assembly's law ordering a modification in the number of holy days Virginians were to observe, therefore, altered the church's liturgical calendar to accommodate not only the colony's immediate environment and its particular growing season, but also the market forces impinging upon the settlement. It was an important moment in Virginia's history, perhaps even a "hinge-point" in David Cressy's words. The colony's leaders had emphasized the need for virtuous behavior from Virginia's earliest days and had feared that failure to serve God would draw His judgment down upon the settlement. At their first meeting in 1619 the House of Burgesses had

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<sup>28</sup>Billings, Selby, and Tate, pp. 66-68; Morton, I, pp. 40-41; Morgan, p. 177; T.H. Breen, Tobacco Culture: The Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of Revolution (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), passim, esp. p. 82.

pronounced their belief that "men's affaires doe little prosper where God's service is neglected."<sup>29</sup> Four years later, however, that same group was suggesting that from early spring through early fall, economic behavior took precedence over some religious behaviors. The law symbolized a movement away from the medieval past and from contemporary English practice in which the rhythms of the church calendar dominated the organization of time. Though slight, the movement implied that during certain seasons the demands of the market took priority over the demands of God. It represented a step toward the modern world and the notion that something other than religion gave unity and organization to the polity.

In addition to cutting back on the number of holy days to be observed, Virginia's government demanded, in a proclamation issued in August 1626, that on every day "kept and Solemnized as holiday" a military official at each plantation exercise and drill members of the local militia. Colonial authorities thereby not only modified religious time, but also changed part of its meaning and function by combining the worship of God with provision

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<sup>29</sup>Brydon, I, pp. 85-86, although he tends to emphasize the similarities rather than the differences between Virginia's Church and the Church of England; John Pory, A Reporte of the manner of proceeding in the General Assembly convented at James City, July 30-August 4, 1619, in Susan Myra Kingsbury, ed., The Records of the Virginia Company of London, 4 Vols. (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1906-1935), III, p. 155.

for the colony's defense, a practice at odds with militia training in contemporary England. This mingling of purposes demonstrated an emerging secularism. Writing from London a few years later, even the religious-minded John Smith approved of the practice: "and everie Holy-day, everie Plantation doth exercise their men in Armes, by which meanes . . . the most part of them are most excellent markmen."<sup>30</sup> Particular individuals, ministers, or parishes may have adhered to practices associated with Anglicans, Puritans, or Roman Catholics, but they existed within a context in which the secularization of religious time formed a common element of Virginia's public life.

This transformation of Virginia's public religious life occurred in a time when religious quarrels were coming to dominate England's public discourse. Four years before the Burgesses passed the law altering the liturgical calendar, English Separatists had established a colony at Plymouth to practice their religion. And many non-Separatist Puritans already had moved to Holland because they feared what they saw as the increasing corruption of the English church. In his royal Directions Concerning Preachers of 1622, James I had placed restrictions upon the religious freedom of puritan lecturers, limiting the right to preach on "the deep

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<sup>30</sup>General Court, p. 107; Shea, p. 47; Lindsay Boynton, The Elizabethan Militia, 1558-1638 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), pp. 94-95, 204-206.

points of predestination, election, reprobation, or of the universality, efficacy, resistibility or irresistibility of God's grace" to deans and bishops. During the same years, Charles I elevated the irascible William Laud to the see of Bath and Wells and would later appoint him archbishop of Canterbury. Laud despised Puritans (as well as Roman Catholics), and his attempts to enforce the Church of England's liturgical uniformity only exacerbated the controversies between Anglicans and Puritans.<sup>31</sup> While their countrymen wrangled over theological issues in England, thereby testifying to its importance in their lives, Virginia's leaders were subtly subordinating religion to secular, particularly market, activities, and institutionalizing their attack on idleness. Even as secularization took place, by limiting the number of observed holy days and keeping the colonists at work, Virginia's laws fought idleness and institutionalized the Christian virtue of labor. In Virginia's context, these secular behaviors could be interpreted as actions which

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<sup>31</sup>Leo F. Solt, Church and State in Early Modern England, 1509-1640 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 164-173. Additional directions from James I replaced the afternoon sermons dear to Puritans with catechetical instruction for children, a practice already followed by the colony's ministers. See Alexander Whitaker to M.G., June 18, 1614, in Ralph Hamor, A True Discourse of the Present [E]state of Virginia (London, 1615; reprint, Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1957), p. viii.

distinguished English people from savagery, thereby maintaining their Christian identity.

Despite the secularization implicit in its leaders' decisions, Virginia's church encompassed a variety of religious views and practices and reflected more clearly than those in any of England's other colonies the religious diversity tolerable under the canopy of English national Protestantism. In 1614 Alexander Whitaker wrote to a friend in London chiding reformed clergy who refused to serve God in the colony: "I much more muse, that so few of our English Ministers that were so hot against the Surplis and Subscription: come hither where neither [are] spoken of." The Church of England's Canons of 1604 required that ministers wear the surplice, a white liturgical vestment worn over the cassock, during divine service and when celebrating the sacraments. Puritan-minded clergy found the surplice offensive, claiming it smacked too much of Roman Catholic ceremony and was therefore something from which the Church needed to be purified. Whether or not Whitaker approved of this vestment--and most historians assume he did not--the colony's records document the existence of surplices in early Virginia. Although Whitaker may have disliked the surplice, it is significant that in his only extant sermon, a 1613 discourse titled A Good Speed from Virginia, his scriptural quotations were primarily, but

not uniformly, taken from the Geneva Bible favored by Puritans. Separated by an ocean from the disciplinary reach of bishops, some of Virginia's more Puritan-minded clergy apparently followed a certain laxity in ceremonial pomp at the same time as they adhered to the offices in the Book of Common Prayer.<sup>32</sup>

The splendor of the communion plate used in Virginia's churches was often more resplendent than plain, suggesting more of an Anglican than a Puritan understanding of the rite. Ministers at Southampton Hundred's church, for example, administered the sacrament of Christ's blood to communicants from a "Comunion siluer guilt cupp, & two little chalices in a blacke lether couer." A "yellow & blew cheiny Damaske carpett wth a silke string" provided ornamentation for the communion table. The glittering silver and the brightly colored carpet (or frontal) appealed to sight and to what Anglicans might have called the "holiness of beauty." The silver chalices of Southampton were far more ornate than the simple wooden beakers reminiscent of family meals used

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<sup>32</sup>Alexander Whitaker to M.G., June 18, 1614, in Ralph Hamor, p. 60; General Court, p. 167. Whitaker's own liturgical practice as recounted in his letters from the colony closely resembled that of contemporary high Anglican priest and poet George Herbert. Both men read evening prayer at 10:00 am and 4:00 pm, the canonically appointed times, preached on Sunday mornings and catechized on Sunday afternoons. See Alexander Whitaker to M.G., Hamor, p. viii; Strachey, Voyage to Virginia, p. 80; Davies, II, p. 103.



at the Lord's Supper by many Puritan parishes in Jacobean and Stuart England.<sup>33</sup>

Other Virginia parishes showed a preference for more Puritan styles of celebrating the Lord's Supper. Elizabeth City Parish, for example, apparently used "figg drinke and coarse bread" as the communion elements. Whether fig drink was a euphemism for wine or whether it implied substituting unfermented juices for wine at communion is impossible to tell. The reference to "coarse bread," however, suggests a Puritan preference for bread rather than wafers in their celebrations of the communion.<sup>34</sup>

If the manner in which individuals described the ornaments in the colony's churches provides any hint of the author's theological preferences, the descriptions by John Smith and William Strachey of the two churches in Jamestown suggest that certain colonists placed different values on different ministerial functions. Smith gave

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<sup>33</sup>Chalice covers usually served as patens and held the consecrated bread or hosts. General Court, p. 167; Davies, II, pp. 212, 308, 323. For Puritan neglect of the "eye-gate," see Davies, II, pp. 527-28, 532.

<sup>34</sup>Charges by the Virginia Company against Governor John Harvey, 1635, Bankes Manuscript 8, Bodleian Library, Oxford University, f. 3, (VCRP); Davies, II, p. 305; Ann Kibbey, The Interpretation of Material Shapes in Puritanism: A Study of Rhetoric, Prejudice, and Violence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 49. Like the simple wooden beakers, "coarse bread" may have been the type of bread people used at their own tables each day.

primacy to the pulpit, thereby indicating the importance of religious instruction popular in Puritan circles. Strachey, on the other hand, spoke first of the chancel and communion table, a typically Anglican emphasis on the church's ritual nature.<sup>35</sup>

Hugh Jones' early eighteenth-century description of Virginia as the happy retreat of "true churchmen for the most part; neither soaring too high nor drooping to low" aptly describes the colony's church in the seventeenth century as well. Like their brethren in the mother country, Virginians espoused a number of different religious views. Anglicans, Puritans, even a few Brownists and Roman Catholics, inhabited the colony. Henry Jacob, a Brownist minister, died at sea during his passage to the colony in 1619, and several others of that sect had arrived in Virginia a decade earlier. They apparently conformed to the prayer book, for there is no record of complaints about dissenters in the colony during these years.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>John Smith, Advertisements for the Unexperienced Planters, of New England or Any-Where (London, 1631), in Philip L. Barbour, ed., The Complete Works of Captain John Smith, 3 Vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), III, p. 295; Strachey, Voyage to Virginia, pp. 80-81.

<sup>36</sup>Hugh Jones, The Present State of Virginia, From Whence is Inferred a Short View of Maryland and North Carolina (London, 1724), ed. Richard L. Morton (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956), p. 83; Butler, p. 38; Strachey, Voyage to Virginia, pp. 42-43. According to Richard Beale Davis, two additional groups of

At least a few Roman Catholics also lived in Virginia during the first half of the seventeenth century, and the colony's leaders apparently did not harass these recusants. In 1620, for example, John Pory wrote to Edwin Sandys, a member of the Virginia Company, to tell him of a Roman Catholic residing in the colony: "that Mr. Chanterton smells too much of Roome . . . as he attempts to work myracles with his Crucyfixe." Pory explained that Governor George Yeardley had decided that he "will take no notice" of Chanterton "vnless he perceive some danger." Pory and the governor both wondered, however, if this Roman Catholic could actually perform miracles that might help the colony, although Pory also admitted his suspicion that the man might be a spy. A little over a decade later another of Virginia's early governors, John Harvey, allowed a few Roman Catholics to reside in the colony. Some colonists objected to the governor's policy, for they apparently feared that two Romish priests, "Scott and

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Separatists arrived in Virginia in 1618 and 1621. Most were killed during the Indian massacre of 1621/22. There is, however, no trace in the colony's records that anyone blamed the massacre on the lack of religious unity, a fear displayed in many tracts and sermons promoting the colony written in England. Virginians interpreted the uprising as God's judgment on their own idleness and vice, not on their disrupting the colony's religious unity by harboring dissenters. Significantly, the leaders of these Separatist groups were members of the House of Burgesses during the years in which that Assembly passed laws urging the colonists to adhere to the forms of the Church of England and determining the Assembly's meetings by the rhythms of the Church's liturgical calendar. See Davis, II, pp. 643-644.

Baker," were "withdrawing our people from our Religion." Harvey claimed, however, that those individuals who complained so about the Roman Catholics and "would rather knock their cattell on the heads then sell them to Maryland," were being "nourished from England." The animosity toward Catholics arose not in Virginia, but from people influenced by anti-Catholic sources in the mother country. And despite the reluctance of some colonists to live near the Catholics then settling Maryland, one Thomas Tindall was sentenced in 1630 to spend two hours in the pillory for "Giving my Lord Baltimore the Lye and threatening to knock him down." Social station was to be respected no matter what religion an individual might profess. Virginians were tentatively developing religious relationships comprehending a broader portion of society than that of England.<sup>37</sup>

The court records of Virginia's Eastern Shore provide additional evidence of Roman Catholics in the colony. In 1639/40, for instance, Stephen Charlton claimed in Accomack County Court that he had never received compensation for a "silver Crucifix" he had purchased from

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<sup>37</sup>John Pory to Sir Edwin Sandys, June 12, 1620, RVCL, III, p. 304; Charges by the Virginia Company of London against Governor John Harvey, 1635, Bankes Manuscript 8, f. 3, (VCRP); "Extracts from Virginia Records, 1630-31," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography XVII (January 1909), p. 7; "Governor Harvey to Secretary Windebanke," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography VIII (October 1900), p. 161.

a local doctor. For a Puritan or moderate Anglican to have purchased, or even approved of, this devotional object and symbol of Christ's passion would have been extraordinary. Yet at least one individual on the Eastern Shore, a vestryman of the established church at that, apparently believed this popish object was a fit way of expressing his piety. The will of Nicholas Harwood of Accomack County also pointed in the direction of Roman Catholicism. Harwood stipulated that he desired the parish's minister, William Cotton, "may make a sermon for me and soe I leave this worlde desiringe all good people to pray for my soules helth." The latter portion of the clause was suspiciously close to suggesting that Harwood desired prayers for the dead, a practice abhorred by Protestants.<sup>38</sup>

Even a good Protestant like John Rolfe mingled something of Roman Catholicism with reformed religion in

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<sup>38</sup>Ames, 1632-1640, pp. 144-145, 54. Ralph T. Whitelaw, Virginia's Eastern Shore: A History of Northampton and Accomack Counties, 2 Vols. (Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, 1951), I, p. 425. A clause in Charlton's will left glebe land for the use of "an orthodoxe Divyne," what people then called Anglican ministers to distinguish them from Puritan clergy, serving Hungars Parish. Davies, I, p. 424. Following Bacon's Rebellion in 1676, Governor William Berkeley appointed Daniel Jenifer, a self-confessed Roman Catholic to be the sheriff of Accomack County. This may have been a reward for Jenifer's assistance during the rebellion, but it points out that Virginians did not always view Roman Catholicism as a threat to the state. Jenifer, in fact, had proven more loyal than those who had followed Bacon. See Whitelaw, II, p. 1403.

his 1621 will. Rolfe's codicil included the Pauline theology of justification by faith so typical of many Protestant wills in Elizabethan and Jacobean England: "assuredlie trustinge in the meritts of Jesus Christ my Lord and onelie savior to have full and ample remission of all my sinnes." Yet, with this assertion that Christ alone mediated between God and man, he mixed words describing the company of heaven peculiar to the wills of Roman Catholics: "and to inherite with him [Jesus Christ] a portion of the glorious kingdome of god with all the holy angels and archangells and blessed saintes and rest of that eternall kingdome." The will of Abraham Peirse, the Virginia Company's cape merchant, also showed this mixture of Roman Catholic and Protestant themes: "Hopinge and surelie trusting, that by the meritts of his sonne Jesus Christ that all my sinns are wholelie and cleenelie washed away by the deere blood of my Saviour Christ Jesus, and that after this life, I shall sett in glory with his Angells."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Will of John Rolfe, March 10, 1621, Public Records Office, Principal Probate Registry, Will-Register Books, 49 Scrooge, (VCRP); Margaret Spufford, Contrasting Communities: English Villages in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. ; Miller, p. 107; Will of Abraham Peirse, March 1, 1625/26, Public Records Office, Colonial Office 1/8, f. 15, (VCRP). John Rolfe's will is also available in Jane Carson, ed., "The Will of John Rolfe," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography LVIII (January 1950), pp. 58-65.

Like the competing religious views expressed by Rolfe and Peirse in their wills, Virginia's church was more a melange of practices and theologies than a homogenous establishment. Anglican, Brownist, Roman Catholics, and Puritan religious practices coexisted in early Virginia. And this comprehensiveness stood in marked contrast to the advice the colonists had received from sources in London as well as from the bitter denominational animosity that shook seventeenth-century England. Propagandists and ministers in England repeatedly warned Virginia's colonists about the danger of religious factions, for they believed that unity of religion helped seventeenth-century states establish and sustain practical as well as spiritual cohesion. These observers cautioned Virginians particularly about the danger of allowing Roman Catholics into the colony. Robert Gray exhorted the settlement's ministers "specially . . . [to] resist Poperie." He believed Catholicism posed a threat to the state, "for as it doth infect the mind with error, so it doth infect the manners of men with disloyaltie and treachery." The threat posed by Roman Catholicism was similar to that presented by the natives of North America.<sup>40</sup> To the English mind, both groups educated people incorrectly and, in effect, changed the manners of malleable human beings.

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<sup>40</sup>Robert Gray, A Good Speed to Virginia (London, 1609), ed. Wesley Frank Craven (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1937), D3.

Robert Johnson offered a slightly different argument. The Gunpowder Plot of 1605 remained clear in his mind, and he warned about the dangers Roman Catholics could create in a new commonwealth: "If they grow so bold and desperate in a mighty state, how much more dangerous in the birth and infancy of yours? Therefore, if you will live and prosper, harbor not this viperous brood in your bosom, which will eat out and consume the womb of their mother." He recommended that not "one person seasoned with the least taint of that leaven" be allowed in the colony.<sup>41</sup>

English ministers and promotional authors viewed both Roman Catholics and Brownists as threats to Virginia's polity. William Crashaw typified the feelings of many people when he warned Virginians of these dangers: "Suffer no Papists; let them not nestle there. . . . Suffer no Brownists, nor factious Separatists."<sup>42</sup> Virginians, however, showed little concern if a few recusants or dissenters made their homes in the colony. The colonists seemed to care more about famine, Indian uprisings, and planting tobacco than theological

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<sup>41</sup>Robert Johnson, Nova Britannia. Offering Most Excellent Fruits By Planting in Virginia (London, 1609; reprint, Rochester, 1897), p. 20; Bruce, I, p. 264.

<sup>42</sup>William Crashaw, A New-yeeres Gift to Virginia. A Sermon Preached in London before the right honorable the Lord Lawarre, Lord Governour and Captaine Generall of Virginea (London, 1610), L1.



speculation about justification and salvation. Virginia's notion of religious unity entailed a certain amount of pragmatism. Virginians, less concerned with heresy than survival, making unruly colonists obey the laws of God, and growing tobacco, tolerated a vague consensus of ceremonial and liturgical practices.

Virginia's Anglican Church was broad and comprehensive during the colony's early decades. Even as the church adopted some secular aspects, it served as a symbol of English Christian unity in the North American wilderness. Despite the strident appeals for theological unity that issued from the tracts of propagandists and the sermons of ministers who preached before the Virginia Company of London, the colonists frequently disregarded this advice. More accurately, from the colony's earliest days Virginians had developed their own religious unity. Their religious establishment comprised what has been called the "great comprehension" of the Anglican liturgy, and it may well have been more true to the Elizabethan Settlement than the religious animosities emerging in Stuart England.<sup>43</sup> "As near as may be," England's church had been transplanted to the New World, but in the North

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<sup>43</sup>Davies, I, p. 224. For a good summary of the Elizabethan Settlement, see A.G. Dickens, The English Reformation, 2d ed. (University Park, PN: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), pp. 354-363.

American wilderness Virginians were also developing their own religious identity and establishment.

Of all the Reformed churches in the seventeenth century, the Church of England held perhaps the vaguest notion of orthodox doctrine. No written confession outlined Anglican faith and beliefs, certainly not the Thirty-Nine Articles which, as one historian has pointed out, "allowed plenty of room for personal theological emphases and idiosyncracies." When pressed, many authorities referred to the decisions of the first four ecumenical councils of the church held at Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon as the basis of the Church's doctrine. That still left much room for theological disagreement, especially in the religiously charged atmosphere of seventeenth-century England. Yet, in theory, common worship rather than common doctrine united the Anglican communion. The Restoration Church of England would recognize this fact, and its lack of theological unity would become a standing joke.<sup>44</sup> Separated by the Atlantic Ocean from the growing religious animosities of their homeland, and shaped by their own "occasions," most Virginians had accepted this notion by

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<sup>44</sup>Spurr, p. 185; Paul Elmer More and Frank Leslie Cross, eds., Anglicanism: The Thought and Practice of the Church of England, Illustrated From the Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century (London: S.P.C.K., 1962), pp. 162-163.

the mid-1640s, and it had become part of their religious identity.

The wide variety of religious views and practices tolerated in early seventeenth-century Virginia demonstrated its church's ecumenical nature. Use of the Book of Common Prayer at divine services may have been the one constant among the colonists' religious practices prior to 1645. It was a familiar part of worship in Virginia throughout the colonial period, its usage commanded by law and likely followed in practice.<sup>45</sup> Use of the Book of Common Prayer became something of a touchstone of orthodoxy.

In 1621, for example, a group of about 300 Walloons and French Protestants fleeing religious persecution in their homelands asked English authorities for permission to settle in Virginia. The colony's governor and Council acceded to the request, provided these foreign Protestants agreed to swear the oaths of allegiance and supremacy and to conform to the canons of the Church of England, including use of the Book of Common Prayer. Although Protestant, the Walloons and French Huguenots were also stricter Calvinists than most English Christians. Yet Virginia's leaders would tolerate them and their religious views as long as they expressed their beliefs within the

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<sup>45</sup>Jones, p. 98; Billings, Selby, and Tate, p. 53; Butler, p.38; Morton, I, p. 175; Brydon, I, p. 123.

framework of the colony's established church. The refugees found this offer unacceptable and chose not to emigrate to the colony.<sup>46</sup>

Puritans dominated Elizabeth River Parish in Lower Norfolk County during the 1640s, yet they practiced their religion within the liturgical bounds of the established Anglican Church. In September of 1641, for instance, Edy Tooker was ordered to do penance "for the foul crime of fornication" in that parish's "Chapel of Ease according to the tenor of the said spiritual laws and forms of the Church of England." Two years later, Basil Haynes and Julian Underwood of Norfolk County were found guilty of adultery and ordered to atone for their sin by making "a public acknowledgement of their fault" and by asking God's forgiveness "in time of divine service, between the first and second lessons in the forenoon." This description of divine service is not consistent with Puritan forms of worship. Puritans traditionally disciplined their members in the afternoon rather than at the morning service. And according to a historian of Puritan devotional practices in North America, Puritans--unlike Anglicans--read only one passage of scripture at each meeting because the minister's sermon usually included numerous Biblical references. If Elizabeth River was a Puritan parish as

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<sup>46</sup>"Discourse of the Old Company," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography I (July 1893), p. 160; Bruce, I, p. 26; Davis, II, p. 640.

historians have suspected, their worship services at least approximated the offices of the Book of Common Prayer through the early 1640s.<sup>47</sup>

Not until the colony's Puritans abandoned the prayer book liturgy later in the decade did Virginia's authorities act against them. In 1649, the government finally banished to Maryland a group of Norfolk County dissenters, but only after they refused to conform to the rites of the Book of Common Prayer. Edward Johnson, the minister at Mulberry Island, applauded the decision and believed Governor Sir William Berkeley had been particularly charitable in allowing the "Discontented round party" to remain in the colony until then. He took particular delight, however, in the irony of the Puritans' move to Maryland: "now they are goinge to the Mouth of the Chesepiacke Bay (or head rather I may say.) to bee neerer Neighbours to the Romish Catholicks in Mary Land whoe like Samsons Foxes though they by their heads turned Contrary ways to differ yeat they are fast Joyned by the tayles; with Fyrbrands to worke mishife and sett all the world on Flame." The authorities had also earlier

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<sup>47</sup>Brydon, I, p. 119; Norfolk County Record Book, 1637-1646, ff. 122, 225-226; "Lower Norfolk County Records, 1636-1646," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography XLI (April 1933), pp. 118-119; XXXIX (January 1931), p. 3; XL (January 1932), pp. 41-43; Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), pp. 110, 130; Davies, I, p. 266; Bruce, I, pp. 256-257.

silenced the parish's minister, the Reverend Thomas Harrison, and gave him three years in which to conform or to leave the colony. He complained to the Parliament, who in turn complained to the colony's Governor William Berkeley. Harrison, Parliament wrote, "hath beene banished by you for no other cause but for that he would not conforme himselfe to the use of the Comon prayer booke." Until 1649 in Virginia, use of a common service book united two groups which had taken up arms against each other back in the mother country.<sup>48</sup>

Virginia's context in the North American wilderness helped shape the church's emerging identity. In part, the colonists' Christian unity developed out of a shared antipathy to the Indians, who were not Christian. This allowed the colony's leaders to tolerate a variety of religious views and expressions, and that would remain a part of Virginia's religious identity until the outside influence of the English Civil War affected the colony. An Indian uprising in 1644--at a time when Anglican and Puritan Virginians could have begun taking up arms against one another--probably added to the religious unity of colonial Virginians and diverted them from imitating the armed conflict which was then spreading across their

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<sup>48</sup>Edward Johnson to John Ferrar, March 25, 1650, Ferrar Papers, f. 1160, (VCRP); Public Records Office, State Papers, Domestic 25/84, f. 482, (VCRP). Johnson's scriptural reference is to Judges 15.3ff.

homeland. Opechancanough, the Powhatan king, was old and feeble by 1644, but he wanted to make one last attempt at driving the English from his ancestral homeland. The Powhatans attacked in April. Two summers earlier, in 1642, civil war had erupted in England. Anglicans and Puritans were at war. The Powhatan's initial assault in the spring of 1644, however, served to reinforce the colonists' understanding that in spite of any disputes over theology they were English Christians united against a savage foe. While their kinsmen fought against each other in England, Virginians conducted a two-year war of revenge against the Powhatans. Animosity between Puritan and Anglican Virginians never approached the levels reached in England. Even a Puritan author who believed the uprising was God's judgment upon the colony for imposing an oath in support of Charles I on "divers of the most religious and honest inhabitants [Puritans]," interpreted the event as an attack upon Christian Virginians. The statute directing that April 18, the day of the massacre, be "yearly celebrated by thanksgivinge for our deliverance from the Salvages" also avoided denominational invective.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Billings, Selby, and Tate, pp. 49-50; James R. Perry, The Formation of a Society on Virginia's Eastern Shore, 1615-1655 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), p. 227; Smits, p. 186; Sheehan, p. 178; Joseph Frank, ed., "News From Virginny, 1644," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography LXV (January 1975), p. 86; Hening, I, p. 290.

Comments from outside the colony differed from those of Virginians. A Massachusetts author referred to Anglicans in Virginia as a "malignant" party who cast an "evill eye" upon the Puritans, "and could no better refrain from oppressing them, than Pharaoh after he had rest from the plagues under which he was." A royalist propaganda newspaper, the Mercurius Aulicus, describing events in Virginia also demonstrated a partisan religious attitude uncommon in the colony. The editor claimed it would be safer for Virginians to "Article with the Divill" than with the colony's dissenters, and referred to the colony's nonconformists as "Infidels" and "Pagans," terms Virginians used to describe the natives and occasionally the Turks.<sup>50</sup> Having discovered in the natives the other against which they defined themselves, Virginians could be more tolerant of each others' beliefs.

Although Virginians tended to treat each other charitably, they were not always so tolerant of dissenters from outside the colony whose religious views challenged the established church and, thus, the unity of society. In 1629 Governor John Pott complained to the Privy Council about Lord Baltimore's settlement of Roman Catholics north of the Potomac River in Maryland. Pott had tendered Baltimore the oaths of supremacy and allegiance, but he

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<sup>50</sup>Mercurius Aulicus, week ending August 31, 1641, Virginia Historical Society; Davis, II, pp. 1037-1038; Jameson, pp. 266-267.



and his company had refused them. Some Virginians felt threatened by this colony of papists and begged King Charles I to keep the Catholics away from Virginia.

"Amonge the many blessinges and favors for wch we are bound to blesse god . . . there is none whereby it has beene made more happy then in the freedome of our Religion wch wee haue enioyed, and that noe papists haue beene suffered to settle their aboad amonst us, The continuance whereof we most humbly implore."<sup>51</sup>

In the fall of 1642 an emerging group of dissenters in Nansemond County contacted Massachusetts leaders and asked them to supply that county's people with "godly" ministers. Three Puritan ministers--William Thompson, Thomas James, and John Knowles--travelled from New England to Virginia, but served the Nansemond parish for only a short time before Governor Berkeley banished them from the colony. The action is in marked contrast to his treatment of a Virginia minister and his Puritan congregation during the 1640s. After discovering that Thomas Harrison refused to follow the rites of the prayer book, Governor Berkeley gave the cleric and his parishioners three years in which to conform before they

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<sup>51</sup>Public Records Office, Colonial Office 1/5, ff. 101-102; Morton, I, p. 119; "Governor and Council of Virginia to the Privy Council in Regard to Lord Baltimore," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography XVII (January 1909), p. 6; Hening, I, p. 149.

too were banished from Virginia.<sup>52</sup> Virginians were beginning to understand themselves as a people separate from the inhabitants of England's other North American colonies.

By the 1640s, Virginians had developed what one historian has called a "fiercely defended localism" in ecclesiastical affairs, responding to events only "when a decision was thrust upon them" by outside forces. Based on use of the Book of Common Prayer, the colony's church establishment looked to a past when religion had united rather than divided the English people. Within English territory bounded by the York and Blackwater Rivers, the "rich ecumenical potentiality" of the prayer book allowed different groups to practice variant forms of English religion. Circumstances in the North American wilderness encouraged Virginians to adhere to the tolerant ecclesiastical mood originally intended by the Elizabethan settlement. The colony's shortage of clergy further invited Virginians to take this approach to religious unity. Ruled with little interference from English authorities during the decades following the dissolution of the Company in 1624, Virginians developed their own political and ecclesiastical relationships that sometimes bore slight resemblance to those in contemporary England,

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<sup>52</sup>Davis, II, p. 644; Jon Butler, ed., "Two 1642 Letters From Virginia Puritans," Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings LXXXIV (1972), p. 99.

their religious localism tempered by use of the Book of Common Prayer.<sup>53</sup>

Virginia's ecclesiastical localism extended beyond theology and liturgical practice to include variant forms of punishment for offenses English church courts would have handled. York County followed the traditional English attitude which had emerged by 1600 and dictated that lay people could not be whipped or have other physical penalties imposed upon them for religious or moral offenses. Moral offenders in York County usually did public penance, a ritual designed to "work for the health of the culprit's soul," often by confessing their fault before the congregation and wearing a white gown, the traditional garb for these occasions. Prior to 1661, only one person was whipped in York County for a religious crime, and that individual had willfully refused to

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<sup>53</sup>Perry, p. 227; Steven D. Crow, "'Your Majesty's Good Subjects': A Reconsideration of Royalism in Virginia, 1642-1652," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography LXXXVII (April 1979), pp. 158-173; Warren M. Billings, "Berkeley and Effingham: Who Cares?" Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (January 1989), p. 36; Parke Rouse, Jr., James Blair of Virginia (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), p. 56. See also the Loyal Addresses of the Civil and Military Officers of Accomack and Northampton Counties to King William III, Public Records Office, Colonial Office 5/1312, part II, ff. 253, 263. These addresses were sent to William III after the colonists learned that England had been threatened by the French King, a Roman Catholic. Accomack and Northampton were the only counties in Virginia to mention Roman Catholicism or religion in their addresses, perhaps because they were so close to Maryland, but perhaps there had also been Catholics on the Eastern Shore in an earlier period.

receive instructions from the minister of New Poquoson Parish "to fitt & enable him for receiving of the holy sacrements and also hath Denied to receive the same." He may have been considered an atheist.<sup>54</sup>

Unlike the practice followed in York County, Nansemond officials usually had moral offenders whipped in addition to doing public penance. This localism in ecclesiastical punishments lasted until the early 1660s when the county courts, which administered these cases in Virginia, stopped prescribing public penance for religious or moral crimes and replaced it with fines and whippings.<sup>55</sup>

Only after the English Civil War broke out, and only then after their own conflict with the Indians had been resolved, did Virginia's authorities start persecuting Puritan groups who had settled in the colony. Even then they showed a great deal of tolerance, moving only against the more radical groups of dissenters. The English Civil

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<sup>54</sup>My argument comes from my survey of York County, Deeds, Orders, and Wills, Books I-III. The case cited is in Book III, f. 386. See also II, ff. 350, 387; III, ff. 1-2. Martin Ingram, Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1590-1640 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 52-53.

<sup>55</sup>Warren M. Billings, "English Legal Literature as a Source of Law and Legal Practice for Seventeenth-Century Virginia," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography LXXXVII (October 1979), p. 415; Warren M. Billings, "The Growth of Political Institutions in Virginia, 1634-1676," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., XXXI (April 1974), p. 229.

War had forced the colonists to make choices. In 1642/43 the House of Burgesses passed a statute providing for "the preservation of the puritie of doctrine & vnitie of the church," and directing "that all ministers whatsoever which shall reside in the collony are to be conformable to . . . the Church of England." Nonconformists were to be "compelled to depart the collony with all conveniencie." Despite this law and the knowledge that Puritans resided in Nansemond County, Virginia's nonconformists were not banished for nearly seven years.<sup>56</sup>

Virginia's mythic Christian unity was next threatened by immigrant Quakers during the late 1650s. They were a disruptive and confrontational sect, not opposed to using violence to help usher in the millennium. Quakers were persecuted with some severity in Virginia during the late 1650s and early 1660s. Once the Quakers renounced violence following the English Civil War, however, only those Friends who openly courted trouble through outrageous physical and verbal abuse were persecuted in the colony.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Hening, I, p. 277; Morton, I, p. 152; Brydon, I, pp. 120-121.

<sup>57</sup>H. Larry Ingle, First Among Friends: George Fox and the Creation of Quakerism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 189-195; Barry Reay, The Quakers and the English Revolution (London: Temple Smith, 1985), pp. 106-111. Thomas Bushrod sought out colonial symbols of authority to denounce. In 1661 the Reverend Justinian Aylmer, a minister in York County, was attempting to purchase a servant on a ship docked in the York River.

By mid-century Virginia was beginning to show signs of permanence. The General Assembly had directed the colonists a few years earlier to begin laying out "Highwayes," and Richard Kemp wrote in 1638 that the settlers had begun constructing sturdier buildings than in the past. The colonists were also beginning to understand themselves as Virginians. And as Virginians they displayed a certain tolerance of religious beliefs, acting vigorously against dissent only when outside forces--be they Maryland Catholics, Massachusetts Puritans, or the

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Bushrod also came aboard, and Aylmer, who knew of the Quaker's verbal aggression, tried to avoid him. Bushrod, however, found the minister and began to heap abuse upon him, calling the minister "a lying knave, an ugly Rogue, & blind Rogue." He then denounced the Anglican clergy as "Episcopall knaves" and "Anti Christs" and challenged anyone to disrupt the Quaker meetings. Edward Thomas chopped down trees on the Reverend Anthony Sclater's land, worked on Christmas Day to affront members of the established church, and defamed Anglican clergy. Richard Brown threw blocks of wood at Sclater's wife. With the exception of people like Bushrod and Brown who courted persecution, Quakers were left alone, although during times of social stress they were treated with more circumspection.

After 1670 Quaker missionaries sometimes called on the colony's governor when they arrived in Virginia. Thomas Story dined with Lieutenant Governor Francis Nicholson in 1705 and found this ardent churchman "kind beyond Expectation." After dinner, Commissary Blair gave the missionary and his companions a tour of the College, then Nicholson offered the group a selection of lemons, coconuts, and other fruits, and wished them well on their travels. Several decades earlier during one of his missionary journeys, William Edmundson stopped to visit Governor William Berkeley. He found Sir William "peevish and brittle," but that the governor met the man at all demonstrates the changing attitudes of Virginians toward the Friends. Just a few years earlier Berkeley had created a commission to see to it that "the abominate seede of ye Quakers spread not."

effects of England's Civil War--compelled them to make these decisions. Their chief interest as Virginians was not theological purity, but tobacco. Conformist or nonconformist, they wanted as little English, or outside, interference with their tobacco trade as possible. In establishing their identity as Virginians, the colonists stressed both tobacco and toleration.<sup>58</sup>

The broad nature of Virginia's church had helped prevent religious passions from erupting into armed conflict in the colony during the English Civil War. Although the nature of Virginia's institutional church--in its weakness, its breadth, and its context in a land of "savages"--encouraged a tolerant definition of Christian unity, the weakness of that institution led by mid-century to the existence of a public church unable to shape the spiritual lives of many Virginians. Lack of ministers to officiate in the colony's churches harmed the colony's public religious life for it often led colonists to neglect attendance at divine service. Although a lay reader or clerk could read the offices in the Book of Common Prayer each week, a common practice in the eighteenth century, James Perry was probably correct when he suggested that in the absence of a minister many people allowed their religious devotion to lapse and thus fell

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<sup>58</sup>Morton, I, p. 130; Morgan, p. 145; Crow, esp. 171-173.

away from the common prayer of the church. With their parish vacant for several years, the people of Lower Norfolk County had nearly stopped attending church. In 1654 the county court presented "the whole County" for "ye genrall breach of ye Sabbath day." And by the early 1660s, county courts stopped prescribing public penance for ecclesiastical offenses. The civil courts in Virginia had always presided over these sorts of cases, yet they had now become entirely civil matters.<sup>59</sup>

When the English Civil War ended so too did the brief period of religious strife in seventeenth-century Virginia. A treaty made at the conclusion of the Powhatan War had formalized the separation of Virginia into Christian and savage areas. Within English territory by 1660, Virginians had created their own mythic religion in which Christianity became identified with ethnic background. As long as individuals adhered to shared notions of Christian morality and did not allow their religious opinions to disrupt the polity, they were free to practice Christian religion.

Neither Company nor Crown had ever supplied the colony adequately with ministers, so it is not surprising that Virginians found something other than denominational religion to help order their society. As Steven Crow has

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<sup>59</sup>Perry, p. 184; "The Church in Lower Norfolk County," Lower Norfolk County Virginia Antiquary III (1901), p. 29; Ingram, pp. 52-53.



pointed out of Virginians at mid-century, "Their commitment was to themselves" and the profit that could be made from cultivating a yellow weed. A public spirituality in any real sense no longer existed.<sup>60</sup> A spiritual life still existed in Virginia, but it did so more clearly in private than in public. Although the state continued to punish moral offenders, the spiritual life existed more clearly in private than in public. Public behavior, particularly English sexual notions and the virtue of labor, distinguished Virginians from the natives. Faith retreated to the private conscience and the family dwelling. By the time of the Restoration, Virginia had largely become a land of public behavior and private faith.

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<sup>60</sup>Crow, p. 173; Morgan, pp. 129, 211. See also Morgan, pp. 145-147, "In Virginia English freedom meant . . . to be as free as possible from interference by England.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE RELIGION OF ANGLICANS IN COLONIAL VIRGINIA, 1660-1730

"When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul."<sup>1</sup>

Book of Common Prayer

In January 1686/87, William Fitzhugh--an attorney and tobacco planter in Stafford County--reflected briefly upon the difficulties of living in the colony. Education for children was hard to come by. Financial security rested upon too many contingencies, forcing Fitzhugh to devote more time to worldly affairs than he thought proper. With the exception of that found in books, "good & ingenious" society was scarce. "But that which bears the greatest weight with me," he concluded, "is the want of spirituall help & comforts, of which this fertile Country in every thing else, is barren and unfruitfull." It was a familiar complaint, made consistently throughout the century by clergy and laity alike. On at least two occasions Fitzhugh tried to remedy the problem, asking friends in England to speak with the bishop of London about supplying the colony with a sufficient number of ministers. His request, like most others, usually went unanswered in the seventeenth century. Consequently, Virginians'

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<sup>1</sup>The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments, and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, According to the Use of the Church of England (London, 1678), n.p., but see the orders for morning and evening prayer.

relationships with God often developed outside the formal structures of the institutional church.<sup>2</sup>

Virginia did not lack a public church during the colonial period, but the one that existed was weak, hampered by a sprawling population and a shortage of clergy. In 1662 a former colonial minister estimated that nearly eighty percent of the colony's parishes lay vacant. No more than ten or twelve ministers served a population approaching 26,000. Almost three decades later, in 1699, only twenty-two of Virginia's fifty parishes had ministers at a time when the colony had a total population of approximately 63,000 souls. James Blair surmised that some parishes refused to hire ministers because their salaries would have meant additional taxes, and the inhabitants wanted to keep the parish levies in their own pockets.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>William Fitzhugh to Nicholas Hayward, January 30, 1686/87, p. 203; William Fitzhugh to Captain Roger Jones, May 18, 1685, p. 168; William Fitzhugh to John Cooper, August 20, 1690, p. 268, all in Richard Beale Davis, ed., William Fitzhugh and His Chesapeake World, 1676-1701 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963). Biographical information in Davis, pp. 6, 12.

<sup>3</sup>R[oger] G[reene], Virginia's Cure: or An Advisive Narrative Concerning Virginia (London, 1662) in Peter Force, ed., Tracts and Other Papers, Relating Principally to the Origin, Settlement, and Progress of the Colonies in North America, 4 Vols. (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1963), III, no. 15, pp. 4-5; Samuel Clyde McCulloch, ed., "James Blair's Plan of 1699 to Reform the Clergy of Virginia," William and Mary Quarterly, 2d ser., IV (January 1947), pp. 73, 76. Population estimates in Edmund S. Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia (New York: W.W. Norton &

Nor was a settled minister any guarantee that colonists would regularly attend divine service. Factors other than an insufficient number of clergymen also conspired to keep people away from church. "Extremities of Wind and Weather" hindered some, "and divers of the more remote Families being discouraged, by the length or tediousness of the way, through extremities of heat in Summer, frost and Snow in Winter, and tempestuous weather in both, do very seldom repair thither." William Byrd II went to church on less than forty-five percent of the Sundays covered by his diary between 1709 and 1712. And the church was on his property, less than half a mile from his residence. Byrd seemed to believe that reading a sermon at home was an adequate substitute for attending Sunday prayers; rain and excessive heat were his most frequent excuses for neglecting public worship. The diary of John Harrower, an indentured servant, reveals that he attended church on but fourteen percent of the Sundays he recorded. He sometimes remained at home "because I had no saddle to go to the Church with."<sup>4</sup>

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Company, 1975), p. 404. George MacLaren Brydon has argued that following the Restoration so many parishes in England needed conforming ministers that there was little reason for Anglican clergy to seek jobs overseas. George MacLaren Brydon, Religious Life in Virginia in the Seventeenth Century (Williamsburg: Virginia 350th Anniversary Celebration Corporation, 1957), p. 37.

<sup>4</sup>G[reene], pp. 8-9; William Stevens Perry, ed., Historical Collections Relating to the American Colonial Church 4 Vols. (Hartford, 1870; reprint, New York: AMS

Most parishes contained one, sometimes two or three chapels of ease, and although the parish clerk read the liturgy and a homily on Sundays when the minister served another church, this affected church attendance as well. William Byrd, for example, attended church only once between 1709 and 1712 when the minister was not officiating. In some ways, the situation in Virginia resembled the European practice of clerical pluralism, the primary reason given by English ministers for non-attendance of divine services.<sup>5</sup>

Despite these obstacles and the weakness of the colony's Anglican Church, religion remained an important part of many peoples' lives. In those parishes fortunate enough to have a clergyman, ministers preached sermons, read the public liturgy, and celebrated the sacraments.

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Press, 1969), I, p. 11; Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, eds., The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709-1712 (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1941), July 24, August 7, 1709; June 10, November 26, 1710; January 21, April 15, 1711, and passim; Pierre Marambaud, William Byrd of Westover, 1674-1744 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1971), p. 151; Patricia U. Bonomi and Peter R. Eisenstadt, "Church Attendance in the Eighteenth-Century British American Colonies," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser. (April 1982), pp. 254-255.

<sup>5</sup> Lord Howard to the bishops of Durham, Peterborough, and Rochester, February 23, 1687 in Warren M. Billings, ed., The Papers of Francis Howard Baron Howard of Effingham, 1643-1695 (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1989), p. 282; Viviane Barrie-Curien, "The Clergy of the Diocese of London in the Eighteenth Century," in John Walsh, Colin Haydon, and Stephen Taylor, eds., The Church of England c.1689-c.1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 109.

Away from the sacred space of the church building individuals read devotional works and prayed privately. And not all Virginians were complacent about the shortage of ministers. Although some, as Commissary Blair believed, did not want to pay tithes to support a clergyman, and a certain number thought "not of prayers, but on one day in seven," other colonists complained about their inability to participate fully in the religious life common to Englishmen, perhaps a vindication of the idea espoused by colonial ministers and laity alike that it was "natural for helpless man to adore his Maker in some form or other."<sup>6</sup>

No matter how weak the church may have been, religion mattered to many Virginians. Approximately ninety percent of the wills recorded in York County during the seventeenth century began with the phrase "In the Name of God, Amen," and then commended the testator's soul to God. More significant is the fact that over seventy percent of these wills included additional religious sentiments--

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<sup>6</sup>Deuel Pead, "A Sermon Preached at James City in Virginia, the 23d of April 1686, Before the Loyal Society of Citizens born in and about London and inhabiting in Virginia," ed. Richard Beale Davis, William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser. XVII (July 1960), p. 382; William Byrd, History of the Dividing Line betwixt Virginia and North Carolina Run in the Year of Our Lord 1728, in Louis B. Wright, ed., The Prose Works of William Byrd of Westover (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 193; John Tillotson, The Works of Dr. John Tillotson, Late Archbishop of Canterbury, 10 Vols. (London: J.F. Dove, 1820), I, p. 470.

mentioning the resurrection, forgiveness of sins, sure and certain hope of salvation, an explicit request for Christian burial, or a combination of these. Of people listing a parish affiliation, eighty-five percent included additional sentiments, compared with only fifty percent of those who did not list a parish. Some people left bequests donating books, money, or property to their parish churches. And expressions of atheism met with shock from the colonists.<sup>7</sup>

Throughout the colonial period, but particularly during the seventeenth century, the colony's Anglican Church had difficulty fulfilling its intended spiritual purpose. The many obstacles confronting Virginia's established church undoubtedly shaped that institution, but they did not fundamentally alter the Church's mission. The shortage of ministers, the absence of ecclesiastical courts, and the colonists' scattered manner of planting were all but "occasions," situations the Church simply had to deal with. One church historian has recently noted that "the political, social and cultural context can only

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<sup>7</sup>The figures come from my survey of York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills, books I-X, Virginia State Library, Richmond Virginia, (microfilm) Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library. For specific bequests see York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills, III, f. 38A; will of John Yeates, Virginia State Library; Isle of Wight Records, II, pt. 1, f. 53; see also Warren M. Billings, review of Holy Things and Profane, by Dell Upton, in Virginia Magazine of History and Biography XCV (July 1987), pp. 379-81.

provide the occasion for a church and contribute to the shaping of its outward form, it cannot provide a definition of a church or its raison d'être." "Occasions" was what Virginians and their ministers complained about in the seventeenth century. The structure of Virginia's Church, not its message, worried them. The majority of Virginians during the seventeenth century were immigrants from the mother country; to their minds the colonial institution did not reflect the traditional order of the church in England. Yet in Virginia as well as England, the church struggled to bring religion to a nominally Christian people. As one historian of the English Church has pointed out, the activities of Anglican clergy throughout the seventeenth and into the eighteenth centuries "can profitably be viewed as part of that continuing drama, 'the English Reformation.'" Despite its many problems, Virginia's Anglican Church participated in the unfinished task of bringing the Reformation to the English people. It still served as a means of spreading the Gospel message and of guiding people in paths that might lead them to salvation.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Warren M. Billings, John E. Selby, and Thad W. Tate, Colonial Virginia: A History (White Plains, NY: KTO Press, 1986), p. 65; Paul Avis, "What is 'Anglicanism?'" in Stephen Sykes and John Booty, eds., The Study of Anglicanism (London: SPCK, 1988), p. 406; Jeremy Gregory, "The Eighteenth-Century Reformation: the Pastoral Task of Anglican Clergy After 1689," in John Walsh, Colin Haydon,



Although the colony's "occasions" meant that many people went without the guidance of a minister, Anglicanism in Virginia was still primarily a pastoral religion, one concerned with the spiritual care and guidance of individuals rather than with theological polemic or intellectual debate. At its heart, like Puritanism, Anglicanism addressed the devotional life. A life that began in faith, proceeded through repentance and amendment of life, and culminated with the "sure and certain hope" of a glorious resurrection at the last day. The Church's liturgy, ministers' sermons, devotional materials, and events in the natural world, all helped create a general orientation pointing the faithful in the direction of God. Virginia's established church helped structure and order an individual's spiritual life. Through preaching, prayer, the distribution of devotional manuals, and the sacraments, the church kept God alive for men and women, while leaving the essential work of salvation in the hands of individuals who would work out their own salvation "with fear and trembling."<sup>9</sup>

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and Stephen Taylor, eds., The Church of England c.1689-c.1833 From Toleration to Tractarianism (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 69.

<sup>9</sup>The Burial Office in The Book of Common Prayer, n.p.; George Keith, The Power of the Gospel, in the Conversion of Sinners (Annapolis, 1703), p. 12; John Page, A Deed of Gift to My Dear Son, Captain Matt. Page, One of His Majesty's Justices for New Kent County, in Virginia (n.p. 1687; reprint, ed., William Meade, Philadelphia: Henry B. Ashmead, 1856), p. v.

Anglicans in colonial Virginia often spoke of this process as a pilgrimage or a voyage to heaven.<sup>10</sup> "Before I was ten years old as I am sure you remember," William Fitzhugh confessed to his mother, "I look'd upon life here as but going to an Inn, no permanent being."<sup>11</sup> By the late seventeenth century, the pilgrimage motif was a well known form of portraying the soul's journey to God, popular among Puritans and Roman Catholics as well as Anglicans. The classic presentation of this genre was John Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress, but it had roots in the works of medieval mystics such as Bernard of Clairvaux, Bonaventure, and especially in Walter Hilton's The Scale of Perfection.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Page, p. 219; will of Edward Watts, York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills, V, f. 165; James Blair, Our Saviour's Divine Sermon on the Mount, Contain'd in the Vth, VIth, and VIIth Chapters of St. Mathew's Gospel, Explained; and the Practice of it Recommended in Divers Sermons and Discourses, 5 Vols. (London, 1722), IV, p. 80, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library.

<sup>11</sup>William Fitzhugh to Mrs. Mary Fitzhugh, June 30, 1698, in William Fitzhugh and His Chesapeake World, p. 358.

<sup>12</sup>Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), pp. 54-55; John Spurr, The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 373. For additional examples of life as a journey to heaven see, Byrd, History of the Line, p. 193; The Vain Prodigal Life, and Tragical Penitent Death of Thomas Hellier Born at Whitchurch near Lyme in Dorsetshire: Who for Murdering his Master, Mistress, and a Maid, was Executed according to Law at Westover in Charles City, in the Country of Virginia, near the Plantation called Hard Labour, where he perpetrated the said Murders

The Anglican notion of the journey to God, both in Virginia and Restoration England, possessed its own distinct qualities. Churchmen emphasized neither the terrors of the wilderness stage so typical of Puritan writers nor the mystical union with God common among Roman Catholic authors. Likewise, they wrote little of the rapturous joy of sinners admitted to redemption. Emotional swings between despair and joy did not punctuate the Anglican's spiritual journey. Feelings of "Uneasiness," especially when thinking of one's sins, attended this voyage, but not dramatic events such as what the Puritans termed conversion. Anglicans preached a low key piety, deeply felt and involving the "whole individual," but given to order rather than to passion or ecstasy. They worked out their salvation through a well-ordered journey to God. They believed that in matters of both spiritual temperament and behavior, extremes harmed the spiritual life. John Page warned his son against the emotional excesses of presumption and despair--those "two destructive rocks, upon either of which, if the ship of the soul dash, it is split in pieces"--as a missing of the religious life's golden mean. One deceived men and women into vain hopes of mercy, the other tormented them with

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(London, 1680), p. 40, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library; Tillotson, I, p. 526; Donna Joanne Walter, "Imagery in the Sermons of James Blair" (M.A. thesis, University of Tennessee, 1967), esp. 39-44.

"hellish fears of justice." Together they threatened both halves of the spiritual life: "Presumption is an enemy to repentance, and despair to faith."<sup>13</sup>

As Page's allusion suggests, Virginians often described their spiritual journeys through the metaphor of a ship at sea returning to its home port, a particularly evocative image for anyone who had survived an Atlantic crossing. Most Virginians prior to 1720 had probably made the voyage at least once, for throughout the seventeenth century the colony's population grew largely through immigration.<sup>14</sup> James Blair turned the metaphor into an analogy, in a sober manner comparing Christians to a well-disciplined ship's crew attending to its duties, "Such as stopping the Leaks, mending the Sails, . . . preparing the Guns to make a Defence against an Enemy; and especially the keeping of a good Reckoning, and looking out sharp to avoid Shelves, and Rocks, and Quicksands, and all other Dangers both attending the Voyage at Sea, and the Piloting right into Harbour."<sup>15</sup> The image had become so commonplace that Blair did not bother to explain for his

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<sup>13</sup>Hambrick-Stowe, pp. 54-55; James Blair, I, p. 104; Spurr, Restoration Church, pp. 373-74; Page, pp. 94-95.

<sup>14</sup>Pead, pp. 376-77; Richard Beale Davis, Intellectual Life in the Colonial South, 1585-1763, 3 Vols. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1978), II, p. 376; Morgan, p. 404.

<sup>15</sup>James Blair, II, p. 138; see also George Keith, Power of the Gospel, p. 17.

listeners and readers that by the enemy he meant the devil and by rocks and shelves temptations to sin.

When Blair described the spiritual journey to sailors going about their usual tasks of keeping the ship in order and sailing it to its intended destination, he captured the essence of the Anglican's movement to God. He described the journey as part of an individual's daily work, striking only in its ordinariness. People expected sailors to repair leaks, make preparations for enemy assaults, guide the vessel to its intended port, and watch for shallow waters so as to prevent the ship from running aground. These were tasks common to the lives of seafaring men. For sailors to have neglected these chores would have been extraordinary; it would have made them poor seamen. And this was perhaps the most distinctive quality of Anglican religion in colonial Virginia, it seemed unexceptional, a matter of doing the routine and habitual duties that naturally accompanied an individual's vocation. Religion was less something individuals believed than something they did, a practice rather than a set of propositions. "Christ's Doctrine is a practical Doctrine. Whosoever heareth these Sayings of mine, and doeth them."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>James Blair, V, p. 374; see also James Blair, II, pp. 199, 204; Paxton, sermon no. 4, "Of the Tares in the Church," passim, this topic is the sermon's general theme.

Virginians' emphasis on practical theology reflected contemporary trends in the Church of England. Throughout the Interregnum and Restoration periods, English divines took part in a process of recovering the church's "Catholic doctrine of salvation" and of establishing an ethical system suitable to the doctrine. This initiative came in response to the damage they believed had been done to the nation's moral life by the doctrine of "faith alone" which had been so prominent while the Puritans controlled England during the Interregnum. The result was a practical theology stressing duty.<sup>17</sup>

Virginians in the second half of the seventeenth century were familiar with theological ideas current in the Anglican Church back home. Devotional materials written by Restoration divines ranked high among their favorite books, especially the influential works of John Tillotson and Richard Allestree. Ministers frequently "plagiarized" these published editions when preparing their own sermons. Robert Paxton of Elizabeth City Parish often borrowed whole passages from Tillotson's discourses, rephrasing them only slightly before delivering them from his pulpit. And prior to 1723 only two colonial made the trip to England for ordination. Every other minister who served a Virginia parish before then had been raised in Europe, most in England or Scotland. The vast majority

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<sup>17</sup>Spurr, Restoration Church, pp. 305, 284.

had been educated at universities in the British Isles and were familiar with the Restoration Church's theology.<sup>18</sup> With the exception of its peculiar institutional structure and the problems associated with the colonists' dispersed settlements, Virginia's Church during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries differed little from the English Church, especially in its theological premises.

The diminished importance of doctrine also reflected the conditions under which Virginia's Church developed between 1607 and the 1650s. During this period, Christianity in general had defined Virginians against their Indian neighbors, and the colony's leaders had stressed the outward marks of English civility rather than Christian living based on a prior faith in Christ. Common sense had guided this process. No matter what their theological preferences, as Europeans and Christians Virginians had more in common with each other than with the natives who lived nearby. In addition, by the latter seventeenth century, there were few Roman Catholics or dissenters living in Virginia who might have challenged the accepted orthodoxy and thereby forced churchmen to

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<sup>18</sup>Intellectual Life in the Colonial South, II, pp. 580-581; Francis Nicholson to Committee on Trade and Plantations, March 6, 1703/04, Public Records Office, Colonial Office (henceforth cited as PRO CO) 5/1314, ff. 303-304, (VCRP); William Fitzhugh to Edward Hayward, July 21, 1698, in William Fitzhugh, p. 363; Joan R. Gundersen, "The Search for Good Men: Recruiting Ministers in Colonial Virginia," Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church XLVIII (December 1979), p. 455.

sharpen their doctrinal definitions. Colonial ministers, then, were able to focus most of their attentions on the "Practical Part of Religion[, it] being the Chief part of our Pastoral Care."<sup>19</sup>

On both sides of the Atlantic, Anglican Christians thought mere belief in religious dogma denoted an insufficient faith. Knowledge, one Virginian wrote, "is not an active quality, but only a means to direct a man in working. God reckons not so much our audience as our obedience."<sup>20</sup> Sometime Archbishop of Canterbury John Tillotson, the English divine whose published sermons colonial ministers borrowed from most frequently when composing their own, mocked the idea that "the Gospel is all promises, and our part is only to believe and embrace them."<sup>21</sup> The mark of a good Christian was neither right doctrine nor a command of theological subtleties, but a life adorned with good morals. John Page told his son: "A good life is inseparable from a good faith--yea, a good faith is a good life."<sup>22</sup> James Blair frequently preached

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<sup>19</sup>James Blair, I, p. ii.

<sup>20</sup>Page, p. 168.

<sup>21</sup>John Tillotson, I, p. 496. See also George Keith, Power of the Gospel, p. 12; Spurr, Restoration Church, pp. 279-330, esp. pp. 284-286; Joan Rezner Gundersen, "The Anglican Ministry in Virginia, 1723-1776: A Study of a Social Class" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1972), pp. 180-181.

<sup>22</sup>Page, p. 160; see also Page, p. 210.



on this theme. Religion was not about theological controversies or a "prying into adorable Mysteries" beyond comprehension by the human mind. The disciples, after all, had been ignorant fishermen and were hardly capable of mastering subtle theology. Nor did religion constitute an "Art of Arguing and Disputing; it is not a Jargon or Rhapsody of religious Cant, such as taking hold of Christ, or rolling our selves upon Christ; it is not a speculative Science which ends all in Faith and Knowledge; but it is a practical Science, which directly teaches a good Life."<sup>23</sup> Ministers occasionally suggested that the Sermon on the Mount with its teachings on behavior contained everything necessary for salvation.<sup>24</sup>

With the exception of a few fundamental articles, doctrine played little part in Virginia's religious life. Jesus Christ, of course, was the Son of God, whose birth, life, death, and resurrection pointed the way to salvation. The prayer book proclaimed this doctrine, and

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<sup>23</sup>James Blair, V, p. 374; see also James Blair, II, p. 173; Paxton, sermon no. 10, "Of Christs Resurrectn," p. 7; George Keith, The Doctrine of the Holy Apostles and Prophets the Foundation of the Church of Christ (Boston, 1702), p. 3; Deuel Pead, Jesus is God: or, The Deity of Jesus Christ Vindicated. Being an Abstract of some Sermons Preach'd in the Parish Church of St. James Clerkenwell (London, 1694), p. 43. Pead had served Christ Church Parish in Middlesex County, Virginia, for nearly a decade before returning to England.

<sup>24</sup>James Blair, V, p. 364; Paxton, sermon no. 3, "Of Anger," p. 1; Tillotson, I, p. 447.

ministers alluded to it in their sermons.<sup>25</sup> Virginians seemed particularly convinced of the resurrection and referred to it often in their letters. Lay people also reflected the church's teachings in the preambles of their wills. In her last testament, Elizabeth Read of York Parish asserted that "being penitent and sorey from the bottome of my heart for my sines past . . . I give and Committ my soule unto Almighty God my Saviour and Redemer in whome and by the meritts of Jesus Crist I trust and believe assuredly to be saved."<sup>26</sup> Beyond this dogma, essentially a summary of the Apostles' Creed, Virginians meddled little with articles of faith. James Blair's view was typical: "Let us take Care to reserve our greatest Care and Industry for the Christian Morals, [for] . . . in the Great Day of Accounts, Holy Lives will be more enquired into, than Orthodox Opinions."<sup>27</sup> Nor did Virginians put much stock in ceremonial practices. In 1720 Robert Carter asserted that he was "of the Church of England way" and wanted his children raised as Anglicans.

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<sup>25</sup>Paxton, sermon no. 2, "Of the Resurrectn of Christ," passim, esp. pp. 5-6; see preambles to wills in York County Deeds. Orders, and Wills, I-X, passim; Secret Diary of William Byrd, p. xxviii; Page, pp. 136-138.

<sup>26</sup>York County, Deeds, Orders, and Wills, VII, f. 257.

<sup>27</sup>James Blair, II, p. 216; see also James Blair, II, p. 173; III, p. 240; Maude H. Woodfin, ed., Marion Tinling, trans., Another Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1739-1741 (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1942), p. 280.

Ceremony, however, had little place in Carter's conception of religion: "Practical godliness is the substance-- [ceremonies] are but the shell."<sup>28</sup> The lack of interest in doctrinal or ceremonial matters and the resulting emphasis on behavior underscored the church's pastoral function and its understanding of soteriology. If salvation depended upon living a good life, then a minister's (or parent's) role was to teach that duty.

Anglicans in Virginia, then, conceived of religion as a form of duty, and this idea guided the way in which they ordered their relationships with God. Sometimes they simply equated religion with virtue, often in simplistic terms that could be misleading to persons who did not share their understanding of religion, such as when James Blair preached that "Good Morality is Good Christianity."<sup>29</sup> William Byrd II offered one of the clearest explanations: "Religion is the Duty which every Reasonable Creature owes to God, the Creator and Supream Governor of the World."<sup>30</sup> When Virginians referred to religion in this way, they meant more than performance of

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<sup>28</sup>Robert Carter to William Dawkins, July 14, 1720, in Louis B. Wright, ed., Letters of Robert Carter, 1720-1727, The Commercial Interests of a Virginia Gentleman (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1940), p. 25.

<sup>29</sup>James Blair, II, p. 253.

<sup>30</sup>William Byrd, "A History of the Jews Before the Birth of Jesus," p. 1, Virginia Historical Society; see also William Byrd Commonplace Book, 1722-1732, p. 51, Virginia Historical Society; Page, pp. 183-195.

moral duties or some rationalist incarnation of virtue. Duty was a necessary facet of the Anglican believer's journey to heaven, a response to God undertaken in faith. Some ministers believed faith itself was a duty, and Byrd may have meant that himself, for his brief summary reflected the ideas preached from the colony's pulpits and available in the most popular religious books of the day. The Whole Duty of Man, a favorite devotional volume among Virginians from the 1660s until the end of the colonial period--rivalling the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer in popularity--stressed the duty of faith. Its title taken from Ecclesiastes 12.13, Richard Allestree's anonymously published work advised readers to "fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."<sup>31</sup>

Byrd based his view of the duties owed to God on his belief "that there is a God, eternal in his Duration, and infinite in his Perfection." Had he believed there was no God there would have been no reason to attempt to control one's passions, to confess one's sins, or to marvel at "his wise and mercifull Providence."<sup>32</sup> But God did exist. He was merciful and good; and He had sent "Christ into the World to bring us to Heaven." The proper and natural response to God's loving action was obedience, for

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<sup>31</sup>Spurr, Restoration Church, p. 282.

<sup>32</sup>"History of the Jews," p. 1.

Virginians believed obedience was "perfective of our Natures."<sup>33</sup> Mankind had been created in God's image, thus, men and women were to imitate God: "every man yt doth not imitate God but [acts] contrary to him, is so far unnatural because he acts contrary to his natural pattern & exemplar."<sup>34</sup> Duty, then, understood as a well-ordered life of prayer and obedience to God's laws, was the high mark of a person's earthly pilgrimage, the restoration of human nature as far as that was possible on earth.<sup>35</sup> To live such a life, like the sailor who did his duty in Blair's analogy, was natural and was what God expected.

Since Adam's fall, however, men and women had not been capable of the obedience God demanded. English Christians of the seventeenth century realized they were sinners and that more often than not their wicked ways fell short of a holy life. Yet they could comfort themselves with the knowledge that despite their many faults God was merciful and did not want his creatures to suffer eternal damnation. For this reason He had sent His son, Jesus Christ, into the world as a propitiation for the sins of mankind. Through the "Mediation of Christ,

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<sup>33</sup>James Blair, V, p. 203; IV, p. 148; Thomas Pender, The Divinity of the Scriptures, From Reason & External Circumstances (New York, 1728), p. 17.

<sup>34</sup>Paxton, sermon no. 6, "Of Imitating God," p. 2; see also Paxton, sermon no. 1, "Of the Son of God," p. 1; Pead, Jesus is God, p. 52.

<sup>35</sup>James Blair, V, p. 157; III, p. 236; II, p. 186.

the old impossible Condition of Perfect Obedience to the Law [of Moses] in all Points, which brought Condemnation to All Men," had been dispensed with.<sup>36</sup> God had replaced the Mosaic covenant with the New Testament's covenant of grace. Christ's death had pacified God's wrath toward humanity and granted "a title to eternal life" to all who accepted the Gospel's terms.<sup>37</sup> God offered the promise of eternal life to the whole world, not just to a select few whom He had predestined for heaven. John Page, a royalist who had emigrated to the colony during the English Civil War, offered one of the most creative arguments supporting this point of Anglican theology. Christ, the mediator between God and man, was born not in a "private house, but [at] an inn, which is open for all passengers," and in the "commonest place," a stable. Likewise, the savior's crucifixion had not taken place within the city walls, "but without the gate, to intimate that it was not an Altar of the Temple, but the world."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>James Blair, II, p. 189.

<sup>37</sup>Paxton, sermon no. 2, "Of the Ressurrectn of Christ," p. 6. See also Paxton, sermon no. 1, "Of the Son of God," p. 6; Page, pp. 126-129, 236-237.

<sup>38</sup>Page, pp. 141-142, 130. See also Paxton, sermon no. 1, "Of the Son of God," passim; sermon no. 11, "Of Salvation," esp. p. 7; James Blair, IV, p. 87; V, p. 301; Morgan Godwyn, Trade Preferr'd before Religion, and Christ Made to Give Place to Mammon (London, 1685), preface, p. 11, text, p. 33. There are two separate paginations to Godwyn's sermon.

Anglican soteriology affirmed that Christ had died to redeem the whole world, but universal redemption did not necessarily mean universal salvation. The way Anglicans in late seventeenth-century Virginia understood the process of working out one's salvation placed particular emphasis on human action. It demanded the obedience of which Blair, and Byrd, and other colonists had written.<sup>39</sup> One minister warned his congregation that the Gospel "does not bring Salvatn to all to whom it appears, not because it is insufficient, but because [men and women] do not accept of its offers . . . upon its terms by hearkening to its exhortatns & complying wt its commands."<sup>40</sup> "We are workers together with God," George Keith preached, "we must not be meerly passive . . . as so many Sticks and Stones . . . but following after him as he gently leads and draws us."<sup>41</sup> Men and women played a role on gaining their salvation; it was not a free gift to the elect. And it encompassed more than a presumptuous solifidianism, an idea Virginians distrusted. James Blair believed the doctrines of "God's absolute and irrespsective Election and Reprobation," and of irresistible grace were "dangerous Principles" because they discounted mankind's need to obey

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<sup>39</sup>Paxton, sermon no. 1, "Of the Son of God," p. 6. See also John Clayton, Christ Crucified; the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God (London, 1706), p. 5.

<sup>40</sup>Paxton, sermon no. 11, "Of Salvation," p. 3.

<sup>41</sup>Keith, Power of the Gospel, p. 12.

the Gospel precepts and enticed sinners to embrace antinomianism. These irresponsible doctrines tempted men and women to "lye easie till some wonderful Motion of God's Spirit" transformed them into new creations, rather than to undergo the painful work of "Prayers and vigorous Endeavours" which gave men and women hope for divine assistance in furthering their journeys to heaven.<sup>42</sup>

For Virginians, faith was a necessary but insufficient part of a Christian's pilgrimage to heaven. By faith men and women acknowledged God's omnipotence and Christ's saving death, but unless they responded to this knowledge with a sincere repentance their faith meant little. Every time an Anglican recited morning or evening prayer--at public worship, within the family, or privately in one's closet--God again called the world to repent. Through the words of the liturgy's invitation to worship taken from the prophet Ezekiel and cited as the epigraph of this chapter, God called all people to lead lives of repentance, to forsake their transgressions, and to amend their lives. "If you welcome repentance, knocking at your door from God, it shall knock at God's door of mercy for

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<sup>42</sup>James Blair, V, pp. 300-302. For the differences between Anglicans and Puritans on the role of mankind in the process of salvation, see Hambrick-Stowe, p. 60, where he states that for the Puritans, God not only leads but takes men and women by the hand--a subtle but telling difference.



you."<sup>43</sup> Through the sacrifice of His son "God meets us half way," Robert Paxton preached to his congregation at Kecoughtan, "He is reconciled to us, It remains only yt we be reconciled to him yt we hearken to the message from him & be reconciled to God."<sup>44</sup> Repentance allowed men and women the opportunity to benefit from Christ's death and to apply the covenant of grace to themselves. Virginians knew that their sins, like those of the rest of mankind, had crucified their savior and left him dead in the tomb; only repentance could "reviveth him to us."<sup>45</sup>

When Anglicans spoke of religion as a duty, they used language as best they could to explain the temporal manifestations of a life transformed through repentance. Thus a good life was a good faith for faith was only good if it showed itself in works. Unlike conversion, which Nonconformists often described in evocative terms--"laying hold of Christ," "getting into Christ," and "rolling themselves upon Christ"--there was a certain poverty to the language of repentance.<sup>46</sup> Tears could express this disposition of the soul: "for Tears have an audible and

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<sup>43</sup>Page, p. 51. See also Paxton, sermon no. 8, "Of Repentance," p. 8; Pead, Jesus is God, p. 101.

<sup>44</sup>Paxton, sermon no. 11, "Of Salvation," p. 6.

<sup>45</sup>Paxton, sermon no. 2, "The Resurrectn of Christ," p. 8. See also Page, p. v., "endeavor that Christ's death may become effectual to your soul."

<sup>46</sup>Spurr, Restoration Church, p. 320.

significant Voice. . . . God hears their secret, and special Voice, and in our weeping reads our Humility and Repentance."<sup>47</sup> But like moral behavior, tears too were externals, and such "outward testimonies" were poor reflections of a broken and contrite heart. How otherwise to explain repentance than by pointing to its outward results? For without evidence of a good life, what people then called amendment of life, repentance remained incomplete.<sup>48</sup> Preaching on a Fast Day at Westover Parish, the Reverend Peter Fontaine explained what many Virginians took for granted: "We should prosecute our repentance & Good resolutions to the actual reformation of our lives, for in this repentance doth mainly consist."<sup>49</sup> Mere sorrow for past sins without amendment did not mark a penitential life.<sup>50</sup>

By placing such emphasis on repentance and human action, Virginians effectively moved mankind to the center of the theological world. At the very least they heightened the role of human endeavor in the economy of

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<sup>47</sup>Deuel Pead, A Practical Discourse Upon the Death of Our Late Gracious Queen (London, 1695), p. 15.

<sup>48</sup>Paxton, sermon no. 8, "Of Repentance," p.3.

<sup>49</sup>Peter Fontaine, "A Sermon preached 10 May 1727," p. 6., Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library. The phrase is also in John Tillotson, III, p. 195. Most of Fontaine's sermon is a reworked version of a Fast Day discourse preached by Tillotson.

<sup>50</sup>Paxton, sermon no. 8, "Of Repentance," p. 6; James Blair, II, p. 167.

salvation. Yet to suggest that Virginians and their Restoration colleagues practiced moralism--placing unwarranted confidence in external duties rather than in faith and God's grace--is inaccurate.<sup>51</sup> The theology of Anglicans in colonial Virginia tended to muddle the traditional sequence of justification and sanctification, suggesting on its surface that good works could merit salvation. But Virginians were not Pelagians, they did not believe that men and women could take the initial steps toward salvation unassisted by divine grace.

Reformed Protestantism had traditionally taught that God justified men as sinners without prior merit or effort on the part of individuals. By faith, the sinner "appropriated" God's promise of forgiveness demonstrated in Christ's atoning death. John Page could therefore write: "Justification by blood."<sup>52</sup> Sanctification, or "growth in grace through a life of obedience and good works" culminating in glory hereafter, had its basis in

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<sup>51</sup>For this interpretation of Anglicanism in Virginia and Restoration England, see C. FitzSimons Allison, The Rise of Moralism: The Proclamation of the Gospel From Hooker to Baxter (Wilton, CN: Morehouse Publishing, 1966); Joan Reznor Gundersen, "The Anglican Ministry in Virginia, 1723-1776: A Study of a Social Class" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1972), pp. 180-181, 188; Jan Lewis, The Pursuit of Happiness: Family and Values in Jefferson's Virginia (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 45-47, 212-214. For a good rebuttal to the moralist position, see Spurr, Restoration Church, p. 298.

<sup>52</sup>Page, p. 40.

justification. Although related, sanctification followed justification and the two were distinct events.<sup>53</sup>

The soteriology espoused in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Virginia, like that of the Restoration Church of England, conflated this chronology. God had justified sinners through the resurrection of Christ and had thereby invited all mankind to partake of the covenant of grace. "In his resurrectn we [are] acquitted & restored to grace."<sup>54</sup> Through Christ's death and resurrection God had communicated to all men a measure of grace adequate to overcome the effects of original sin and to help them recognize the truth of the Gospel.<sup>55</sup> It remained, however, for men and women to take hold of the "title to eternal life" exhibited to them by responding with their own faith and repentance.<sup>56</sup> For without repentance there could be no justification. This sequence could suggest that sanctification occurred simultaneously with or preceded justification, thus making human action

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<sup>53</sup>Spurr, Restoration Church, pp. 298-299; Sermons or Homilies, Appointed to be Read in Churches in the Time of Queen Elizabeth, of Famous Memory (New York, 1815), p. 19, (cited hereafter as Book of Homilies).

<sup>54</sup>Paxton, sermon no. 2, "The Resurrectn of Christ," p. 6.

<sup>55</sup>Paxton, sermon no. 11, "Of Salvation," p. 2; Blair, IV, p.87; Keith, Power of the Gospel, pp. 2-6.

<sup>56</sup>Paxton, sermon no. 2, "The Resurrectn of Christ," p. 6; Keith, Power of the Gospel, p. 7; John Frederick Woolverton, Colonial Anglicanism in North America (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), p. 184.

the means whereby God accepted persons as righteous. But to Virginians, God was always the original actor.<sup>57</sup> In technical language which Virginians rarely used, but readily implied, God's prevenient or "preventing grace" called mankind to repent; His operative or "assisting grace" requested in prayer made men and women capable of repentance and the good works that provided evidence of a life transformed by grace.<sup>58</sup> Through the general propagation of the Gospel, and more particularly in the sacrament of baptism, God had given enough grace "even to the worst of Men, to make them inexcusable" if they did not accept His offer of salvation.<sup>59</sup> John Page best captured the paradox at the heart of Anglican theology in colonial Virginia: "You shall be saved for your faith, not for your works; but for such a faith as is without works you shall never be saved. Works are disjoined from the act of justifying, not from the person justified."<sup>60</sup>

In short, the colonists embraced the doctrine of the conditional covenant. God had satisfied his side of the covenant by offering mankind justification through the

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<sup>57</sup>Blair, IV, p. 148.

<sup>58</sup>Spurr, Restoration Church, p. 300; Page, p. 25; Paxton, sermon no. 8, "Of Repentance," p. 7; sermon no. 2, p. 5.

<sup>59</sup>Blair, IV, p. 87; Paxton, sermon no. 11, "Of Salvation," p. 2; Page, p. 35.

<sup>60</sup>Page, p. 237.

death of His son. By faith and repentance, demonstrated through a holy life of conformity to God's laws, men and women met their part of the covenant's obligations. The post-communion prayer in the Book of Common Prayer addressed the cooperation necessary between God and man in working out an individual's salvation: "assist us with thy grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in."<sup>61</sup> Through the gift of grace, freely given to those who asked this of Him in prayer, God would cooperate with man in the economy of salvation. Just as a good crop required both seasonable weather and the farmer's diligence, "there must be a due Concurrence of these two, the Grace of God, and our own Endeavours, to produce a due Obedience" to the Gospel precepts.<sup>62</sup> One historian, in attempting to dramatize the differences between Puritan and Roman Catholic spirituality, suggested that whereas Puritans thought in terms of their having been elected by God, Roman Catholics believed that they had elected God.<sup>63</sup> Anglicans in Virginia found a path midway between these courses. The colonists believed that they cooperated with God in order to ensure their prior election by God.

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<sup>61</sup>Service for the Lord's Supper, Book of Common Prayer, n.p.

<sup>62</sup>Blair, V, p. 315.

<sup>63</sup>Hambrick-Stowe, p. 45.

Robert Paxton could therefore preach: "Every one who perishes for want of mercy is his own murtherer & lost because he refused his own mercy."<sup>64</sup>

Anglicans in Virginia focused their attention on the pastoral task of preventing the faithful from committing spiritual suicide by failing to repent and amend. Ministers preached of this duty, devotional literature recommended it, parents introduced their children to this truth by teaching them the church catechism, and condemned criminals urged the crowds gathered to witness their executions to "repent now, and continue repenting so long as you have an hour to live." In 1678, one young indentured servant who had been sentenced to death for murdering his master and mistress admonished the crowds to make their "Election sure" by forsaking their wicked paths: "Leave off sinning, else God will leave you off."<sup>65</sup> God also took part in the pastoral work of calling Virginians to repent, periodically sending epidemics and plagues of insects upon the colony as reminders to the settlers that they were sinners who needed to amend their lives. The colonists responded to God's judgments, at least in the short run. One Virginian believed more people attended church on days set aside for

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<sup>64</sup>Paxton, sermon no. 8, "Of Repentance," p. 8.

<sup>65</sup>Vain Prodigal Life, pp. 39-40.

humiliation and fasting than for worship services each Sunday.<sup>66</sup>

Repentance was central to the spiritual pilgrimage of Anglicans, in many ways as important a part of their journey to God as conversion was to Nonconformists--a necessary part of the spiritual life without which all other religious exercises were of little value. Virginians occasionally equated repentance and conversion, thereby suggesting that repentance marked the onset of an active spiritual life in which the individual consciously began moving toward heaven. James Blair likened it to the "Pangs and Throws of the new Birth," and Robert Paxton called repentance the "change of life."<sup>67</sup> The intention to repent, then, indicated a person's acceptance of God's offer of salvation, a decision to become a Christian by choice rather than by birth.

Yet Virginians did not view repentance as a mechanical round of sin, sorrow, and brief amendment repeated day after day.<sup>68</sup> Such a cycle reflected too closely what Anglicans believed was the Roman Catholic sacrament of penance, brief contrition followed by the

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<sup>66</sup>Peter Fontaine sermon; Secret Diary of William Byrd, May 18, 1709, p. 36; Paxton sermon no. 23, "A Fast Day Sermon."

<sup>67</sup>Blair, I, p. 104; Paxton, sermon no. 8, "Of Repentance," p. 7. See also Tillotson, I, p. 479.

<sup>68</sup>Blair, II, p. 167; IV, p. 15.



mumbled words of a priest and penitents were free to begin the cycle again without formally turning from their sins and thus without amending their lives.<sup>69</sup> For the same reason, ministers and devotional guides warned the faithful to avoid putting off their repentance until they lay upon their death beds. Delaying so long left no opportunity for amendment of life, and a sick bed repentance often proceeded from the wrong motives, fear of judgment rather than love of God.<sup>70</sup> "It is a most desperate madness for Men to defer it till" they approached death warned The Whole Duty of Man.<sup>71</sup> Nor was the repentance God demanded accomplished at one time; it was a process which continued throughout a lifetime. James Blair called it "an habitual Temper of the Mind and Course of Life."<sup>72</sup>

Repentance, then, represented the essential reorientation of an individual's life. Despite the necessity of an amended life as evidence and the emphasis ministers placed on outward behavior, the process of repentance more accurately described an internal change

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<sup>69</sup>Blair, V, pp. 302, 427.

<sup>70</sup>Blair, II, p. 167; IV, p. 31; V, pp. 357-358; Paxton sermon no. 8, "Of Repentance," p. 5; John Tillotson in Spurr, Restoration Church, p. 293.

<sup>71</sup>[Richard Allestree], The Whole Duty of Man (London, 1714 [orig. publ. 1658]), pp. 121-122.

<sup>72</sup>Blair, I, p. 96.

within the believer's heart or mind (Virginians did not present a consistent anthropology) which then resulted in a life that increasingly conformed to God's laws. "The inner Man of the Heart, is the chief Thing that God aims to govern," for "like the main spring in a clock, the heart animates and directs all a person's thoughts and motions. "As this main Spring of the Heart goes, the Man thinks, contrives, speaks and acts."<sup>73</sup> Virginians frequently used the pilgrimage motif to express this shift in direction. Preaching on Christ's admonition in Matthew's Gospel, "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," James Blair suggested that the disposition of the heart determined the port toward which a person sailed.<sup>74</sup>

The heart's love also dictated the object which impressed itself upon the eyes. "Heavenly Treasures are fitted for our Heaven-born Souls," Blair told his Bruton Parish congregation, thereby noting man's natural end, "the more good we do with an Eye to Heaven, the more heavenly minded shall we prove, and the more directly shall we steer our Course to Heaven."<sup>75</sup> Men and women may have been formed from the dust, but they had been founded

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<sup>73</sup>Blair, II, p. 332. See also Page, pp. 40-55; and Pead. Jesus is God, p. 35.

<sup>74</sup>Blair, IV, p. 332.

<sup>75</sup>Blair, IV, pp. 225, 230. See also Blair, III, p. 344.

from heaven and were thus naturally inclined to return to God. Focusing one's eyes upon God was a metaphor indicating that the individual was properly oriented and moving towards the intended goal. In this, Virginians followed Augustine's belief that "the eye doth signify the intent . . . wherewith a man doth a thing."<sup>76</sup> To set God before one's eyes was both indicative of a well-ordered heart and to embark on the path leading to heaven. Felony indictments often illustrated this point in a negative way by noting the generally accepted explanation for the defendants' crimes: "not haveing the fear of God before thine eyes but being moved by the instigation of the devil." Lacking the proper orientation, men and women strayed from the precepts contained in the Gospels, threatening their own salvation and disrupting the polity through acts such as theft, murder, and suicide.<sup>77</sup> Robert Paxton urged his parishioners to follow a different course: "This yrfor is an essential part of our relign, to set God always befor our eyes as the great pattern of

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<sup>76</sup>Book of Homilies, p. 39. See also Blair, III, p. 5.

<sup>77</sup>Warren M. Billings, "Pleading, Procedure, and Practice: The Meaning of Due Process of Law in Seventeenth-Century Virginia," Journal of Southern History XLVII (November 1981), p. 580. See also York County, Deeds, Orders, and Wills, I-X, passim. For ministers encouraging criminals to confess their crimes, see Papers of Francis Howard, Lord Howard to Philadelphia Pelham Howard, [May 1], 1684, p. 90.

our lives & actns." So oriented, obedience to God's laws provided evidence of a person's faith.<sup>78</sup>

An active, sincere, and regular devotional life was the key to what Virginians called "evangelical obedience." Separated from the devotional practice of the church, the new theological views advanced by ministers in Virginia and Restoration England could understandably suggest moralism or a mere performance of moral duties. Many, though by no means all, Nonconformists interpreted Anglican theology in this way, as have most historians both of Virginia's Church and the Restoration Church of England. Virginians, however, did not bother with closely reasoned arguments about technical points of theology such as when justification or sanctification took place. Even well-educated laymen confused these concepts. In A Deed of Gift John Page asserted, "Justification by blood, Sanctification by water," thereby implying that the sacrament of baptism conferred sanctification. Yet his entire volume argued against this view. Page repeatedly contended that without repentance and good works there could be no salvation. Well-versed in the writings of the apostolic fathers, Page understood clearly the practical side of Anglican soteriology but retained only a vague

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<sup>78</sup>Paxton, sermon no. 6, "Of Imitating God," p. 3. See also Blair, IV, p. 47: "If we set his Glory before our Eyes, as the ultimate Aim and Design of all our Actions, we shall be delivered from all base sinister Designs and Intentions."

grasp of technical theological definitions. In this regard, he was likely typical of most Virginians.<sup>79</sup>

When viewed as a pastoral strategy within the context of the devotional life, rather than as a rigorous systematic theology, Anglican soteriology falls into a logical and ordered sequence. And that is how it should be understood, for Anglicans in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries thought of religion more as a practice than as a belief. Virginians accepted the concept of universal redemption, and this fit well with an ecclesiology which defined the church broadly, including all members of the polity. The object for ministers, then, was neither to call the elect out of the world into a pure church nor to prepare individuals for their conversion by God, but to encourage all Christians to accept God's offer of salvation. By making use of the means of grace--"Reading and Hearing the Scriptures, Prayer, and Meditation, with the Use of the Sacraments"--all people could benefit from Christ's death.<sup>80</sup> In short, the devotional life provided the necessary link between faith and repentance. Prayer and spiritual discipline could turn nominal Christians into professing Christians.

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<sup>79</sup>Page, p. 84. Much of Page's book was copied from Richard Allestree's The Whole Duty of Man, a typical example of the works of the "holy living" school.

<sup>80</sup>Blair, II, p. 171. See also Blair, II, 61, 64, and passim.

Robert Paxton assured his parishioners that God would cooperate with all people who truly desired to amend their lives and called upon Him in prayer: "the grace & assistance of God sincerely Sought is never to be despaired of."<sup>81</sup>

Ministers and devotional manuals urged Virginians to take up a life of prayer and devotion. It was a constant refrain from the colony's pulpits. Anglicans believed God was as unimpressed by works without faith as He was by faith without works. Without prayer, the best of duties was but "dull morality" and worthless in the eyes of God.<sup>82</sup> James Blair recommended "Prayer, Meditation, and Contemplation" both as a means of grace and as a form of "Vigilance against Temptations."<sup>83</sup> On another occasion he said: "There is nothing like the constant Use of Prayer for keeping the Mind in a good Frame and Temper; nothing draws down the continually needful supplies of Grace like it; nothing does better oil the Wheels of Action."<sup>84</sup> George Keith employed nautical imagery to make his point about the importance of the devotional life, comparing the Bible to a compass and Christ's life to a map that could

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<sup>81</sup>Paxton, sermon no. 7, "Of fortitude and Resolution," p. 7.

<sup>82</sup>Blair, III, p. 362.

<sup>83</sup>Blair, I, p. 101. See also Blair, III, p. 346.

<sup>84</sup>Blair, III, p. 346.

guide the faithful on their voyage. Prayer entreated God to send the winds of divine influence to fill the sails of human affections.<sup>85</sup> The devotional life offered the means of grace which helped individuals order their lives. Repeated and habitual acts of piety, especially prayer or "visits to the throne of Grace," helped the faithful keep God before their eyes. In short, Anglicans believed that the devotional life shaped the moral life and thus served as the link between faith and salvation.<sup>86</sup>

In public as well as in private, the Book of Common Prayer was likely the greatest single influence shaping Virginians' devotional lives. Next to the Bible, it was the most common volume in the colonists' libraries.<sup>87</sup> Its liturgy repeated weekly at public worship and read each day privately by many individuals, the prayer book served as a symbol of orthodoxy in Virginia, providing the colonists with a source of unity and a means of asserting their religious identity. Use of the Book of Common Prayer may have been the one constant among the liturgical behaviors of seventeenth-century churchmen in the colony. By the late 1600s and early 1700s, however, both Governor Howard of Effingham and the Reverend Hugh Jones, a

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<sup>85</sup>Keith, Power of the Gospel, p. 17.

<sup>86</sup>Blair, III, p. 346; Spurr, Restoration Church, p. 334, where the point is hinted at.

<sup>87</sup>Davis, Intellectual Life, II, p. 580.

minister recently arrived in Virginia from England, complained that although the colony's ministers followed the prescribed forms in the prayer book, they frequently omitted or altered "parts of the liturgy." Such deviations were not unknown in Restoration England, even in the most "conformable" of parishes.<sup>88</sup> Due to the length of certain parts of the service, particularly the Athanasian Creed, some colonial governors occasionally encouraged ministers to shorten the liturgy.

Whether abbreviated or not, the set liturgies of the Book of Common Prayer heard by those people who attended church Sunday after Sunday were intended to work a gradual transformation in the lives of individuals.<sup>89</sup> American historians, however, have been reluctant to appreciate this function of the Church of England's prayer book. Typically they emphasize the alleged dullness of a set liturgy. Dell Upton recently described Anglican worship in colonial Virginia as "predictable and boring." Yet the purpose of divine service was neither entertainment nor

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<sup>88</sup>Hugh Jones, The Present State of Virginia, From Whence is Inferred a Short View of Maryland and North Carolina (London, 1724), ed., Richard L. Morton (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956), p. 98; Proclamation concerning ministers and lay readers, in Papers of Francis Howard, July 1686, pp. 260-262; Dell Upton, Holy Things and Profane: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia (New York: MIT Press, 1986), p. 9; Spurr, Restoration Church, pp. 187-188.

<sup>89</sup>Spurr, Restoration Church, p 334.



excitement but edification and spiritual formation.<sup>90</sup> What historians have found "predictable and boring" churchmen thought of as a source of structure. In the "Tempestuous Sea" of life, tossed by passions and distractions, the liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer was exceptional in its constancy. The Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer were repeated at each office, and through the appointed lessons the Bible was read through each year. The liturgy in fact echoed the Bible, many of its prayers crafted from the words of Holy Scripture. Day after day, week after week, it gave voice to the same themes, calling the faithful to repentance at every service and offering them the means of grace.<sup>91</sup> One minister wrote that the prayer book "fully comprehended" everything necessary for edification in this life and "Eternal Salvation hereafter."<sup>92</sup>

Both as a devotional work and as a service book, the Book of Common Prayer aimed less at conversion than at helping the presumably converted maintain and deepen their faith. It served as the liturgy for a people who were

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<sup>90</sup>Upton, pp. 9, 3-4. Rhys Isaac comes closest to appreciating the function of the Church of England's set liturgies. See Rhys Isaac, The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), pp. 63-64.

<sup>91</sup>Spurr, Restoration Church, p. 334

<sup>92</sup>William Beveridge, A Sermon Concerning the Excellency and Usefulness of the Common Prayer (Boston, 1735, 29th edition, first published London, 1681), p. 2.

Christians because they were members of the English commonwealth.<sup>93</sup> William Beveridge--a late seventeenth-century minister and some-time bishop of St. Asaph--explained in his discourse, A Sermon Concerning the Excellency and Usefulness of the Common Prayer, that prayer book worship was designed to form as well as to order the lives of English Christians. This process, however, occurred slowly over time. It represented a gradual action instead of a sudden and dramatic change like that experienced by the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus. Since the set prayers worked this transformation through sound rather than through the more immediate agency of sight, necessity demanded the frequent repetition of the same words and phrases.<sup>94</sup> Beveridge, in fact, based his argument on the elusive epistemology of the spoken word:

In order to our being Edified, so as to be made better and holier, whensoever we meet together upon a Religious account, it is necessary that the same good and holy Things be always inculcated and pressed upon us after one and the same manner. For we cannot but all find by our own Experience, how difficult it is to fasten any thing that is truly good, either upon our selves or others, and that it is rarely, if ever, effected without frequent Repetitions of it.

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<sup>93</sup>Spurr, Restoration Church, p. 109. See also Richard Hooker quoted in chapter 2; and "Draft of Representation of the Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts to King George I," June 3, 1715, Fulham Palace Papers, Vol. XXXVI, ff. 42-43, (VCRP).

<sup>94</sup>Horton Davies, Worship and Theology in England, 5 Vols., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961-1975), II, p. 196; See also Blair, IV, p. 9.

Whatsoever good things we hear only once, or now and then, though perhaps upon the hearing of them, they may swim for a while in our Brains, yet they seldom sink down into our Hearts, so as to move and sway the Affections, as it is necessary they should do, in order to our being Edified by them. Whereas by a Set Form of Publick Devotions rightly composed, as we are continually put in mind of all things necessary for us to know and do, so that it is always done by the same Words and Expressions, which by their constant use will imprint themselves so firmly in our Minds, that . . . they will still occur upon all occasions; which cannot but be very much for our Christian Edification.<sup>95</sup>

Divine worship following the rites of the prayer book was intended to grasp an individual's affections, thereby swaying the person toward living a holy life. Not that this occurred simply by attending the offices each day or each week. Individuals had to participate willingly in the service by opening their minds to the words they would hear, thus allowing the liturgy to bring their affections into the right frame and temper.<sup>96</sup> For what an individual heard was fleeting, lasting for but a moment then passing away. Repeatedly using the same set brief forms, however, allowed the faithful to "recollect" their prayers, or in Beveridge's words, "to look over our Prayers again, either in a Book, or in our Minds, where they are imprinted."<sup>97</sup> Thus spoken prayers over time gained the epistemological

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<sup>95</sup>Beveridge, pp. 7-8. Also quoted in Isaac, p. 64, and Davies, III, pp. 26-27.

<sup>96</sup>Beveridge, pp. 17, 21-23, 39.

<sup>97</sup>Beveridge, p. 11.

immediacy of sight for those who opened their minds to the words repeated each week.<sup>98</sup>

In theory, then, the set liturgies in the Book of Common Prayer were to help form the souls of Virginians. The exhortation that followed the opening sentence of scripture in the offices of morning and evening prayer explained the purpose of divine service. The congregation rendered God thanks for His blessings, praised Him, heard His holy word, and asked of Him "those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul."<sup>99</sup> Rightly understood, the liturgy of the prayer book represented a public and communal form of spiritual discipline for a people whose ethnic origin marked them as Christian. Upon the mere accident of their English birth or upon their unconscious admission to the church as infants at baptism, the Book of Common Prayer attempted to mold nominally Christian people into active and professing Christians. Through the habitual performance of the same actions each week, the liturgy of the Book of Common

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<sup>98</sup>Some Anglican apologists argued that brief collects or "arrow-like prayers," required less time than the long prayers of the Puritans, and therefore ran less risk of losing the hearers' attention. James Blair believed short prayers addressed the infirmities of human nature more directly than longer ones. See Davies, II, p. 212; and Blair, IV, p. 9.

<sup>99</sup>Beveridge, p. 21. See also the offices in the Book of Common Prayer.

Prayer evoked and strengthened the appropriate emotions within an individual.<sup>100</sup>

Unlike the colony's laws which threatened the body with physical torments and the mind with fears of painful deaths, the prayer book aimed at the affections. It attempted to transform people from within rather than to restrain them from without. Week after week, and in the same phrases, the Book of Common Prayer put those assembled for divine worship "in mind, both of what we ought, and what we ought not to do, that we may be saved."<sup>101</sup> In short, through the accretion of time, active participation in the prayer life of the established church could lead an individual to practice self-discipline for the sake of salvation. Like the process of conversion, the means by which prayer transformed an individual was a mysterious one, and it transcended rational analysis. To the Reverend John Clayton, minister of Virginia's James City Parish during the 1680s, a clergyman could not effect this change on his own. He could preach, read prayers, exhort people to practice holy living, and urge them to repent and amend their lives. In the end, God and the individual had to cooperate in the process of Christian formation, or as Clayton termed the

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<sup>100</sup>Davies, II, pp. 199, 528.

<sup>101</sup>Beveridge, p. 17.

process: "leaving it to God and their own Souls."<sup>102</sup>

Anglican theology following the Restoration brought mankind to the center of the theological world, but it also placed greater responsibilities on the laity as they attempted to work out their salvation.

Like the Restoration Church of England, Virginia's Church encouraged the faithful to practice "holy living" for the sake of salvation. This term, much abused by historians, essentially denoted the existence of a lively faith and a godly life grounded on that faith."<sup>103</sup> It provided evidence of the internal reorientation of the heart which had occurred as a result of repentance. John Page warned his son to beware of a dry doing of duty separate from faith: "External actions adorn our professions, where grace and goodness seasons them; but where the juice and vigor of religion is not settled in the soul, a man is but like a goodly heart-shaken oak, whose beauty will turn into rottenness, and his end will be the fire."<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup>John Clayton, The Defence of a Sermon, Preach'd upon the Receiving into the Communion of the Church of England, the Honourable Sir Terence Mac-Mahon Baronet and Christopher Dunn: Converts From the Church of Rome (Dublin, 1701), 2d page of preface, there is no pagination.

<sup>103</sup>Spurr, Restoration Church, p. 308.

<sup>104</sup>Page, pp. 246-247. See also Clayton, Christ Crucified, p. 3.

Ministers and devotional manuals stressed the importance of Christian perfection and encouraged individuals to work towards resembling God as children do their parents.<sup>105</sup> Underlying this idea was the familiar concept that only like can know like. As Anglicans progressed on their journeys to heaven and made use of the means of grace, they were expected ever more closely "to imitate [God] in all his imitable perfections."<sup>106</sup> Virginians realized that sinless obedience to God's precepts was impossible to fallen men and women, and they noted that God accepted a "sincere Obedience" rather than a "sinless Obedience."<sup>107</sup> Robert Paxton assured his parishioners that God accepted a "faithful tho imperfect obedience[,] an obedience suitable to mans naturall infirmity & frailty & proportionable to the assistances afforded to him."<sup>108</sup> Yet these acknowledgements excused neither the colonists nor Anglicans in Restoration England from trying more closely to imitate God.

In furthering this process, Anglicans in Virginia did not restrict their spiritual regimen to the public liturgy

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<sup>105</sup>Paxton, sermon no. 6, "Of Imitating God," p. 1; Blair, IV, p. 32.

<sup>106</sup>Blair, IV, p. 32. See also Page, p. 175.

<sup>107</sup>George Keith, The Great Necessity and Use of the Holy Sacraments of Baptism and the Lords Supper (New York, 1704), p. 14. See also Blair, II, p. 189.

<sup>108</sup>Paxton, sermon no. 11, "Of Salvation," p. 6; Spurr, Restoration Church, pp. 306-307.

and the sacred space of the parish church. Public worship did not constitute the whole of the devotional life. Regular attendance at divine service offered the means of grace to those gathered at the parish church, but Virginians never viewed public worship as an end in itself. Although they thought highly of the prayer book liturgy, Anglicans in the colony did not believe that God could only be approached in the church building or through the set forms of the Book of Common Prayer. God had not restricted the means of grace to the formal institutions of the church. Nor did Virginians believe public worship was necessarily the most important part of the spiritual journey. Clergy and laity alike often viewed public worship as preparation for private devotions. James Maury told his congregation that "Solitude is prerequisite to prayer" and recommended that persons interested in serious spiritual discipline follow Christ's example and retire from the presence of others when they attended to their prayers.<sup>109</sup> And James Blair admitted, "such is the Nature of Speech, that as it tires and flags the Spirit, so it dissipates a Spirit of Devotion, which as it is fed by Meditation, so it is spent by many Words and Talking."<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup>James Maury manuscript sermons, "2d sermon on Mat. vi.6," pp. 2-5, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library.

<sup>110</sup>Blair, IV, p. 9.



Naturally, then, the commissary advocated short sermons.<sup>111</sup>

Virginians broke with their colleagues in the Restoration and early Georgian Church on the role of public worship. English divines treated private devotions as a form of preparation for the Church's public worship.<sup>112</sup> With the exception of private prayers and spiritual exercises prior to the Lord's Supper, however, Virginians reversed this sequence, placing the greater emphasis on private devotions rather than on public and communal prayer. James Blair suggested that through the habitual practice of daily private prayer and self-examination "a Man becomes his own Reprover and Monitor, and from daily Experience, both of his own Good and Bad Actions, learns to improve himself for the future."<sup>113</sup> In a discourse on repentance Robert Paxton urged his parishioners to reprove themselves for their sins, a practice made more necessary since "the decay of publick & judicall chastisment hath left us more in our own hands."<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup>Blair, I, p. v.

<sup>112</sup>John Spurr, "The Church, the Societies and the Moral Revolution of 1688," in John Walsh, Colin Haydon, and Stephen Taylor, eds., The Church of England c.1689-c.1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 138; Gregory, p. 73.

<sup>113</sup>Blair, II, pp. 341-342.

<sup>114</sup>Paxton, sermon no. 8, "Of Repentance," p. 1.

In all likelihood, this pattern reflected the necessity imposed on Virginians by the colony's "occasions." If the public worship of the Church was to provide the focal point for the piety of the faithful, the Church had to provide regular opportunities for the devotion it encouraged. But relatively few ministers served Virginia's Church, the Lord's Supper was usually celebrated just three or four times each year, and divine service was held only on Sundays, a practice ministers new to the colony sometimes complained about.<sup>115</sup> Each of these factors weakened the impact of public worship, as did the fact that clerks appointed to read the liturgy in the minister's absence often showed up at the wrong time. In comparison, by the mid-1680s nearly thirty churches in London offered the prayer book offices daily, and many churches had begun to celebrate the eucharist weekly or monthly. Deuel Pead of Christ Church Parish in Middlesex County celebrated the eucharist each month during the 1680s, and like some Anglican ministers in England, he preached a preparation sermon "on the Satterday in the afternoone afore the Giveing the Comunion." Despite

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<sup>115</sup>John Lang to Bishop Edmund Gibson, February 7, 1725/26, Vol. XII, Fulham Palace Papers, ff. 97-98, (VCRP). See also Francis Nicholson to Lucy Burwell, [1701], Francis Nicholson Papers, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

Pead's efforts, the practice remained uncommon in Virginia.<sup>116</sup>

Virginia's Church could not sustain such a rigorous public spiritual regimen. Praying the offices in public each day made little sense throughout much of the colony because the parishes were so large. Anglican parishes in colonial Virginia ranged in size from eighty to two thousand square miles. Not counting the three largest parishes, each averaged approximately 370 square miles.<sup>117</sup> Not surprisingly, Anglicans in Virginia practiced much of their piety at home, away from the sacred space of the institutional church. Colonial ministers encouraged the laity to use the means of grace in private. Most sermons preached in the colony were how-to discourses on repentance urging the duty of private prayer and explaining its necessity. Preaching thus served the faithful as a calm exhortation to action, to keep God before their eyes, and to deepen their spiritual lives. John Page warned his son not to "narrow up" God's service in "hearing," for sermons and public prayers did not exhaust his religious duty: "The word preached brings in knowledge, and knowledge rectifies devotion. So that

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<sup>116</sup>Spurr, "The Church, the Societies and the Moral Revolution of 1688," pp. 138-139; Davis, Intellectual Life, II, p. 717; C.G. Chamberlayne, ed., The Vestry Book of Christ Church Parish, Middlesex County, Virginia, 1663-1767 (Richmond: Old Dominion Press, 1927), p. 44.

<sup>117</sup>Perry, I, pp. 261-344.

preaching is to beget your praying, to instruct you to praise and worship God."<sup>118</sup> Prayer and other devotional exercises were therefore duties to be undertaken within the family and in private, in addition to regular attendance at divine worship.

Reading the Bible or a devotional book, family prayers, and secret prayer were all considered means of grace that individuals could make use of away from the institutional church, in the family or in private. Ministers, parents, and devotional guides also encouraged self-examination, although unlike the Puritans in New England, Virginians did not believe the practice conferred grace.<sup>119</sup> Thus, the faithful could continue the process of growing in grace and moving toward Christian perfection outside the formal structures of the institutional church. For many royalist immigrants to the colony this may have been a familiar way of life, for during the Interregnum their religious expressions had retreated into the family or the private conscience.<sup>120</sup>

Private devotions served much the same function as public worship and formed part of the church's pastoral function. Reading the Bible or other religious books, self-examination, and secret prayer, all directed the

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<sup>118</sup>Page, p. 169.

<sup>119</sup>Hambrick-Stowe, p. 170.

<sup>120</sup>Spurr, Restoration Church, p. 22.

faithful toward God. These exercises were designed to help Virginians forge spiritual resolutions and then to act upon them, to order their lives in keeping with the divine pattern. Bible reading was widely encouraged. John Page urged his son to read the scriptures frequently and offered him the counsel of St. Ambrose: "Eat, and eat daily of this heavenly manna." The scriptures provided an "exact map of the heavenly Canaan, drawn by the pen of the Holy Ghost."<sup>121</sup> In the stories of Christ's earthly pilgrimage the Bible offered a model of the Christian life. Virginians viewed Christ as the divine teacher of virtue who had perfectly combined faith and works, thereby restoring human nature and demonstrating what men and women could become. They learned their duties through His model, and then tried to apply His teachings to their lives. "Examples are far better than Precepts," James Blair preached of Christ's life contained in the Gospels, "the perfect Pattern of all Virtue . . . gives a very great Light into our Duty."<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup>Page, pp. 12-14.

<sup>122</sup>Blair, II, 64. See also Blair, II, 166; Pead, Jesus is God, pp. 81-82. For an example of Biblical precepts in action see Robert Carter to Messrs. Micajah and Richard Perry, July 22, 1720, in Louis B. Wright, ed., Letters of Robert Carter, 1720-1727, The Commercial Interests of a Virginia Gentleman (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1940), pp. 34-35: "My son, I find, is on the stool of repentance. . . . He begs of me to forget his past extravagances and desires I may not insist upon a particular account from him, and that he will give me no more occasion of future complaints. Upon these terms I am

In addition to the Bible, Virginians turned to a variety of other religious works to guide their devotions. Philip Ludwell kept a "poor little old prayer book" worn from use in his closet to help order his private spiritual exercises.<sup>123</sup> Another colonist believed that for family or private devotions one "cannot make a better choice than of the church prayers."<sup>124</sup> A number of English devotional writings also helped Virginians direct their journey to heaven. And the colonists were likely as practical in their purchase of books as in their theology. Books were bought in order to be used.<sup>125</sup> The Practice of Piety by Puritan bishop Lewis Bayly, The Whole Duty of Man, likely written by Richard Allestree, a royalist minister, and A Weeks Preparation Towards a Worthy Receiving of the Lords Supper were all popular in the colony. Although written by a range of authors representing nearly the entire theological spectrum, the religious volumes owned by colonial Virginians shared a common desire to encourage

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willing to shut up with him. Thus you see I am no stranger to the story of the Gospel." For Christ as an exemplar of unjust suffering for Christians to imitate, see William Berkeley to [King's Commissioners for Virginia], April 23, 1677, Public Records Office, Colonial Office 1/40, f. 62, (VCRP).

<sup>123</sup>Philip Ludwell to Philip Ludwell II, December 20, 1707, Lee Family Papers, section 5, Virginia Historical Society.

<sup>124</sup>Page, p. 216. See also Whole Duty of Man, p. 109.

<sup>125</sup>Davis, Intellectual Life, II, p. 493.

what one historian has called "the consecrated life of the laity." These works advocated what came to be called "holy living," and like the Bible, they urged Virginians to imitate Christ. Underlying much English devotional literature was the idea that piety and godliness were not restricted to the clergy. Lay Christians could and should adorn their lives with faith and virtue.<sup>126</sup>

Family prayers too formed part of the Anglican spiritual regimen. Virginia's ministers recommended this exercise, as did the English clergy, especially for those people who were unable to attend public worship regularly.<sup>127</sup> John Page urged his son to take up the practice of family devotions, not only as a means of grace but also as an example to his children. Since Virginians believed that praying for a person conferred grace upon that individual, habitual family prayer was also a way for husbands and wives mutually to support each other in their spiritual lives.<sup>128</sup> When he came to Virginia as the colony's governor in 1683/84, Lord Howard of Effingham's wife, Philadelphia Pelham Howard, did not immediately accompany him. While apart, however, the couple continued

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<sup>126</sup>Davis, Intellectual Life, II, p. 580; Louis Wright, "Pious Reading in Colonial Virginia," Journal of Southern History VI (August 1940), p. 385; Spurr, Restoration Church, p. 371. For specific ownership, see York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills, Books I-X, passim.

<sup>127</sup>Gregory, p. 74.

<sup>128</sup>Page, pp. 189, 192-193.

their practice of offering daily prayers for each other. Lord Howard seemed especially concerned that they both pray for each other when they received the sacrament: "pray remember me particularly on Easter day in your prayers, or any other holy time that our prayers may meet at the Throne of Grace for Each other."<sup>129</sup>

Besides public prayers within the family, Anglicans were expected to engage in the more serious work of private prayer, a duty "to be often performed, by none, seldomer than morning and evening."<sup>130</sup> William Byrd II followed this practice throughout his life, even on those days when he attended public worship at the local parish church. It was not exceptional when Byrd prayed but when he missed his prayers for some reason.<sup>131</sup> Like family prayer and public worship, private prayer included praise, petition, confession, and thanksgiving. In their daily prayers Virginians thanked God for His temporal blessings or begged Him to be merciful to the colony, at the same time acknowledging His omnipotence. "I comit you and yors to the divine tuition," and "the planter (if [God say

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<sup>129</sup>Lord Howard to Philadelphia Pelham Howard, February 10, 1684, Papers of Francis Howard, p. 46, and passim.

<sup>130</sup>Page, p. 217. See also Lord Howard to Philadelphia Pelham Howard, March 21-22, 1684, Papers of Francis Howard, p. 73, Whole Duty of Man, p. 110.

<sup>131</sup>On this point, see Byrd's diaries, passim.



Amen] designs) a great crop" were typical sentiments.<sup>132</sup>

The more intense work of private devotion transcended both texts and forms. The colony's ministers advised Virginians to set aside words and to approach God in meditation or "mental prayer," for prayer was the "Language of the Heart to God."<sup>133</sup> By meditating upon God's goodness, His providences, or His mercy in sending Jesus Christ to redeem mankind, men and women focused their eyes upon the deity and thus oriented themselves for the journey to heaven.<sup>134</sup> These exercises brought the faithful "Face to Face" with God. So too did their daily observations of the natural world, which some colonists viewed as a type of spiritual exercise. In its design and its revelation of God's providences, creation pointed to an omnipotent and merciful God. James Blair told his congregation: "There are many wonderful things might be learned from the Works of Creation . . . for they bear the

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<sup>132</sup>John Catlett to Thomas Catlett, April 1, 1664, misc. manuscripts, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library; William Byrd I to [Perry & Lane], March 29, 1685, Marion Tinling, ed., The Correspondence of the Three William Byrds of Westover, Virginia, 1684-1776, 2 Vols. (Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 1977), I, p. 30. The examples could easily be multiplied, but see Philip Ludwell to Philip Ludwell II, February 9, 1705/06, Lee Family Papers, Section 4, Virginia Historical Society; Francis Nicholson to Lucy Burwell, January 7, 1702/03, Francis Nicholson Papers, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library.

<sup>133</sup>Blair, IV, pp. 9-10, 132; III, p. 359; V, p. 170.

<sup>134</sup>Blair, I, pp. 203, 206; V, pp. 170-171.

Marks and consequently the Proofs of God's Wisdom."<sup>135</sup>

Members of the laity also understood the world this way.

Thomas Glover marvelled that God could have created a beast as terrible as the rattlesnake and placed a rattle at the end of its tail, "which seemeth to me a peculiar providence of God to warn people to avoid the danger."<sup>136</sup>

William Byrd II believed God had filled creation with many fascinating objects as a way of encouraging mankind to investigate and learn more about the natural world.<sup>137</sup>

Other colonists embraced illnesses, bad weather, and plagues of insects as calls to repentance. Virginians believed that, understood properly, the entire world pointed toward God. Their beliefs approximated those of Thomas Traherne, a seventeenth-century Anglican minister and poet. "Would one think it possible for a man to

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<sup>135</sup>Blair, IV, pp. 324-325. See also Blair, I, p. 206; IV, pp. 50-51, 96, 100.

<sup>136</sup>Thomas Glover, An Account of Virginia, its Scituation, Temperature, Productions, Inhabitants and their manner of planting and ordering Tobacco (London: Royal Society, 1676), p. 20, Earl Gregg Swem Special Collections, College of William and Mary. See also Glover's manuscript edition in which he suggests that the great hurricane of 1667 "was a divine punishment laid on the Virginians because they had broken their promises not to plant tobacco," Royal Society of London, Classified Papers, 1660-1740, VII (1), a xerox copy is on file at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library as part of the VCRP.

<sup>137</sup>William Byrd II to Francis Otway, [ca. August 1737], Correspondence of the Three William Byrds, II, p. 453; William Byrd II to [Sir Hans Sloane], April 10, 1741, Ibid., II, p. 585.

delight in gauderies like the butterfly, and neglect the Heavens?"<sup>138</sup> The colonists' prose lacked the felicity of Traherne's, but the sentiments were the same: look closely at even the trivial, and you will find God.

Despite the emphasis Anglicans in Virginia placed on human effort in the economy of salvation, the focus of their devotional lives both in public and in private remained on God. Over and over He called them to repent, and His was the pattern they endeavored to imitate. They did not find humility in meticulous self-examination or in bemoaning the human condition, but in acknowledging God's goodness and striving to grow in grace and Christian perfection. Rather than meditating upon their sins, Virginians tended to focus their attentions on God. Although they practiced self-examination, no extant sermon delivered by an Anglican minister in the colony suggested that the faithful keep diaries of their religious pilgrimages or record their sins in detail. "Confession is required, not so much to sin past . . . but chiefly in reference to sin for the time to come, that thereby being more sensible of the offence, we may be both enraged and engaged against it."<sup>139</sup> Virginians did not keep a diary of their spiritual lives in a book, but in their lives.

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<sup>138</sup>Thomas Traherne, Centuries (Wilton, CN: Morehouse Publishing, 1985), p. 16.

<sup>139</sup>Page, p. 92.

The devotional life shaped the moral life, it provided the link between faith and repentance, between piety and living a holy life. Commissary Blair therefore recommended that Virginians heed the Pauline injunction to pray without ceasing.<sup>140</sup> Throughout the day, as a means of spiritual maintenance and the "keeping out of Evil-Thoughts," he suggested the use of mental prayer and brief ejaculatory prayers--either with the heart or with the lips.<sup>141</sup> Ejaculatory prayer was similar to the Hindu "OM" and among Christians was a popular form of mystical prayer involving the frequent repetition of brief phrases. St. Augustine's "O Beauty of all things Beautiful," St. Francis' "My God, My God," and the Jesus Prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me," are all examples from the Christian tradition.<sup>142</sup> Blair believed this form of prayer should become as common in the spiritual life "as Breathing is in the Natural."<sup>143</sup> He also urged the faithful to pray the Psalms as an antidote

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<sup>140</sup>Blair, V, p. 166; IV, p. 112. The Biblical reference is I Thess. 5.17.

<sup>141</sup>Blair, II, p. 344; V, pp. 170-171; IV, p. 10.

<sup>142</sup>Hambrick-Stowe, p. 184; F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone, eds., The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press), p. 738. Compare Blair's views with those in James Walsh, ed., The Cloud of Unknowing (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1981).

<sup>143</sup>Blair, II, p. 344; V, pp. 170-171. See also Whole Duty of Man, pp. 110, 434-436.

to temptation. Blair found Psalm 136 particularly useful, and its refrain of "for his mercy endureth forever" fit the pattern of brief ejaculatory prayer which the commissary found so important.<sup>144</sup> By keeping mindful of God through habitual devotion, individuals drew down measures of grace to help them combat temptations and kept their eyes focused on God as they continued on the course to heaven.

Like other Christian theologies, Anglicanism in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Virginia tried to assist the faithful along the path to heaven. Although Anglican piety addressed the whole person by cultivating what James Blair called "the practice of the divine presence," Virginians demonstrated their piety most vividly through external behaviors. Such actions did not indicate the widespread acceptance of rationalism, moralism, or the ascendancy of faith over works. Doing one's duty was a statement of faith and the product of a sincere devotional life. Unlike many Nonconformists, Anglicans did not seek in their earthly pilgrimages a mystical union with Christ the Bridegroom of the soul. Rather, they thought of Christ as a teacher of virtue, and with the assistance of God's grace they endeavored to imitate the divine pattern. William Byrd II could therefore define blasphemy as living a life of "Disorder."

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<sup>144</sup>Blair, II, p. 342; III, p. 239.

By so living, "instead of blessing his name, we are blaspheming it, & blotting out his Image in our Souls."<sup>145</sup>

Virginians viewed the spiritual life as a process in which the faithful, through God's assistance, tried to replace their sinful habits with the habits of Christian virtue. They were fond of citing the parable of the talents to indicate that sincere Christians were expected to grow in grace and come ever closer to Christian perfection throughout a lifetime. Essentially, this was a process of becoming by doing. The habitual repetition of devotional behaviors strengthened an individual's relationship with God and led the growth in grace necessary to continue the work of repentance and amendment. One could discern the state of a person's soul by observing their actions. A life marked less and less by sin was one oriented toward God, while a life that continually reflected "a long train of sins" was evidence that the work of repentance had not yet begun.<sup>146</sup>

The performance of devotional duties not only helped individuals grow in grace and establish a religious identity. This had always been true of those who took on the disciplines of family and secret prayer. But by the end of the century it was becoming true of regular church

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<sup>145</sup>William Byrd Commonplace Book, p. 16.

<sup>146</sup>Tillotson, II, p. 31. The parable of the talents is in Matthew 25.14-30 and Luke 19.12-27.

attendance as well. In 1699 the House of Burgesses reduced the legal requirement for church attendance to once every two months, a distinct decrease in whatever coercive authority the institutional church still possessed. (The Burgesses expected Nonconformists to attend their licensed conventicles with the same frequency.)<sup>147</sup> The decision to attend public worship regularly and to engage in private spiritual exercises, then, had largely become a matter of personal choice. A form of voluntarism was emerging within the structure of the institutional church, and it was being encouraged by colonial leaders. God had offered redemption to all men and women. To respond to His call, either by worshiping regularly at the parish church or by making use of the means of grace in private, was to begin the process of becoming a Christian by choice rather than by birth.

In light of the weakness of the colony's established church and the hindrances its ministers faced, books, family, and private devotions played a significant, perhaps magnified, role in the religious lives of colonial Virginians. The colony's "occasions" had forced Virginians to adapt their devotional practices, not to abandon them. For those who wished to make use of them, the means of grace still existed. Virginia's ministers

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<sup>147</sup>William Waller Hening, ed., The Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia . . . 13 Vols. (Richmond, 1809-1823), III, pp. 170-171.

realized their church's problems, and pragmatic clergymen actively encouraged forms of prayer that might potentially threaten the centrality of the institutional church. Despite the church's difficulties, the faithful were able to practice their piety and to continue their pilgrimage to heaven. Until 1740, dissenters were unable to challenge Virginia's Anglican Church. And although William Fitzhugh worried about the lack of "spirituall help & comfort" in Virginia, he also knew that a person could further her spiritual pilgrimage in the colony, even if the spiritual helps were not as readily available as some immigrants may have wished. He wrote his mother in 1698, thanking her for the gift of her "choice Bible," urging her to face a present illness with Christian patience and to see God's hand in it, and reporting that his sister, who also lived in Virginia, had "died a true penitent of the Church of England."<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>148</sup>William Fitzhugh to Mrs. Mary Fitzhugh, June 30, 1698, William Fitzhugh and His Chesapeake World, p. 358.



## CHAPTER 8

### FROM MYTH TO PERSUASION

" . . . to the end that the Church of Virginia may be furnish'd with a Seminary of Ministers of the Gospel."<sup>1</sup>  
Charter of the College of William and Mary, 1693

In 1701 a pamphlet written by an anonymous Virginian entitled An Essay Upon the Government of the English Plantations on the Continent of America was published in London. Signed self-consciously "By an American," the tract contributed to a growing debate over the economic and political relationship of colonies to the mother country within England's emerging colonial system. The author's primary interest was establishing in British North America what he called "a free Constitution of Government in the Plantations," and he mentioned religion only briefly. Yet his remarks on that subject reflected attitudes common among Virginians of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Although a supporter of the established church, he believed it was neither convenient nor practical to expect all the colony's citizens to worship according to the rites of the Church of England, and he discussed religion just so far as it contributed to the "Maintenance and Support of the Civil Government." Appeals for both liberty of conscience and

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Hartwell, James Blair, and Edward Chilton, The Present State of Virginia, and the College (London, 1727), ed. Hunter Dickinson Farish (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg, Inc., 1940), p. 72.

laws against profane and immoral behavior encompassed most of what the author had to say on this topic.

Denominational affiliation seemed to him a thing indifferent, for all Christian religions could help the state maintain order by teaching virtuous behavior. There the Essay placed its emphasis: "It is to be wish'd, that some Care be taken to instruct People well in Morality, that is, what all Perswasions either do, or pretend to desire."<sup>2</sup>

This was not the religion Captain John Smith and the English settlers had carried across the Atlantic Ocean in 1607. Gone is the militant national Protestantism which characterized England's ideology of colonization and sought to conquer a continent for God and king. Gone is the jealous Old Testament deity who blessed His chosen people for their daily worship of Him and sent judgments upon the colony to punish individual failures to abide by the Deuteronomic Code. Gone too is the insistence on religious unity and purity prevalent among the writings of ministers and propagandists who supported the colonization effort. This religion the first English settlers had not brought, but the colony had been moving toward this religion for almost ninety years.

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<sup>2</sup>An Essay Upon the Government of the English Plantations on the Continent of America (London, 1701), ed. Louis B. Wright (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1945), pp.ix, 20, 38-39, 23.

The national Protestantism of Elizabethan and early Stuart England was mythic. So too were the religions of other European nation-states. Mythic notions of religion established truths about national identity. They told stories of what was supposed to be true. When people looked at the larger world of European politics they thought of individual states and of denominations associated with each state. As Richard Hooker attempted to demonstrate through his analogy of "a figure triangular," the same independent group of Christians made up both a church and a commonwealth depending upon whether they were seen as a political society or as a political society which embraced true religion. The religion a nation professed became its public possession, distinguishing one people from another. People could speak of English Protestants and Spanish Roman Catholics: each nation existed through its belief in the true expression of the Christian Gospel.

Mythic religion gave meaning to the nation's collective being. It helped construct the polity internally and served as a symbol through which the polity interpreted the meaning of its existence. Early modern Europe had inherited from antiquity the classification of governments into the one, the few, and the many. And in religion, as in politics, the one was better than either the few or the many for it was less likely to breed

factions. Internal unity and harmony gave a measure of strength to the nation when it acted externally. A people bound together by Christian love, charity, and the mystical bonds of prayer, allowed the nation to better confront the enemies of God, who, naturally, were also the enemies of the state. The myth of national religious purity and of state churches that organized the polity's relationship with God was based on a fictional theology of hope. As a theological system explaining a nation's relationship with God, it prescribed the way authorities wanted the world to be rather than the world as it existed. These fictive theologies were also descriptive, telling citizens of one state that aggressive nations united by heretical beliefs opposed their own country. The descriptive facet of the myth only heightened the prescriptive imperative. And this whole way of thinking only made sense to people predisposed to think in those terms. To be born English was to be born Protestant as well. English Roman Catholics existed, but they were aberrations in nature, rebels against their own English natures.

Creating the mythic unity authorities wanted to exist became something of an obsession. Religious unity made nations strong and enabled states to carry out what they believed was God's work in the world, to become partners in furthering His design for history. Even in an enemy

one could admire this trait. Although he despised the Turks and thought the Brownists of Plymouth colony an arrogant sect, John Smith envied both groups for their religious unity and the strength of purpose it gave their societies. Religious mixture, on the other hand, led to impurity and weakness, and might draw God's judgments upon a people. God did not like faction, political or theological, and He judged it harshly.<sup>3</sup>

Coercion, test oaths, expulsions, and executions were all used by leaders to purify their nations of religious mixture. During the Spanish Inquisition Ferdinand and Isabella persecuted marranos, Protestants, and Muslims, by forcing conversions and expelling people who refused to conform to the state's religion. Rather than face increasing disabilities in their homeland, many Puritans fled England during the 1620s and 1630s. When French authorities repealed the Edict of Nantes in 1685, a measure which had guaranteed a degree of toleration to French Huguenots for nearly a century, thousands were forced into exile. And propagandists associated with the Virginia venture urged the colonists to allow neither

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<sup>3</sup>John Smith, Advertisements for the Unexperienced Planters of New England, or Any-Where (London, 1631), in Philip L. Barbour, ed., The Complete Works of Captain John Smith, 3 Vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), III, p. 296; John Smith, A True Relation . . . till the last returne (London, 1608), in Ibid., I, p. 33; William Symonds, Virginia, A Sermon Preached at White-Chapel (London, 1609; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1968), pp. 45-46.

Brownists nor Roman Catholics into the settlement. The embassy chapel question, settled just a few decades prior to the Jamestown voyage, shows how deeply ingrained the fear of mixture was in the mind of early modern Europe. The issue of what religion diplomats could practice in foreign lands had vexed European governments ever since nations adhering to different religions began exchanging ambassadors. Since an English diplomat to Spain, for example, resided on foreign soil, use of the Church of England's liturgy would have introduced heresy into Spanish territory. Just a few decades prior to the Jamestown voyage, European nations agreed to consider embassy chapels as the territory of the diplomat's home country. This legal fiction enabled European states to protect their myths of religious purity, of a mystical relationship between God, a people professing true religion, and the territory of a particular state. Mythic national religions born of the Reformation gave early modern Europe a means of organizing their world. They eschewed complexity and instead saw the world in simple dichotomies of good and evil.<sup>4</sup>

"An American" also believed that religion helped order the world, but he did not think a single state

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<sup>4</sup>Jon Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 12; Garrett Mattingly, Renaissance Diplomacy (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1964), pp. 242-244.

church any longer structured the polity's relationship with God. The Essay did not address prescriptive unity based on shared religious beliefs. The author, in fact, criticized for their arrogance religious groups that still held to the older view. In the colonies they controlled Puritans, whom he called Independents, and Quakers, he wrote, "abuse all Mankind that come among them, and are not for their Persuasion." And New York's various denominations oppressed each other in turn, depending upon which group held political influence at the moment. Against this background of contentious religious groups still attempting to establish in North America the mythic national religious purity common to Europe, "an American" implied that Virginia was different. Although Nonconformists there were few, the colony's Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Protestant dissenters, and "a greatly increasing" number of Quakers, got along in comparative harmony.<sup>5</sup>

Virginia, in fact, benefitted from Europe's continuing religious intolerance, and some leaders encouraged religious diversity. Many of the Huguenots banished from France in 1685 found homes in the colony. William Byrd II and a few other colonial leaders sponsored a settlement of French Calvinists at Manakin Town in 1701,

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<sup>5</sup>Essay, p. 22; Butler, p. 103. For a different view from that expressed here, see Butler, pp. 98-99.

even though the exiles' theological tenets likely differed from Byrd's own belief that "Compassion is inseparable from the Deity and seems to be an argument against the Eternity of future punishments." And shortly after William of Orange was proclaimed the joint-sovereign of England in 1688/89, William Fitzhugh, expecting the subsequent persecution of English papists, suggested that portions of Virginia become "a Refuge & sanctuary for Roman Catholicks." He had no doubts that "our Governmt. will give it all the Indulgences that can be reasonably required." Fitzhugh's proposal reflected ideas about religion that had been developing in Virginia for years: "Neither do I believe that persuasion will be hindred from settling any where in this Country [Virginia], especially [on the frontier], where being Christians they may secure us against the Heathen."<sup>6</sup>

By the end of the seventeenth century the new world created in Virginia had no place for Europe's mythic national religion. The concept of a state united by

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<sup>6</sup>Warren M. Billings, John E. Selby, and Thad W. Tate, Colonial Virginia: A History (White Plains, NY: KTO Press, 1986), p. 121; William Byrd Commonplace Book, p. 17, Virginia Historical Society; William Fitzhugh to Nicholas Hayward, April 1, 1689, in Richard Beale Davis, ed., William Fitzhugh and His Chesapeake World, 1676-1701 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), p. 250. The Huguenots at Manakin Town were also exempted from colonial laws prescribing the pay of ministers and were allowed to use their own methods. See William Waller Hening, ed., The Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia . . . 13 Vols. (Richmond, 1809-1823), III, p. 478.



religion under God was absent from the Essay's discussion. For the Essay's author, and for his fellow Virginians as well, religion had become a private persuasion rather than a public possession. To be sure, the Anglican Church remained the colony's established church, and all subjects were expected to pay taxes for its support. But that should not obscure the fact that the Church of England in Virginia had become merely the established church rather than a colony-wide or national church. Quakers, Catholics, Nonconformists, and members of the Church of England were all in the colony to stay. Anglicans and the far less numerous Quakers actively proselytized among the populace, distributing devotional literature and occasionally taking part in formal theological disputations as methods of persuading people to become professing Christians.

By accepting religion as a private persuasion, Virginians acknowledged the world as it existed. As a matter of statecraft, however, this recognition did not necessarily make the world any easier to deal with. James Blair made the common sense observation that only persons who believed in fantasies could expect different religious groups to agree on all points of doctrine and practice. Blair's response to the situation was charity rather than coercion. Heresies and schisms, he declared, were not to be "extirpated with Fire and Faggot, by all the Methods of

Cruelty and Oppression." The commissary welcomed disputations and discussions of religious opinions by people of different denominations, so long as these were "done in a friendly and peaceable Manner, and with a Design to find out the Truth." Preaching on the beatitude blessed are the peacemakers, which he thought contained the Savior's teachings on civil peace, Blair outlined the colony's emerging commitment to religious toleration: "if ever we Mind to cement into one Body, as our common Christianity obliges us . . . we must learn to be Friends of Truth and Virtue and Goodness, wherever we can find them, and to follow Peace with all good Men of whatsoever Denomination." Virginians were moving towards a new understanding of the Christian state, one emphasizing what Christians of various denominations shared in common instead of the differences replacing them. New Testament charity was replacing Old Testament notions of religious purity as the value which organized the polity.<sup>7</sup>

Charity toward other religions and support for Biblical standards of morality formed the basis of the colony's religious life in James Blair's Virginia. If members of different denominations could agree on anything it was that Biblical morality was a good thing. Anglican

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<sup>7</sup>James Blair, Our Saviour's Divine Sermon on the Mount, Contain'd in the Vth, VIth, and VIIth Chapters of St. Mathew's Gospel, Explained; and the Practice of it Recommended in Divers Sermons and Discourses, 5 Vols. (London, 1722), IV, pp. 212-214, p. 223.

theology of the period, in fact, taught that a good life was evidence of a good faith. The anonymous Virginian who wrote the Essay avoided the question of unity which came from shared belief and encouraged religion because it taught people morality. His implication was not that good behavior pleased God, but that by teaching good behavior religion kept peace within the polity. This is what Virginians meant when they said "God be thanked [we] are in a peaceable state, and Intirely well quieted," or other words that expressed the same idea. Rather than dividing the world between those who professed true religion and those who adhered to false doctrine, Virginians by the end of the seventeenth century thought in terms of those who were Christians and those who were not. As long as they tolerated people professing other beliefs, good Christians made good citizens.<sup>8</sup>

Individuals who breached Christian charity by physical or verbal abuse of other Christians, thus disturbing public order, were often rebuked by the authorities. Virginians' persecution of the Quakers in the early 1660s was not based on their theology, but, as historian Rufus Jones has demonstrated, "on the supposition that they were a menace to the stability of

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<sup>8</sup>Nicholas Spencer to Lionel Jenkins, July 16, 1683, Public Records Office, Colonial Office 1/52, f. 54, (VCRP). See also Spencer to Jenkins PRO CO 1/61, f. 208, (VCRP): "I thank God . . . this . . . country enjoys peace and quiet, with fullness of liberty."

social life and government." Colonial leaders had good reason to suspect the Quakers of disorderly behavior. In England they disrupted services of the established church and threatened to use violence to bring in the millennium. Virginia's laws against the Quakers were passed in the years just after the Restoration, and considering the turmoil religious divisions had recently brought to England and the Quaker's confrontational attitude, the colony's statutes are understandable. Some Friends in Virginia were as disruptive as their English brethren. Once the Quakers renounced violence a few years after the Restoration, persecution of that sect declined in Virginia for all but those Friends who insisted on disturbing the peace. The Quakers summoned to the York County Court after 1662 had gone out of their way to invite trouble.<sup>9</sup>

Quakers were not the only people disciplined for their uncharitable outbursts. In 1688 Major Charles Scarborough, a justice of the peace in Accomack County, was presented for complaining that James II would "weare out the Church of England" by appointing Roman Catholics and Presbyterians to church offices. For his actions Scarborough was stripped of his commission as a justice. A case brought before Acting Governor Edmund Jennings and his Council in 1708 highlights the complexity of religious

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<sup>9</sup>Rufus Matthew Jones, The Quakers in the American Colonies (London: MacMillan and Co., 1911), p. 270; York County, Deeds, Orders, and Wills, Book III, f. 131.

attitudes in Blair's Virginia. Anne Walker of Kecoughtan filed a petition complaining that her husband, who was a Quaker, "violently" restrained her and the couples' children from attending worship at the parish church. The councillors ordered George Walker to let his wife attend the established church, but told Anne that her husband possessed "that authority over his Childr. that properly Belongs to Every Christian man: that is to Bring up his Childr. in whatever Christian Religion he may Be of that is priveliged By our Christian Laws." A social order based on patriarchy took precedence over religious conformity, although the councillors suggested that if Anne could prove her husband was not a Christian they would reverse their decision.<sup>10</sup>

The commonwealth of Christians envisioned in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Virginia had developed out of the colony's environment and the nature of the Church of England. Virginia's Anglican persuasion combined orthodox Restoration theology with the colony's own peculiar institutional arrangements. To argue, however, that this represented an institutional accommodation to the North American environment, old

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<sup>10</sup>H.R. McIlwaine, ed., Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia, June 11, 1680-June 22, 1699 (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1976), p. 98; "Old Kecoughtan," William and Mary Quarterly, 1st ser., IX (October 1900), p. 127; "Religious Differences Between George Walker and His Wife," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography XVI (July 1908), pp. 79-81.

matter is new forms, is not quite accurate. Although there were some elements of accommodation in the colony's religious structure, especially in the ways the colonists organized religious time, the nature of the Church of England suggests that the church that emerged in Virginia was the colony's creation. It was more Virginian than English, a fact which often disturbed immigrant clergy. King William III recognized this difference in law when he chartered the College of William and Mary to educate men for positions in the ministry of the "Church of Virginia."<sup>11</sup>

As John Spurr has recently shown, the Church of England must continually find its identity in each new situation. The Church possesses no "irreducible doctrinal core" and no denominational confession of faith; it is peculiarly dependent on its "occasions." In Spurr's words, the Anglican Church "must go out, armed only with her Bible, liturgy, Articles and traditions, to do battle with each new set of political, social and cultural circumstances." The church in Virginia was no different. It grew out of the mixed experiences of early Stuart England and the North American environment. Seen in this light, the Church of England in Virginia was an American creation. It was not a creation in the sense of mere accommodation, or as the Puritans in New England free to

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<sup>11</sup>Hartwell, Chilton, and Blair, p. 72.

do what they wished once free of England, but in terms of constructing an identity out of materials at once English and colonial.<sup>12</sup>

When the first settlers carved an English space out of Virginia's wilderness in 1607, the church that was to occupy that space was still searching for its identity. It comprised a diverse collection of English Protestant groups with incompatible theologies and competing notions of how church polity should be organized. Calvinists and anti-Calvinists were sure of only two things: the Church was English and it was not Roman Catholic. Beyond that simplistic worldview, most issues were still up for grabs. What identity the Church of England had, then, was born of hate and fear. Hating Roman Catholics did not tell English people who they were, it only told them what they were not. Virginia's colonists soon learned that they feared and hated Indians more than they did each other, whether they were Brownists, Puritans, Roman Catholics, and Anglicans. In Virginia, hating natives displaced the troublesome Old World question of sorting out which Europeans were Christians. The settlers in effect replaced Richard Hooker's myth that all English people were members of the Church of England with one of their own which divided the world between English Christians and

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<sup>12</sup>John Spurr, The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. xiii-xiv.

"savage" natives. Within fifteen years of first settlement, and as a result of an Indian uprising, Virginians were beginning to see themselves as a distinct people under God. And less than a decade after the massacre, they would be abandoned by the English Church.<sup>13</sup>

Some historians have argued that the English state church system failed in Virginia sometime during the first four decades of the eighteenth century. The European state church system had actually failed Virginians in 1629 when Charles I's Privy Council responded to Governor John Harvey's request for clergymen by declaring that they would not help bear the costs of sending ministers to the colony. "Voluntary ministers" willing to pay their own way could serve the colonists' spiritual needs. At its highest levels, the English government no longer considered religion an essential part of the nation's mission to the New World. The Privy Council's response initiated a half century of active indifference on the part of English authorities to the church in Virginia. Over sixty years would pass before Sir Edward Seymour, commenting on the college proposed to educate men for the colony's church, would allegedly state: "Souls! damn your Souls. Make Tobacco!" The attitude seems to have been

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<sup>13</sup>On the variety of religious groups in Elizabethan and early Stuart England see Peter Lake, Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterian and English Conformist Thought From Whitgift to Hooker (London: Allen & Unwin, 1988).



established by 1630, and it must be included among the colony's "occasions."<sup>14</sup>

Abandoned by the Church of England, Virginians began to develop what George M. Brydon has called "native institutions." Chief among these were vestries that became far more powerful than those in England. Following the dissolution of the Virginia Company, vestries, governors, and the Council, all contended for the right to select a parish's ministers. By 1643 the vestries had secured this right, a power they refused to surrender. In England the owner of the advowson--a feudal remnant of the control exercised by lords over churches on their lands--chose a candidate and then told the bishop. The bishop, in turn, confirmed the choice by admitting the minister to the parish. That done, the vestry presented their rector to the bishop for induction, or life tenure in that particular cure. Virginians were reluctant to take this last step, preferring instead to hire their ministers from year to year. Along with the absence of ecclesiastical courts and bishops, the vestries' resistance to induction

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<sup>14</sup>Butler, pp. 127-129; "Virginia in 1629 and 1630," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography XII (April 1900), pp. 369-372; Bruce, I, pp. 118-119; Parke Rouse, Jr., James Blair of Virginia (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), pp. 70-71.

became one of the distinguishing features of the Anglican persuasion in colonial Virginia.<sup>15</sup>

What Jon Butler has perhaps overenthusiastically termed an "Anglican renaissance" took place in Virginia between 1680 and 1740. New churches were constructed, a greater number of clergy served the colony's parishes, and, most important, Henry Compton, the bishop of London, established the commissary system to provide the Church of England in North America with a measure of guidance. The bishop's efforts came too late. By the 1680s, when Compton appointed the colony's first commissary, Virginians had been creating their own church for over fifty years. Again and again they had asked English authorities to send more ministers to the colony, and their requests had been turned away. At the first meeting of the General Assembly following the Restoration, the colonists took steps to remedy this problem. No more than twelve clergymen then served Virginia's 25,000 inhabitants. The Burgesses passed an act making provision for a "colledge" to train ministers." They also addressed

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<sup>15</sup>George MacLaren Brydon, Virginia's Mother Church and the Political Conditions Under Which it Grew, 2 Vols. (Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, 1947-1952), I, pp. 90-93; William H. Seiler, "The Anglican Parish in Virginia," in James Morton Smith, ed., Seventeenth-Century America: Essays in Colonial History (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), p. 133; Clive Raymond Hallman, Jr., "The Vestry as a Unit of Local Government in Colonial Virginia" (Ph.D. diss., University of Georgia, 1987), p. 223

a petition to Charles II asking him both to help find financial support for their proposed college and to encourage Oxford and Cambridge to send ministers to the colony. Nothing came of the proposals.<sup>16</sup>

Compton appointed James Blair, then the minister of Henrico Parish, to the commissariat in 1689. The new bureaucrat lost little time attempting to establish his own authority and traditional English forms of ecclesiastical order. Within months of receiving his appointment, Blair convened the clergy and announced a proposal to punish moral offenses in ecclesiastical courts. His plan reflected the passion for moral reform which swept England in the years after the accession of William and Mary. English ecclesiastical and political leaders thought the country had embraced vice and immorality. According to one writer, "the abuse of good wine and the use of bad women" had become "strangely epidemical." English ministers who had emigrated to the colony found that conditions were at least as bad if not worse in Virginia. "Drunkenness is a most common sin. . . . Rash swearing is too common. . . . Great numbers, I think, are more ashamed of Chastity and modesty, than of impudicity and Ribaldry." Moral reform or not, Virginians

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<sup>16</sup>Butler, p. 100; Edmund S. Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1975), p. 404; Hening, II, pp. 25, 30, 57.

had no intention of submitting to ecclesiastical discipline, and Blair's proposals died in the House of Burgesses.<sup>17</sup>

Virginians were defensive of the ecclesiastical structures that had emerged in the colony. Commissary Blair did not learn this lesson right away. Following the defeat of his proposed church courts, Blair advanced plans to increase clergy salaries and to provide ministers with greater security in their livings. Ministers' salaries in 1690 were set by law at 13,333 pounds of tobacco, a wage based on the shifting whims of the tobacco market rather than on a fixed scale in sterling. And the colonists' resistance to the English practice of induction proved a continuing bother to the clergy. Although the Burgesses reluctantly raised salaries to 16,000 pound of tobacco per year, the salary was neither fixed in sterling nor the graduated scale with an upper limit of 32,000 pounds of

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<sup>17</sup>Rouse, pp. 37-42, 141; Billings, Selby, and Tate, p. 141; Spurr, Restoration Church, p. 237; John Spurr, "The Church, the Societies and the Moral Revolution of 1688," in John Walsh, Colin Haydon, and Stephen Taylor, eds., The Church of England c.1689-c.1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 128; Alexander Forbes to Bishop Edmund Gibson, July 21, 1724, Fulham Palace Papers, Vol. XIII, ff. 27-30, (VCRP); John Lang to Bishop Edmund Gibson, February 7, 1725/26, Fulham Palace Papers, Vol. XII, ff. 97-98, (VCRP). For Warren M. Billings' argument that John Clayton served as Virginia's commissary before James Blair, see his Virginia's Viceroy: Their Majesties' Governor General: Francis Howard, Lord Howard of Effingham (Fairfax, VA: George Mason University Press, 1991), p. 80.

tobacco suggested by Blair. And the campaign for induction was a failure. Wrangling over clergy salaries continued throughout the colonial period, its elusive terms essentially unchanged. In 1759 William Sherlock, the bishop of London, had grown weary of the colonists' repeated violations of English laws regarding religion and the pay of ministers. "In some times," he wrote, such actions "would have been called Treason, and I do not know any other name for it in Our Law."<sup>18</sup>

Blair had lived in the colony for five years before his appointment as commissary, but he only gradually came to realize that Virginia's Church had not only developed in ways different from the church in England, but was also in many ways a fundamentally different institution. By 1703, however, this fact had become clear. He changed sides on the question of induction and in coming years used that issue to help topple royal governors who threatened the prerogatives of Virginia's ecclesiastical institutions. Blair openly preached against Erastianism, a radical step in the 1710s, and suggested that the colony's Church might be better off if it were separated from the state, an action which would have made Virginia's Anglican Church a truly private persuasion. The

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<sup>18</sup>Rouse, pp. 42-43; Billings, Selby, and Tate, p. 158; Seiler, p. 132; William Sherlock to the Lords Commissioners of Trade, June 14, 1759, Fulham Palace Papers, Vol. XIV, ff. 258-263, (VCRP).

theological tenets Blair proclaimed to his parishioners could have come from any of the volumes written by English divines that were in many colonists' libraries, but by the early eighteenth century the church polity and the Church he defended were less and less that of the Church of England as it existed across the Atlantic and more and more the Church Virginians had created in the New World.<sup>19</sup>

The chronic weakness of Virginia's Church does not necessarily imply that the colonists were indifferent to religion. Virginians, in fact, had been far more willing to ask for ministers than the English Church had been to send them. Their ways of doing things had kept the Church alive when English authorities did not seem to care. Virginians in the seventeenth century practiced English religion the only way the necessities imposed upon them by their environment and English neglect allowed. By the 1660s there was little pretense that Virginians were developing their own religious institutions. Unlike some statutes regarding the administration of justice and the colony's court system, no laws regarding religion in that period were prefaced by the phrase: "For the better conformity of the proceedings of the courts of this country to the lawes of England."

Immigrants in this period often recognized what they called irregularities more easily than native Virginians

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<sup>19</sup>Blair, II, p. 27; I, pp. 232, 239.

or those who had lived in the colony for many years. Ministers educated in England noticed: "The Parishioners are very defective being either averse from, or very regardless of committing themselves solely to the care of one Shepherd . . . so that Induction is very little practiced here." Nor did Virginia's Church regularly keep the traditional holy days of English national Protestantism: "the fifth of Novr and xxxth of January are little regarded." Royal governors noticed as well. Some of them noticed disturbing trends in matters other than religion. Lieutenant Governor Alexander Spotswood fought James Blair and the vestries over the issue of induction and lost, but that was a minor worry. In 1718 he reported to the colony's governor, the Earl of Orkney, that Virginia was ruled by "an ungenerous and Spitefull tribe of Men, so I'm confident the Kings Authority here will in a great measure be destroyed."<sup>20</sup>

In religion as well as on other facets of life, Virginians were becoming a people with their own interests. More by evolution than design they had created a Church establishment by the end of the century foreign to that of the Church of England as by law established in the mother country. It was no longer "as neer as may be"

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<sup>20</sup>Alexander Forbes to Bishop Edmund Gibson, July 21, 1724, Fulham Palace Papers, Vol. XIII, ff. 27-30, (VCRP); Alexander Spotswood to the Earl of Orkney, December 22, 1718, Public Records Office, Colonial Office 5/1340, f. 226, (VCRP).

to that institution. Virginians had cast off the myth of Europe's national churches. While settlers in other colonies and many Europeans still fought religious battles among themselves, Virginians directed their anger at political foes who shared their religious beliefs but not their political and economic goals. They might one day ask if their relationship with England was not a myth as well.



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Virginia: Myth, Persuasion, and the  
Creation of an American Identity

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March 14, 1995