

COLONIAL DELMARVA DESCRIBED IN ESSAYS OF FRANCIS MAKEMIE

The Delmarva Peninsula, especially the lower part, often has been referred to as "Makemieland."

This, of course, has been done mainly by the Presbyterians in honor of Francis Makemie. The famous minister, because of his work in the Presbyterian ministry and the establishment of Presbyterian Churches and Presbyteries, is considered the "father of American Presbyterianism."

Makemie, coming from Ireland, arrived in Somerset County, Md. about 1683, For the next 25 years - until: his death in Accomack County, Virginia in 1708 - he devoted much of his time to establishing, organizing and spreading of Presbyterianism the British colonies of the New World. His travels carried him from New England to South Carolina and the Barbados, but the center of his activities and his life was the Delmarva Peninsula.

THERE IS much that may be told about Makemie, the religious leader and "freedom fighter." But this article is primarily concerned with "Makemie, the promoter for the development of the Delmarva Peninsula."

Makemie was not only interested in the success of the Presbyterian Church in America, but also the general welfare of the people of Virginia and Maryland. Throughout his stay In America, Makemie did not cease to expound upon the virtues of the Peninsula. He wrote a description of the region and sent it to Europe to encourage others to come and live in America.

Makemie was also an active merchant - a man interested in the growth of business and commerce. He was personally engaged in farming and commerce, especially with the British West Indies where he spread not only the gospel of Presbyterianism but also the gospel of trade.

IN 1705 he published in London an essay, "A Plain & Friendly Perswasive to the Inhabitants of Virginia and Maryland For Promoting Towns & Cohabitation." In this paper Makemie set forth some very interesting arguments as to why the settlers of the Delmarva Peninsula should encourage the development of towns. Some of the points would apply only to conditions that existed at the close of the 17th Century and the beginning of the 18th Century, but others sound like some of the arguments presented today by local Chambers of Commerce.

Anyone reading Makemie's essay, a copy of which is to be found in the Harvard University Library, would see that the gentleman was a keen observer of economic trends as well as a deeply pious man and a shrewd trader.

Makemie starts his essay by calling on Queen Anne to be the founder of towns and cohabitations to her glory, as Queen Elizabeth crowned her glory with the discovery and founding of the "most Ancient and Noble Colony of Virginia."

AFTER THIS introduction he refers to the wonderful lands that border the Chesapeake Bay. "I need not inform you, what an excellent and desirable Country you inhabit, nor inferiour to any

Colonies in the English America . . . supplied with the spacious Bay of Chesapeake ... capable of receiving vast Fleets of Ships, without skilful Pylots, not to be affrighted with dangerous Rocks, and dismal Sands; a Bay in most respects scarcer to be outdone by the Universe, having so many large and spacious Rivers, branching and running on both sides . . . Here we have a clear and serene Air, a long and hot summer, a Short and Sharp Winter, a free and fertile Soil; and I dare assure you, here is Country Capable of a superlative Improvement, beyond many, Countries. in the World . . . Here are in most places Bricks to made at every man's Door, fell Building; a soil suitable for producing any thing agreeable for a Northern Latitude, ands with as little Labour and Expense as any Place in the World; Spacious and flourishing Orchards, replenished With fair and pleasant Fruits, and will, afford pleasant Gardens, by much less Labour and Expense than in Europe, furnished with whatever Herbs, Flowers, and Plants, you are pleased to put into the ground. Here are stocks of all sorts raised, and maintained with little Industry, and by better Husbandry might be improved to a high degree: Here are all Advantages imaginable for Trade by Water, Conveniences for Travel and Transportation; Commodious, Easie and plesant Roads; Here is a Country Capable Of producing sundry Staples, as Hemp, Flax, Wool, Silk, Cotton and Wine too, and still overdo the Tobacco Trade."

As one would judge from the last few words concerning tobacco, Makemie was opposed to the extensive tobacco production which was then being undertaken in Maryland and Virginia. It does not seem that he was preaching against the evils of smoking the weed but against the economic evils which came from depending so much on one crop and the overproduction thereof.

AFTER A rather long introduction Makemie finally came to the major purpose of the essay: "Therefore, the principal. Topicks, from whence I derive any Perswasive, shall 'be the chief and principal Advantages that shall be the chief and principal Advantages that shall and do attend the inhabitants of a Country, from Towns and Cohabitations; Next the Disadvantages and inconveniences we labour and groan under, and that only from want of Towns and Cohabitations. And lastly, I shall endeavour to remove by Confutation, those usual and inconsequential Reasonings, partly of Ignorant and unthinking Men, partly of sonic designing persons, who would smile at our Calamity, and please themselves by our Disappointments, by filling our Counsels, and Clogging our Designs, with impracticable Inconveniences, of purpose to undermine all attempts of this nature."

As Makemie wrote, all of the points could be enlarged upon, "but that would no way suit with the Design of this Perswasive, which is only to furnish the Legislators of our Country with a foundation and Theme, to improve and enlarge their Thoughts upon this Subject, and facilitate the undertaking, obviate some of those Difficulties, as have hitherto disappointed all Designs of this Nature."

HERE BRIEFLY are the eight advantages Makemie presented which would promote the interests of the people as well as encourage traders to come to the Peninsula through the development of towns and cohabitations.

(1) It would soon add a worth and value to the whole region and all that is in it. By this he meant that the products of the forests, the farms, and the waters would find ready markets; for "if Towns were promoted, many poor People would produce more, by selling sundry things which

now turn to little account." Also the fishing would be advanced and improved, by encouraging many poor men to follow that calling, "and sundry sorts which are now slighted, would be fit for a Town Market ... and our vast plenty of oysters, would be a beneficial Trade, both with the Town and Foreign Traders: Believing we have the best Oysters for Pickling and Transportation, if Carefully and skilfully managed."

(2) Towns would soon fill the country with peoples of all sorts and add to the strength of settlements, and render the people more formidable against all enemies. By this Makemie meant that the increase in population which towns would bring would make the English colonies stronger against the growing French and Spanish colonies to the North, West, and South. This proved an important factor in the struggle for empire between England and France in the 1750's.

(3) Towns would make it easier and less expensive to carry on trade. In towns the buyers and sellers could meet in a common market place convenient to both as to time and place.

(4) Trading in Towns "would effectually prevent, and soon regulate a great many Frauds, Irregularities, Abuses, and Impositions on Trade and Trades." Makemie was sure that the many frauds carried on between seller and buyer at private plantations would not exist at the public market. Also in a public market where seller competed with seller, each would try to outdo the other in the quality of the goods produced.

(5) Towns or cohabitations would employ thousands of people. Many who were helping to ruin the tobacco trade through overproduction and producing tobacco of poor quality would soon be employed in the fields of transportation, lumbering, fishing, and the various trades and skills which businesses of towns call for; "and raise many Apprentices, which they are now discouraged to do, for want 'of a full employ, and from the badness of our Pay, and all for want of Towns."

(6) Towns would advance religion. Makemie claimed that religion flourished best in cohabitations, for the people in remote and scattered settlements could never "enjoy so fully, frequently, and certainly, those Privileges and Opportunities as are to be had in All Christian Towns and Cities." Because of bad weather, or other reasons, ministers in the remote areas were prevented and people hindered in attending services; but, in the towns congregations were never wanting, and children and servants never were without opportunity of hearing the gospel. Sermons would be more common and frequently attended if there were towns and cohabitations on the Peninsula, or so said Makemie.

(7) Cohabitations would highly advance learning and school education; for this flourishes only in such places. Many teachers of Makemie's day by necessity had to shift from place to place, until they could not live at all by that calling.

(8) Towns would prevent many, illegal abuses and frauds both by the government officials at tempting to enforce the laws and by certain people trying to evade the laws.

LATER ON in the essay Makemie presented both the disadvantages which the people suffered for the want of towns and cohabitations and his arguments against the objections raised opposing

the promotion of towns and cohabitations in Maryland and Virginia, Most of the points were good, and logical. but the last argument to objection No. 5 is also rather amusing.

Objection No. 5. "But say some, If we come to Towns to deal in Stores, we shall spend all our Crops at Ordinaries; therefore better without Towns."

"Answer 1. It is an objection of sots, therefore not to be regarded by any but such. 2. There is more danger of being drunk - at our Common Stores, where you have liquor gratis, and so liable to be cheated by some designing Persons; for this Custom has propagated Drunkenness as Much as any one thing in the Plantations. 3. I am perswaded that if every Sot in Virginia and Maryland paid roundly, and made good pay for what they drink, it would be a means to remedy their Excess in a great measure. 4. I always judged such as are averse to Towns, to be three sorts of Persons; First. Fools, who cannot, neither will see their own interest and advantage in having Towns, Secondly. Knaves, who, would still carry on Fraudulent Designs, and cheating Tricks, in a corner or secret Trade, afraid and ashamed of being exposed at a Publick Market. Thirdly, Sluggards, who rather than be at labour, and at any charge in transporting their Goods to Market, tho idle at home, and lose double thereby rather than do it: To which I may add a fourth, which are Sots, who may be best Cured of their Disease by a pair of Stocks in Town." (Source - Salisbury Times, March 16, 1960)