

THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIANS.

CHAPTER I.

THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIANS BEFORE 1861.¹

THE European sources of Southern Presbyterians are almost as numerous as European nations; but the chiefest of such sources have been the English Presbyterians, the Dutch, the Germans, the Swiss, the Huguenots, the Scotch, and the Scotch-Irish.

The English Presbyterians came into the colonies of Virginia and the Carolinas from the start. Some of these were nonconforming; and of these those in Virginia after 1531 or 1533² suffered much persecution, some of them being driven to the colonies of Maryland or the Carolinas, while others were forced into conformity. After the middle of the eighteenth century, when the Presbyterian Church came to be formally tolerated, its numerous converts from the Episcopal Church showed, with a degree of

¹ This chapter is intended to present only such a brief sketch of Presbyterians, New and Old School, in the South, before 1861, as is necessary to enable the reader to comprehend the body whose history he is invited to follow through the period 1861-93. For a fuller account of these peoples before 1861, the reader is referred to vol. VI., "Presbyterians."

² Hodge, part i., p. 45. Compare Hays, p. 60.

probability, that there had been many *conforming* Presbyterians in that church. Indeed, Alexander Whitaker, “the self-denying apostle of Virginia.”¹ Had been a Cambridge Puritan. He had established a Congregational Presbytery² for the government of the local church. He had written “neither surplice nor subscription is spoken of” in Virginia.³ The Puritans in the Virginia colony continued to have great freedom up to about 1530. After that they suffered persecution, as we have asserted.

The Dutch were among the early settlers of Maryland and of Charleston, S.C.⁴ Later they were found in the valley of Virginia, and throughout the South. The Germans during the first three quarters of the eighteenth century immigrated into Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia, chiefly from Pennsylvania, but also directly from South Germany.⁵ Bodies of Swiss, too, came into South Carolina between 1730 and 1750.⁶ The Dutch and Swiss were Presbyterians; and so, also, was a moiety of the Germans. The Huguenots, particularly after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, made settlements in our borders, the chief of which were in Virginia, on the James, and in South Carolina, in Charleston and its neighborhood.⁷ The Scotch immigrated into our territory in large numbers from the beginning of the eighteenth century on. Scotchmen from Argyleshire were in North Carolina on the Cape Fear River in 1741. After the battle of Culloden and the defeat of the Jacobites, Scotch Highlanders came over in great numbers and settled beside their brethren on the Cape Fear and its tributaries.⁸ Scotchmen settled during the first half of the eighteenth century, also, in parts of South Carolina, in Georgia, in

¹ Bancroft, vol. i., p. 141.

² Briggs, p. 86.

³ Bancroft, vol. i., p. 141.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 430.

⁵ Hodge, part i., p. 50.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Bancroft, vol. i., p. 432.

⁸ Hodge, part i., p. 66.

the Piedmont region of North Carolina and Virginia, and had settled at a much earlier time in Maryland. The Scotch-Irish, irritated by increase of rents, and by a tax to support a church not of their choice, began in the first quarter of the eighteenth century a more rapid immigration into America. These people, coming directly, or after a stoppage in Pennsylvania, spread themselves over the valley of Virginia, the Piedmont region of Virginia and the Carolinas, and more sparsely over the whole remaining South Atlantic Colonies¹—"a staunch and stalwart stock" of Presbyterians.

From these older States the settlers, or their children, subsequently passed over into the lands of Kentucky and Missouri, of Tennessee and Alabama, of Mississippi and the States of the Southwest. In their earlier immigrations the Scotch and Scotch-Irish did not, as a rule, settle in large bodies, but singly, and were scattered widely over the Middle and Southern colonies. Hence, up to 1750 they had, except in a few favored localities, no regular religious ministrations. There was, of course, no organic church connection among them. Independency, even, was in the ascendant in the Charleston colony, the most favored of them all in the ecclesiastical privileges.

Nevertheless, from about 1650 on, Presbyterian settlers in Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina were looked after by such servants of God as the Revs. Francis Doughty, about 1657-59, Matthew Hill, 1667-76, William Trail, Francis Makemie, and their followers; while the churches of Charleston and in the vicinity were served by Puritans like John Cotton, or Scotch Presbyterians like Archibald Stobo, and their followers.

Their Character, as Illustrated in the Civil and Religious Life.—Under this guidance and the "favoring conditions of

¹ Hodge, part i., pp. 67, 68; Howe, vol. i., pp. 197 ff.

our Southern life” these several strains of European Presbyterianism were so blended as to make “a body of Christians, singularly homogeneous, conservative, truth-loving, and ardently devoted to right and liberty. The courtly and cultivated Huguenot, the stern and simple-hearted Highlander, the strong, earnest, faithful Scotch-Irish, the conscientious Puritan, and the frank, honest Teuton, contributed of the wealth of their character and the glory of their history. Devotion to principle was the guiding star of their action.”¹ They have been devoted to the maintenance of their *civil* rights. No people has shown a higher degree of patriotism. The act of the Scotch-Irish met in Abingdon, Va., January 20, 1775;² the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, made on the 20th of May, 1775;³ their conduct in the Revolutionary War—such as to draw from General Washington the famous encomium on the men of Western Virginia—are sufficient proofs. Nor were they prepared to show less of heroic devotion to the country in the calamitous struggle of 1861. They have been equally zealous, to say the least, for *religious liberty*. The petition from the Presbytery of Hanover, dated November 11, 1774, “To the Honorable the Speaker and the Gentlemen of the House of Burgesses,” of Virginia,⁴ and the memorials from the same Presbytery—in 1776⁵ and in 1777⁶—to the same legislative body, at once leave no doubt as to where Mr. Jefferson got his views of religious liberty, and evince the fact of the zeal of the Presbyterian people of Virginia for religious liberty. These people have shown themselves as eager for the *truth* as for lib-

¹ Dr. Moses D. Hoge, in Hays’s “Presbyterians,” p. 480.

² Bancroft, vol. iv., pp. 100, 101; Briggs, p. 348.

³ Bancroft, vol. iv., p. 196; Briggs, p. 340.

⁴ This petition was published for the first time in the “Central Presbyterian,” May 16, 1888, by the Hon. Wm. Wirt Henry, LL.D., Richmond, Va.

⁵ See Foote’s “Sketches of Virginia,” series i., pp. 323 ff.

⁶ *Ibid.*, series i., pp. 326, 327.

erty. Academies were often erected beside the churches. The pastors were frequently teachers as well as preachers. Queen's Museum, in Mecklenburg County, N.C., was founded and obtained a charter from the colonial government in 1770. This charter, though set aside by the king and council, was amended, and a second time granted by the colonial legislature in 1771. The king repealed it by proclamation, evidently because several of the trustees were Presbyterian ministers.¹ The independent commonwealth of North Carolina chartered the institution again in 1777 as Liberty Hall. About the same time Hanover Presbytery took "into consideration the great expediency of erecting a seminary of learning." As a result academies were very soon established, one of which grew into Washington College in the valley of Virginia, the other into Hampden Sidney College in Southside, Va., each being at once a monument to patriotism and fidelity to religious convictions, and the means of supporting these virtues as long as, in the mercy of God, it shall remain substantially unperverted.

So the church ran her early course.

We cannot, in this sketch, follow her in detail to 1861. That can be fairly inferred from her start and from her condition on the eve of the war between the States. We beg leave, though, to point out one very worthy trait of Southern Presbyterians during the early part of the nineteenth century. They were a missionary body. It was from Dr. John Holt Rice, the founder of Union Theological Seminary, in Virginia, that the famous overture on missions came before the General Assembly of 1831. He asked the Assembly to adopt the following resolutions:

First, That the Presbyterian Church in the United States is a missionary society, the object of which is to aid in the conversion of the world; and

¹ Foote's "Sketches of North Carolina," p. 513.

that every member of the church is a member for life of the said society, and bound, in maintenance of his Christian character, to do all in his power for the accomplishment of this object. Second, ministers of the gospel in connection with the Presbyterian Church are most solemnly required to present this subject to the members of their respective congregations, using every effort to make them feel their obligations and to induce them to contribute according to their ability.¹

This paper stirred the church.

The Status of Southern Presbyterians in 1861.—In 1861 there were south of Mason and Dixon's line 12 synods of the Old School Church, 1275 churches, and 96,550 communicants. There were three flourishing theological seminaries within her bounds, each under the control of one or more synods, viz., Union Seminary in Virginia, Columbia Seminary in Columbia, S.C., and Danville in Kentucky. There were important colleges under the more or less careful superintendence of the body, e.g., Hampden Sidney College and Washington College in Virginia, Davidson College in North Carolina, Center College in Kentucky, *et. al.*

In 1861 there were in the same territory, constituting the United Synod of the South, 3 synods, with 199 churches, 11,581 communicants. Steps had been taken for the founding of a theological seminary, and \$70,000 had been subscribed and partly paid in for this purpose. The Synod had under its care one college, at Maryville, Tenn.

No part of the church had a more cultivated ministry than the Southern Presbyterian Church of the Old School. Their seminaries were manned by some of the very ablest men in either of the two churches, North and South. Thornwell was in his meridian splendor at Columbia; Dabney and Peck, slower in reaching their maturity, as

¹ For the whole of this able and solemnly important paper see Assembly's Digest, Baird's Collection, p. 363.

well as younger in years, were teaching with marked ability at Union; Breckenridge was illustrating as the day, or obscuring, according to his subject, as the night, the themes with which the theologian deals, at Danville; Palmer and Hoge and others were edifying as well as delighting large and cultivated audiences day after day. A ministry, generally highly cultured and especially trained, was serving with acceptance the people of God. No considerable part of the church elsewhere surpassed the South in all that goes to make intelligent and honest Presbyterianism. It had been a happy, a blessed portion of the Church of God.

