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A MINISTER FOR THE TIMES.

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Rapid changes in people's thinking, in their ways of doing things and in their social situations are making new problems for the minister. These changes are so numerous and they come so unexpectedly that theological education and ministerial service find difficulty in keeping pace with them.

Ministers are supposed to be students all their lives. It is not sufficient that they keep their faces buried in books; they must study men and tendencies, not only in the church, but without as well. Part of the purpose of their training is to fit them for doing just this thing. The minister is no different from other men in this respect. Others are meeting constantly changes which require quick adaptations. Some of these changes have been almost revolutionary, particularly in business and educational fields. The minister can claim no exemption. When altered ways of doing things in the church and altered types of thinking in the pew confront him, he must be prepared for them and must know how to deal with the problems they create.

Changes which lay upon the minister the severest test are not those near the surface nor are they changes which affect the church only. They have to do with the world in all aspects, with the universe indeed, and with men's thinking thereupon. This is one reason the minister is in danger of missing their significance. He is engrossed in his own work, always tempted to live apart, more or less, from the common currents of life and to maintain a certain aloofness from interests which usually engage the eager attention of others.

ever way his soul demands." It is not at all unlikely that the men who are now beginning the work of the ministry, instead of running against the strong wind of doubt in their work with the souls of men, may feel the high breezes of faith behind them swelling their sails and thus making their work a richer and more satisfying one than the servants of God have felt for many generations past.

SAMUEL DAVIES IN HANOVER COUNTY.*

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The traveler in Mediterranean lands will one day find himself facing a majestic marvel of antiquity, before which he will be awed into silent wonder. Looking up at the Great Pyramid, he may be impressed, not so much by the present rough and broken surface of that huge pile of stone, as he will be awed by its suggestion of the engineering skill, which with flawless accuracy reared that imposing structure, nearly five hundred feet in height, covering more than eleven acres of ground, and expressing genius almost miraculous and power almost fabulous. In that moment the traveler feels the mightiness of human achievement in the past.

In like degree today we find ourselves with reverent gratitude looking up through the past to a marvelous spiritual phenomenon. Here and hereabouts not quite two centuries ago there was erected a noble spiritual structure, and there were enacted events which were little less than miraculous, and which are now exerting wide and beneficent influence on the religious life of Virginia, and of our whole Southland. The place which we mark today was the scene of one of those

*An address delivered in October, 1929, at the dedication of a monument, marking the site of the Pole Green Presbyterian Church in Hanover county, Va., erected by the East Hanover Woman's Auxiliary.

most blessed human experiences, a great revival. We are making our pilgrimage into the past to make bare both our heads and our hearts in the revived memory of those spiritual fathers of ours, who were large in hope, dauntless in faith, and mighty in devotion and effort. Gratefully today, as we memorialize their rich service, we would hear the challenge of their voices and make firm resolve to hand on in faithful lives, more than in memorial stone, to those who follow us the rich benefits which came to us who followed them.

By the grace of the East Hanover Woman's Auxiliary we are marking with this handsome stone the scene of one of the most important occurrences in Virginia History, as also in American Church History. Scant physical remains of that great work are in evidence now: a ragged clump of trees and bush beside a dusty country road, a few scattered foundation stones. That is all now. But once stirring scenes transpired here, a great victory was won for truth, a blessed revival began, which swelled high and overflowed into other communities. The stream of spiritual life, which headed here, flowed on and on far beyond this country and state.

First of all, we must consider at least two of the brave, strong men who made possible the Pole Green Church and from it organized the Presbyterian Church in Virginia. The most notable of these was Samuel Davies, whose genius and labors brought fame to this Church. Davies was of Welsh Baptist descent, his father and mother having membership in a Delaware Baptist communion. Our Baptist brethren in Virginia today must surely hold in high appreciation this foremost and most effective advocate of religious liberty in Virginia, since his antecedents were so strongly influenced by their own faith. David Davies, his father, died in 1759. His mother, Martha Thomas Davies, was excluded from the Welsh Baptist Church in 1732, because of her Presbyterian sympathies. Samuel Davies' first cousin named his son for his distinguished cousin, and this latter Samuel was the father of President Jefferson Davis, whose branch of the Davies family had remained in the Baptist Church.

Samuel Davies was a frail child, early developing tuber-

culosis, against which he struggled all through his life, and to which he fell a victim at the early age of thirty-six. In his first year in Hanover County it was feared that he would succumb to this disease. His wide and incessant labors, his patient and thorough study, seem almost miraculous in view of his frail and diseased body. Sometimes, racked with fever and pain all night, he would rise and preach with power the next day. At times his regular ministerial labors extended into six counties, and while traveling over this so extensive pastoral charge and preaching almost daily, he nevertheless conducted the ministerial education of young candidates, who were to become shepherds of those outpost flocks, or to become missionaries to the Carolinas and Kentucky.

Samuel Davies' childhood was handicapped also by poverty. School advantages were scant, but his capacity and ambition for learning grasped every opportunity for developing his mind. As accident somewhat impairing his body, the members of his family took this as an indication that his mental aptitude should be encouraged. The lack of funds was in part supplied by the gift of the people of the Hanover Meeting House, made to William Robinson in gratitude for his blessed ministry of four days with them. This gift Robinson resolved should be used for the education of a young minister, who might be led to serve as pastor of this Hanover flock. So did Providence both open the door for entrance and equip his minister to enter one of the most notable fields of evangelistic service in the history of the American Church.

Notwithstanding his ill health and the early privations of his home life, Samuel Davies was a man of handsome and impressive presence, qualified and balanced to meet with poise any situation. His passion was to evangelize the needy, but his culture and graces made him the equal of the highest classes in the society of his day. His voice was good and had power. In his preaching he began in a calm and reasoning manner, and gradually rose to animation and eloquence. This was also the art of the mighty Patrick Henry, who learned it from his master, Samuel Davies. His sermons remain to this

day models of homiletic art, of fine literary expression, of of sound Bible interpretation, and of evangelistic passion.

More than once he was called to Williamsburg, the colonial capital, to defend his own and his people's rights as honest dissenters. In these encounters he won over the ablest legal talent of the colony. He pled his cause with the wisdom of a trained barrister and with the skillful tact of an experienced advocate. All dissenting groups came into their Christian rights over the plain path which Davies had so well blazed. His admirer and disciple, Patrick Henry, learned from him how to plead and gain liberty for imprisoned Baptists.

In his correspondence with Church of England prelates, in behalf of all Virginia dissenters, he displayed the transparent clearness and the sound logic of a great intellect, as also the admirable tact of an accomplished statesman. This correspondence is one of the most valued treasures left to us from the religious life of the colonies. If Jefferson and Henry and Madison wrought out the final draft of religious liberty in Virginia, Davies was its great apostle and pioneer. They moved to final achievement along the way he had marked so well.

Davies was famed far beyond the country counties of Virginia. His mission to England in behalf of Princeton College secured money to brace up that tottering college. But it also won respect and admiration for the American pulpit. Crowds attended his preaching, and royalty demanded that it hear him. And that, too, when those brilliant pulpit stars, Whitfield and Wesley, were in their zenith. His biographers have said that, in his brief presidency of Princeton College, he brought more literary and scholastic distinction to it than did the combined administrations of Jonathan Edwards and the senior Aaron Burr.

Such was the Presbyterian Apostle of Virginia, the greatest of her dissenters, the man who, after his education by the help of Hanover's gift and his ordination by Newcastle Presbytery, came to Virginia that by his ministry to the people of Hanover he might pay a debt of gratitude. It is not

strange that the work of such a man soon spread to other counties, and that the seven meeting-houses erected in six counties were too small for the throngs which crowded to hear him. That good Baptist, Whitsett, has called him "the foremost young minister of his time". In his time Presbyterianism was stronger than it is today in a dozen Virginia counties: in all the Northern Neck, and Stafford, Essex, Middlesex, Hanover, Caroline, Spotsylvania and Goochland. Born in 1724, he entered into life everlasting in 1761, having accomplished in those brief years the tasks which might well have filled the lives of many men. Here at Pole Green served a country parson who was also in his time the foremost preacher of America.

The second of the notable men who wrought for Christ at Pole Green was Joshua Morris, to whom we owe the erection here of the first Meeting House, in which dissenters might worship God after the dictates of their own conscience.

Samuel Davies was by no means the first Presbyterian preacher in Virginia, nor was Pole Green the first organized Presbyterian Church in Virginia, not even the only one in existence at that time, in 1747. The gathering in the Valley of congregations of Scotch-Irish, who had migrated from Pennsylvania, preceded Samuel Davies and Pole Green by more than a decade. Francis Makemie had ministered to Presbyterians in Tidewater Virginia as early as 1684, and it is probable that some of those eastern congregations were still in existence, though it may have been a very feeble existence. However, Makemie's activities did not move westward from the seacoast, but along the coast northward into Maryland and Delaware. The early Valley Presbyterians were Scotch-Irish from Pennsylvania, who moved up the Valley of Virginia southwestward, some breaking through the Rockfish Gap southward and across the James River. These were principally Old School Presbyterians.

The movement in Hanover County was altogether independent of both of these Presbyterian beginnings to east and west of it. Its origin was quite different, and it was of greater significance than either of them for the growth of the

Presbyterian Church in Virginia. The beginnings of this church in Hanover seem little less than miraculous. It began under the direct and manifest operation of the Holy Spirit.

The Pole Green Church originated without a single antecedent Presbyterian member, without a premeditated evangelistic effort, even without the services of an ordained minister. Before a minister came to their help, there had already come the blessed spiritual revival, out of which this church was afterwards formed. The dissenters, who worshipped in the first Pole Green Reading House, did not know that they were of Presbyterian faith until told by the Scotch Governor, William Gouch, when they had been summoned before the Colonial Council at Williamsburg to give account of their dissenting ways and worship. Hanover was an English county throughout, and all of its people were in nominal membership in the Church of England. A few Welsh had come in, and an Irishman or two. The Scots in Eastern and Middle Virginia were almost invariably absorbed into the Established Church. Several Scotch Governors and noble Commissary Blair were all in the Established Church. In Eastern Virginia there had been Puritan (Presbyterian) developments under Makemie's lead. In the Valley the Scotch-Irish had established Presbyterianism firmly. And now in the central section of Virginia another and a different contribution to the Presbyterian Church was to be made: out of the very heart of the Established Church itself.

That is a strange and beautiful story, but too well known to need repetition. Only a few high points of interest can here be touched. Samuel Morris, a carpenter at Pole Green, and other men of the community, dissenting from the dull formality and want of faith and piety in the Established Church and its clergy, absented themselves from the unspiritual services. This they had done without the knowledge of each other's actions until summoned before the magistrate to be fined for failure to attend the parish church. Brave and true men that they were, they did the right thing, refusing to bow to ecclesiastical oppression. Their consciences stood upright. Paying honestly the fine for non-attendance, so many

pounds of tobacco, they now gathered regularly each Sabbath in the home of Morris for Bible Reading, and to hear read what good books might be available. Whitefield's sermons and Luther's Commentary on Galatians were among their selections. Soon the home of Morris was too small for the increasing numbers, who came to hear and learn. Then came the erection of the first dissenting Meeting House, to be known as Morris' Reading House, because it was built on the land of Mr. Morris. This building, too, was soon found to be too small for the roused and seeking throngs, and another larger building, and after that a still larger, succeeded it. Finally in 1757 the Pole Green Church, under the ministry of Samuel Davies, was built on the site which we mark today. The names of some of the men who labored with Samuel Morris deserve frequent recollection by us, who have entered into their labors—Isaac Winston (grandfather of Patrick Henry), Charles Rice, Thomas Watkins, Stephen Lacy.

So far as we know, the first Presbyterian sermons at Pole Green were preached by William Robinson in July, 1743. After his four days' services a liberal contribution of money was made to him by the grateful congregation. This he declined to use for himself, but gave it to aid in the education of a young man for the Gospel. The recipient of this aid, Samuel Davies, was thus enabled to attend the classical school of Samuel Blair at Fagg's Manor, where he was prepared for the ministry, and in 1747 began his ministry in Hanover County. Rapidly his influence extended, until more than two hundred families, over a range of six counties, were under his regular care and ministration. Beyond these, congregations developed also in Northern Neck, on the Peninsular, and south of the James River.

Before leaving this theme and this spot, now marked and dedicated by this handsome monument, we must make hurried review of some of the rich fruits gathered by posterity from the noble service of those two eighteenth century Samuels, Samul Davies and Samuel Morris.

The first of special note was the organization of Hanover Presbytery in 1755, in which Davies was the leading spirit,

having been appointed by Synod to preach the opening sermon and to convene the new Presbytery. Hanover Presbytery began at the Atlantic Ocean and extended to the Mississippi River. North and south it extended from Pennsylvania to the South Carolina line. As the years passed and congregations increased, other Presbyteries were set off from the old Hanover mother-body. What a blessed family of descendants is now hers!

The Synod of New York took action on October 3, 1755, ordering the constitution of Hanover Presbytery. The meeting for the organization was held in December of the same year. This fall, therefore, marks the one hundred and seventy-fifth anniversary of the Mother Presbytery of our Southern Presbyteries, due note of which will doubtless be taken at its approaching Fall Meeting, by East Hanover Presbytery, which is the original stock, from which all the branches put forth.

Davies was greatly interested in setting up a competent ministry for the wide territory for which he and Hanover were now responsible. Some were trained by himself or in schools established under his influence. Others he induced to come from the stronger Presbyterian centers in the North. At one time he almost succeeded in securing Jonathan Edwards for a ministry in Virginia. Under his help and training Todd, Hunt, Waddell, Patillo, Wright, Richardson and others were brought into the ministry in Virginia and Carolina. Through his influence and the doors of service which he opened Robert Henry, the two Smith brothers, Samuel Stanhope and John Blair, and others entered the ministry in Virginia. "Parson Blair", so well known in Richmond Presbyterianism, came South to become pastor of the Pole Green Church. Roswell Page has written: "Perhaps the most virile body (in Hanover County) was that which bears the name of Hanover Presbytery."

A notable line of ministers has served the Presbyterian Church whose forefathers were Church of England folk in Hanover and adjoining counties. Their names are now household words throughout the Southern Presbyterian Church: Winston, Watkins. Hunt, White, Rice, Lacy. The Hanover

congregation was trained in true piety and sound thinking. Davies, himself a reader and a sound thinker, taught his people to read well and to think soundly. Stonewall Jackson's pastor, Dr. White, was a grandson of the Hanover Church. And so also were the Rices, David, John Holt and Benjamin. Certainly two, probably three, ancestors of the honored President of Union Theological Seminary became Presbyterians under the ministry of Samuel Davies in Hanover County. William Richardson, the notable pastor of old Waxhaw, was a "find" and protege of Davies. James Waddell was led into the ministry by Davies. And so the good and glad story might run on from generation to generation, and from the Atlantic to the Rio Grande.

One other benefit which came to Virginia and her sister states through Samuel Davies and the Hanover Church must be recounted and repeated:

Samuel Davies was a patriot. General Braddock's defeat in 1755 brought a serious crisis to Valley and Piedmont sections of Virginia. There was talk of abandoning the exposed frontiers of the Colony to the French and Indians. Panic spread as far east as Hanover. Davies' courage and confidence did much to inspire his fellow-citizens. After an eloquent appeal from him at Hanover Court House, a company of volunteers for frontier service was quickly organized. He believed in the rights of men, civil and political, and although he passed away half a generation before the Revolution, the principles which he had lived and taught were to find expression through others. As has already been said, the impress of Davies' life upon Patrick Henry was unmistakable. Henry was under Davies' ministry and influence from his eleventh to his twenty-second year. His grandfather, mother and sisters were members of the Pole Green Church. William Wirt Henry said: "Patrick Henry's early example of eloquence was Mr. Davies, and the effect of his teaching upon his after life may be plainly traced." Dr. Green, in his memorial sermon on the death of Davies, said: "As the celebrated Patrick Henry lived in the neighborhood where his patriotic sermons were delivered, it has been supposed, with much probability, that

it was Mr. Davies who first kindled the fire and afforded the model of Henry's elocution." Samuel Davies, though dead, was yet living and speaking when Henry spoke for civil and religious liberty in defense of the imprisoned Baptist preachers at Spotsylvania; when he wrote the paragraph on religious liberty for the Virginia Bill of Rights; when, finding his country halting between two opinions, he stood in St. John's Church like a Joshua and called for a decision such as became freemen.

In the eighteenth century a heavy atmosphere of spiritual doubt and dereliction enveloped the entire English-speaking world. What of religion there was, expressed itself chiefly in mechanical formalism and official duties. Such spiritual collapse lay at the foundation of that poor religious state, which Bishop Meade recorded and bewailed in the Established Church in Virginia. But God himself intervened in the middle of that dark century to bring light into its darkness. A world revival sprang up. Far and wide, in many places, without collusion or communication, there came a great awakening. Whitefield and Wesley, from the far hills of Scotland to the American backwoods, were the major prophets of that revival. And Hanover County was the scene of one of the most remarkable demonstrations of that world revival. The Spirit of God, who was brooding graciously over the world's dark spiritual waste, was most evidently and powerfully present here. Men were hearing and believing even without a preacher. To this great opportunity God in his grace brought his well-prepared servant. The Scotch-Irish in the Valley came from Donegal Presbytery and Philadelphia Synod. They were "Old Lights", not much given to evangelistic endeavor. But Samuel Davies came from Newcastle Presbytery and New York Synod, the "New Lights", who were emphasizing and pressing an earnest evangelistic movement. Morris and his neighbors and Davies were well met, and the Word had free course. May we, their heirs and followers, be filled and fired with that same zeal and faith by which they wrought righteousness and obtained the promises.