

established parishes. The chief problems confronting the church in Virginia were 1) the size of the parishes as they covered vast areas of land, 2) the doubtful nature of many of the clergy then serving, and 3) the inadequacy of educational opportunity for ministerial training. So in 1685, in answer to many queries, the Bishop of London appointed a", a church figure to report directly to him, who would take charge of improving the ecclesiastical life of the colony. This was James Blair who in 1693 founded William and Mary college and where he presided for the next forty years or so.

The succeeding commissary was Thomas Bray, appointed in 1695. He did not come to Virginia until about 1700 but in the meantime formed the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in 1698 and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) in 1701. The former concentrated on getting Christian literature to the colonies and the latter of evangelism. Spiritual fervor did not run high, however, and it is estimated that in 1700 only one in twenty persons was a church member.

But with the aid of the new college and the new societies, the faith began to expand. By 1720 there were 44 healthy parishes and by 1750 the number had increased to 100. The Anglican church in its American expression was the established church in Virginia. Other religious sentiments were quieted, persecuted, exiled, or otherwise made submissive. The legal records are full of accounts of presbyterians and baptists and lesser known criminals being prosecuted for holding illegal meetings...meaning anything not sanctioned by the Anglican Church.

The geography factor we mentioned earlier was one of the powerful factors influencing the growth and effectiveness of the Anglican Church in Virginia.

(2) The New England Settlement

New England did not have the pattern of ecclesiastical authority that was seen in Virginia but we are still able to treat it under one head...just making a few more sub-divisions as we go.

(a) The Massachusetts circle.

Working under an agreement with the London company, the separatists of the Scrooby congregation in England came to the new world in 1620, arriving at Plymouth off the Massachusetts coast. They were supposed to go to Virginia but were off target although I have a theory about this that is unproved but reasonable. The account of the voyage is legendary. They arrived in the fall, spent the winter on the ship while suffering considerably. Enough survived, however, to found a colony the following spring, and received the help of Providence in the personages of