

SKETCHES  
OF  
V I R G I N I A  
HISTORICAL  
AND  
B I O G R A P H I C A L .

BY THE  
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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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IT was in contemplation that the Sketches in this volume should be continued to a later period. Materials were procured in abundance; and a number of sketches prepared, viz: James Turner—Cary Allen—The old Churches and Church Yards in the Valley—List of all the members of Hanover Presbytery, from its formation to the year 1786, with short notices of many of the brethren—and Cornstalk, the Shawanee Chief. But the size of the volume forbids their insertion. The appearance of a second volume will depend upon the reception the present volume may meet with from an indulgent public.

ROMNEY, *Hampshire Co., Virginia,*  
December 1849.

SKETCHES  
OF  
VIRGINIA.

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INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

THERE have lived men, in Virginia, whose names are worthy of everlasting remembrance. There have been events that should never be forgotten. There have been principles avowed, whose influence will be felt through all time. There have been historians of Virginia—there have been volumes of Biography worthy of the writers, and of the men whose lives they record. The materials for these volumes have been found abundant, and are not yet exhausted. Mines of literary wealth remain untouched.

Virginia claims the veneration and love of her children. Situated in the medium latitude between the extremes of the Union, she borders on the Atlantic, and six of her sister States. In her bosom was the first of those colonies, that have increased and multiplied into the United States of America. As the mother of great men, and theatre of great events, in Church and State, all posterity will acknowledge her claims.

While political events have had their historians, and political men their biographers, the great struggle for *Religious Liberty* which preceded the Bill for Religious Freedom, has never been set forth. It has been but slightly referred to in the record of those very events over which it had a controlling influence. And while it remains unknown, Virginia, both past and present, remains unknown. The power of the religious principle in moulding the civil and political institutions in Virginia has not been appreciated. The law for religious freedom, in the Statute book, cannot be duly estimated, while the history of the men, that thought and laboured and suffered for the unrestrained liberty we enjoy, remains unwritten. This liberty was not the offspring of mere greatness of mind, or of political

“that it shall and may be lawful for any ordained minister of the gospel, in regular communion with any society of Christians, and every such minister is hereby authorized to celebrate the rites of matrimony according to the forms of the church to which he belongs;”—thus doing away all privilege, and precedence, of one denomination over another, in performing the marriage ceremony.

During the same session (October, 1784,) the committee, to whom had been committed various petitions, praying—that as all persons enjoyed the benefits of religion, all might be required to contribute to the expense of supporting some form of worship or other,—brought in a bill entitled—“*A bill establishing a provision for teachers of the Christian religion.*” The preamble was in the following words,—“Whereas the general diffusion of Christian knowledge hath a natural tendency to correct the morals of men, restrain their vices and preserve the peace of society; which cannot be effected without a competent provision for learned teachers, who may be thereby enabled to devote their time and attention to the duty of instructing such citizens as, from their circumstances and want of education cannot otherwise attain such knowledge; and it is judged such provision may be made by the legislature, without counteracting the liberal principle heretofore adopted and intended to be preserved, by abolishing all distinctions of pre-eminence amongst the different societies or communities of Christians.” This act passed to its third reading, and had the approbation and influence of Patrick Henry. Its provisions were without partiality to sect or people. All persons subject to taxes were, at the time of giving in their titheables, to declare to what denomination of Christians they would give their support, and to which they would appropriate the sums assessed on them. If they made no specification, the sums assessed were to be applied to the encouragement of seminaries of learning in the counties where such sums might arise. On its third reading, its progress was arrested, and the engrossed bill was sent out for the examination of the public, that expressions of opinion might be given, indicating the will of community, and the course to be pursued by the Legislature. The subject matter of the bill was widely and most earnestly discussed, and the opinion of the dissenters, and a large portion of community that were not properly called dissenters, conveyed to the Legislature in unequivocal language.

The Presbytery of Hanover met at Bethel in Augusta county, May 19th, 1785; present Rev. Messrs. John Todd, John Brown, William Graham, Archibald Scott, Edward Crawford, John B. Smith, William Ervin, Moses Hoge, Samuel

Houston, Samuel Carrick, and Samuel Shannon;—with elders James Henry, William McKee, John Tate, James Hogshead, William Yool, and Andrew Setlington. “A petition was presented to the Presbytery from the session of Augusta congregation, requesting an explication of the word ‘*liberal*’ as used in the Presbytery’s memorial of last fall; and also the motives and end of the Presbytery in sending it to the Assembly. Messrs. Hoge and Carrick are appointed a committee to prepare an answer to the above petition and report to Presbytery.”

“On motion, the opinion of Presbytery was taken,—whether they do approve of any kind of an assessment by the General Assembly for the support of religion. *Presbytery are unanimously against such a measure.*”

The question from Augusta congregation referred to that part of the memorial of the preceding fall which says—“Should it be thought necessary at present for the Assembly to exact this right of supporting religion in general by an assessment on all the people, we would wish it to be done on the most liberal plan.” Did this mean that they approved of an assessment,—or that they acquiesced,—or merely submitted; that they wished a large assessment,—or one that favoured all equally, without any distinction of sect? Whatever may have been the private opinions of any of the members in 1784 and previous, or the influence of that popular champion, Patrick Henry, over their judgments when first contemplating a subject of which he was the advocate,—now when the whole subject was thrown before the people, and the principles to govern the connexion of Church and State to be settled by a popular vote, the Presbytery in full session declared themselves unanimously against all assessments by the Legislature for the support of religion.

“On motion, the opinion of the Presbytery, and likewise of several members of different congregations present was taken, whether a General Convention of the Presbyterian body was expedient in our present circumstances. It was unanimously agreed to; and an invitation was accordingly signed by the ministers and several private members of the Presbyterian Church to the whole body to send representatives to a Convention proposed to be held at Bethel, on the 10th day of next August.”

The Convention met on the appointed day; and prepared, and sent forth a memorial, drawn principally by Rev. William Graham, rector of Liberty Hall, Lexington. This paper expresses the true feeling of the Presbyterian Church, after much private and public discussion.

## MEMORIAL.

*To the Honourable the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia,*

The Ministers and Lay Representatives of the Presbyterian Church in Virginia, assembled in Convention, beg leave to address you.

As citizens of the State, not so by accident but choice, and having willingly conformed to the system of civil policy adopted for our government, and defended it with the foremost at the risk of every thing dear to us, we feel ourselves deeply interested in all the measures of the Legislature.

When the late happy Revolution secured to us an exemption from British control, we hoped that the gloom of injustice and usurpation would have been forever dispelled by the cheering rays of liberty and independence. This inspired our hearts with resolution in the most distressful scenes of adversity and nerved our arm in the day of battle. But our hopes have since been overcast with apprehension when we found how slowly and unwillingly, ancient distinctions among the citizens on account of religious opinions were removed by the Legislature. For although the glaring partiality of obliging all denominations to support the one which had been the favourite of government, was pretty early withdrawn, yet an evident predilection in favour of that church, still subsisted in the acts of the Assembly. Peculiar distinctions and the honour of an important name, were still continued; and these are considered as equally partial and injurious with the ancient emoluments. Our apprehensions on account of the continuance of these, which could have no other effect than to produce jealous animosities, and unnecessary contentions among different parties, were increased when we found that they were tenaciously adhered to by government notwithstanding the remonstrances of several Christian societies. To increase the evil a manifest disposition has been shown by the State, to consider itself as possessed of supremacy in *spirituals*, as well as *temporals*; and our fears have been realized in certain proceedings of the General Assembly at their last sessions. The engrossed bill for establishing a provision for the teachers of the Christian religion and the act for incorporating the Protestant Episcopal Church, so far as it secures to that church, the churches, glebes, &c. procured at the expense of the whole community, are not only evidences of this, but of an impolitic partiality which we are sorry to have observed so long.

We therefore in the name of the Presbyterian Church in Virginia, beg leave to exercise our privilege as freemen in remonstrating against the former absolutely, and against the latter under the restrictions above expressed.

We oppose the Bill,

Because it is a departure from the proper line of legislation;

Because it is unnecessary, and inadequate to its professed end—impolitic, in many respects—and a direct violation of the Declaration of Rights.

The end of civil government is security to the temporal liberty and property of mankind, and to protect them in the free exercise of religion. Legislators are invested with powers from their constituents, for this purpose only; and their duty extends no farther. Religion is altogether personal, and the right of exercising it unalienable; and it is not, cannot, and ought not to be, resigned to the will of the society at large; and much less to the Legislature, which derives its authority wholly from the consent of the people, and is limited by the original intention of civil associations.

We never resigned to the control of government, our right of determining for ourselves, in this important article; and acting agreeably to the convictions of reason and conscience, in discharging our duty to our Creator. And therefore, it would be an unwarrantable stretch of prerogative, in the Legislature, to make laws concerning it, except for protection. And it would be a fatal symptom of abject slavery in us, were we to submit to the usurpation.

The Bill is also an unnecessary, and inadequate expedient for the end proposed. We are fully persuaded of the happy influence of Christianity upon the morals of men; but we have never known it, in the history of its progress, so effectual for this purpose, as when left to its native excellence and evidence to recommend it, under the all directing providence of God, and free from the intrusive hand of the civil magistrate. Its Divine Author did not think it necessary to render it dependent on earthly governments. And experience has shown, that this dependence, where it has been effected, has been an injury rather than an aid. It has introduced corruption among the teachers and professors of it, wherever it has been tried, for hundreds of years, and has been destructive of genuine morality, in pro-

portion to the zeal of the powers of this world, in arming it with the sanction of legal terrors, or inviting to its profession by honours and rewards.

It is urged, indeed, by the abettors of this bill, that it would be the means of cherishing religion and morality among the citizens. But it appears from fact, that these can be promoted only by the internal conviction of the mind, and its voluntary choice, which such establishments cannot effect.

We farther remonstrate against the bill as an impolitic measure :

It disgusts so large a proportion of citizens, that it would weaken the influence of government in other respects, and diffuse a spirit of opposition to the rightful exercise of constitutional authority, if enacted into a law :

It partially supposes the Quakers and Menomists to be more faithful in conducting the religious interests of their societies, than the other sects—which we apprehend to be contrary to fact :

It unjustly subjects men who may be good citizens, but who have not embraced our common faith, to the hardship of supporting a system, they have not as yet believed the truth of; and deprives them of their property, for what they do not suppose to be of importance to them :

It establishes a precedent for farther encroachments, by making the Legislature judges of religious truth. If the Assembly have a right to determine the preference between Christianity, and the other systems of religion that prevail in the world, they may also, at a convenient time, give a preference to some favoured sect among Christians :

It discourages the population of our country by alarming those who may have been oppressed by religious establishments in other countries, with fears of the same in this: and by exciting our own citizens to emigrate to other lands of greater freedom :

It revives the principle which our ancestors contested to blood, of attempting to reduce all religions to one standard by the force of civil authority :

And it naturally opens a door for contention among citizens of different creeds, and different opinions respecting the extent of the powers of government.

The bill is also a direct violation of the Declaration of Rights, which ought to be the standard of all laws. The sixteenth article is clearly infringed upon by it, and any explication which may have been given of it by the friends of this measure in the Legislature, so as to justify a departure from its literal construction, might also be used to deprive us of other fundamental principles of our government.

For these reasons, and others that might be produced, we conceive it our duty to remonstrate and protest against the said bill; and earnestly urge that it may not be enacted into a law.

We also wish to engage your attention a little farther, while we request a revision of the act for incorporating the Protestant Episcopal Church: and state our reasons for this request. We do not desire to oppose the incorporation of that church for the better management of its *temporalities*; neither do we wish to lessen the attachment of any of the members of the Legislature, in a private capacity, to the interests of that church. We rather wish to cultivate a spirit of forbearance and charity towards the members of it, as the servants of one common Master who differ in some particulars from each other. But we cannot consent that they shall receive particular notice or favour from government as a Christian Society; nor peculiar distinctions or emoluments.

We find by the act, that the convenience of the Episcopal Church hath been consulted by it, in the management of their interests as a religious society, at the expense of other denominations. Under the former establishment, there were perhaps few men who did not, at length, perceive the hardships and injustice of a compulsory law, obliging the citizens of this State by birthright free, to contribute to the support of a religion, from which their reason and conscience obliged them to dissent. Who then would not have supposed that the same sense of justice, which induced the Legislature to dissolve the grievous establishment, would also have induced them to leave to common use, the property in churches, glebes, &c., which had been acquired by common purchase.

To do otherwise was, as we conceive, to suppose that long prescription could sanction injustice; and that to persist in error, is to alter the essential difference between right and wrong. As Christians also, the subjects of Jesus Christ, who are wholly opposed to the exercise of spiritual powers by civil rulers, we conceive ourselves obliged to remonstrate against that part of the incorporating act, which authorises and directs the regulation of spiritual concerns. This is such an invasion of Divine prerogative, that it is highly exceptionable on that account, as well as on account of the danger to which it exposes our religious liberties. Jesus Christ hath given sufficient authority to his church, for every lawful purpose: and

it is forsaking his authority and direction, for that of fallible men, to expect or to grant the sanction of civil law to authorise the regulation of any Christian society. It is also dangerous to our liberties, because it creates an invidious distinction on account of religious opinions, and exalts to a superior pitch of grandeur, as the church of the State, a society which ought to be contented with receiving the same protection from government, which the other societies enjoy, without aspiring to superior notice or regard. The Legislature assumes to itself by that law, the authoritative direction of this church in spirituals; and can be considered in no other light than its head, peculiarly interested in its welfare; a matter which cannot be indifferent to us—though this authority has only as yet been extended to those who have requested it or acquiesced in it. This church is now considered as the only regular church in the view of the law: and it is thereby raised to a state of unjust pre-eminence over others. And how far it may increase in dignity and influence in the State, by these means, at a future day, and especially when aided by the emoluments which it possesses, and the advantages of funding a very large sum or money without account, time alone can discover. But we esteem it our duty to oppose the act thus early, before the matter be entangled in precedents more intricate and dangerous. Upon the whole, therefore, we hope that the exceptionable parts of this act will be repealed by your honourable House; and that all preferences, distinctions, and advantages, contrary to the fourth article of the Declaration of Rights will be forever abolished.

We regret that full equality in all things, and ample protection and security to religious liberty were not incontestably fixed in the constitution of the government. But we earnestly request that the defect may be remedied, as far as it is possible for the Legislature to do it, by the adopting the bill in the revised laws for establishing religious freedom. (Chap. 82 of the Report.)

That Heaven may illuminate your minds with all that wisdom which is necessary for the important purposes of your deliberation, is our earnest wish. And we beg leave to assure you, that however warmly we may engage in preserving our religion free from the shackles of human authority, and opposing claims of spiritual domination in civil powers, we are zealously disposed to support the government of our country, and to maintain a due submission to the lawful exercise of its authority.

Signed by order of the Convention.

JOHN TODD, *Chairman.*

Attest, DANIEL McCALLA, Clerk.

Bethel, Augusta County, }  
13th August, 1785. }

On Saturday, August 18th, 1785, the General Committee of the Baptist Church met at Dupuy's meeting-house in Powhatan. Mr. Ford made report,—“That according to the directions given him, he presented a memorial and petition to the Honourable General Assembly: that they met with a favourable reception; that certain amendments were made to the marriage law, which he thought satisfactory. To this report the General Committee concurred.” Upon considering the engrossed bill for a general assessment, which had been sent out for the consideration of the public, and for the expression of opinion, the General Committee resolved,—“That it be recommended to those counties which have not prepared petitions, to be presented to the General Assembly, against the engrossed bill for a general assessment for the support of the teachers of the Christian religion, to proceed thereon as soon as possible:—that it is believed to be repugnant to the spirit of the gospel, for the Legislature thus to proceed in matters of religion:—that no human laws ought to be established for that purpose; but that every person ought to be left entirely free in respect to matters of religion:—that the holy Author of our religion needs no such