

195 GRIGG, JACOB

Publisher

Richmond, Norfolk

Publisher of religious tracts in Richmond and Norfolk with Dover Baptist Association (1814).

Grigg was a Baptist minister born in England who became a noted voice of the church in America while associated with Elder John Courtney at the First Baptist Church in Richmond. His early ministerial calling was as a missionary in the British colony at Sierra Leone in 1795; there Grigg developed a life-long identity as an antislavery advocate from his work in the mission of Rev. David George. George was an enslaved Virginian who had joined the British side during the Revolution and then moved to Nova Scotia at war's end; from there he took a group of "Black Loyalists" to West Africa to establish a Baptists community at Freetown to evangelize the local populace by the example of those free black adherents. Grigg soon had a falling out with a new British governor, however, over restrictions he imperiously imposed on religious practices there, especially among the Baptist missionaries; in May 1797, he set out for America where, in the governor's words, the "government will suit you best."

Grigg landed in Norfolk and was quickly preaching in the fast-growing Baptist communities of southeast Virginia. There he married a young widow, Mary Ann Littledike, who became his devoted travelling companion. Eventually, his preaching brought calls to serve churches in Wilmington, North Carolina (about 1800), and then Mason County, Kentucky (1802); his brother John had also emigrated from England and was then established in a Baptist church in Lebanon, Ohio; Jacob joined him there in 1806. Still Grigg and his wife were drawn back to Virginia in 1808 by his wife's now-twice widowed mother, Ann Goodwin, who wanted their support. Her residence in Richmond became Grigg's home base for the next decade. As he had done elsewhere, Grigg opened a classical school (in mother Goodwin's home) and began preaching to local congregations with vacant pulpits. Thus Grigg was also associated with the Dover Baptist Association and its aging charismatic leader, Elder John Courtney, pastor of Richmond's First Baptist Church and father of printer John Courtney Jr. (109).

These circumstances brought Grigg into a leadership role within the association as well. In October 1814, he was the showcased preacher at the sect's annual meeting at Mangohick Church in King William County. Two of his sermons were published subsequently in Virginia at the direction of those attending. These publications were not Grigg's first; he had already published a tract on the controversies that divided New Light from Old Light congregations in Ohio in 1807. But the Virginia sermons set a theological foundation for Baptists generally, and became his signature contributions to the faith. Both were initially summarized in the minutes of the meeting published in Richmond by John Warrock (430) after its closing.

Yet it seems that Grigg differed from his colleagues on which sermon was most important. He was most interested in spreading his ideas on predestination; that fall, Grigg engaged a Philadelphia printer (Ann Cochran Coles) to print a full-length version of that sermon for him: *The Doctrine of Predestination Examined*. However popular that imprint may have been, it would lead to division within the faith, generating charges that Grigg had Arminian views; that his rejection of predestination removed the granting of grace from the hands of

God into those of man, so rejecting God's omnipotence and omniscience.

Less controversial, and so more widely disseminated, was his second sermon on the subject of communion. It specifically pronounced that non-adherents should not be granted the sacrament by Baptist ministers, that communion was limited to believers. The sermon's key points were promptly reprinted as a circular letter from the association to its member churches, though it is not clear whether it was published at his old home base of Norfolk, or his new one in Richmond. Grigg's "closed communion" letter was reprinted in Boston in 1815 and in Exeter, New Hampshire, in 1819, and probably in other places as well, as it strengthened the power of ministers to manage their congregations by the grant of the sacraments, and so their control over the church's theological message – which was the point of the annual meetings: consistency and conformity.

Grigg, however, soon fell out of favor in Virginia. He developed health problems from his exertions and alcohol was prescribed as a treatment for them. Grigg thus gradually became an alcoholic, a condition which apparently compelled his departure from Richmond in about 1817, as the history of Courtney's church intimates, though his antislavery sentiments may have been a factor as well. Grigg moved on to the Philadelphia neighborhood, where such sentiments had more general acceptance, taking on pulpits there in a series of two-year assignments. Grigg also found sobriety in these years, becoming an impassioned lecturer on temperance in the late 1820s and early 1830s as a result of his experience, retiring from the Baptist ministerial circuits that had rejected him previously. He settled in Virginia, although where is not at all clear, and focused his classical school again. That occupation made him a fitting recruiting agent for the Columbian College in the District of Columbia (today George Washington University). It was on a recruiting trip for that institution that Grigg died at "the home of a friend" in Sussex County in 1835.

NB: Some nineteenth-century sources spell surname as Gregg, indicating that style conforms to contemporaneous pronunciation of his name; spelling here is that seen in his imprints.

Personal Data

Born: June 19 1769 Launceston, Cornwall, England.
Married: Jan. 31 1798 Mary Ann Littledike @ Norfolk, Virginia.
Died: Sept. 27 1835 Sussex County, Virginia.
Children: John Ryland (b. 1799), Edward Doughty (b. 1802), Edward David (b. 1804), Mary Ann Goodwin (b. 1806), Robert Baylor (b. 1810), and perhaps others unnamed.

Sources: Imprints; Taylor, *Virginia Baptist Ministers*; Tarrant, *Kentucky Baptist Ministers*; *History of the Miami Baptist Association*; Meagher, *Education in Richmond*; Tupper, *First Baptist Church of Richmond*; names and birth dates of his children from family charts posted on Ancestry.com (October 2012), although the data on Grigg found there differs from the historic record.