

FAITH AT THE CROSSROADS: THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS PLURALITY,
CHURCH LEADERS, AND COMMUNITY STRUCTURES ON THE
AMERICAN REVOLUTION IN NEW JERSEY

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ABSTRACT

Faith at the Crossroads: The Impact of Religious Plurality, Church Leaders, and Community Structures on the American Revolution in New Jersey

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As the American Revolution approached, the Great Awakening and the Enlightenment were becoming increasingly influential in the colonies. While the religious evangelicalism of the former and the secular government reforms of the latter seemed divergent in nature on the surface, the roots of the movements converged in support of American independence. Their common goals included representative government, individual freedom, and diminishing British control. Religious and political leaders alike began to appreciate the power of the connection between their two spheres, and employed rhetoric and organizational strategies that were effective in garnering support from the public.

New Jersey has been referred to as the “crossroads of the Revolution” due to its geographic placement, the headquartering of both American and British troops in the state, and the number of battles that occurred within its borders. The new state was equally as central to the convergence of Great Awakening and republicanism, as there was significant religious plurality which created a more normalized system of self-determination and choice of denomination than existed in other regions. Churches realized that they would need to fight to maintain this status quo, as it would be threatened by increased British control after a loss in the war.

This dissertation will explore how the shared lexicon of the period's religious and republican movements fostered a philosophical connection that allowed many ministers to preach the cause of liberty in their churches. This resulted in increased enlistments, resistance, and logistical support for the Revolution from New Jersey residents who had been tentative about participating in the war. Other denominations used the power of ecclesiastical compliance to convince their parishioners to maintain loyalty to the Crown. Regardless, the impact of religion was evident as war continued. Many ministers who preached the cause followed members of their congregations into battle in the capacities as both soldiers and chaplains. The military leadership recognized the influence of ministers, and employed them as tacticians, community organizers, and preachers. This dissertation will demonstrate that while religion was not the only factor influencing participation, its convergence with the political sphere in New Jersey created the optimum environment for success.

Dedication

*This dissertation is dedicated to my parents and my students, the individuals from whom I
have learned the most.*

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Chapter 1

Introduction

New Jersey has enjoyed a unique history among American states—a past that is often one of contradiction. Today, the “Garden State” of pastoral lands is also an industrial center with the highest population density in the country. New Jersey boasts the wealthiest zip codes in the United States and is home to some of the most economically disadvantaged cities in the Union. Similar contradictions existed in the eras prior to and during the American Revolution. New Jersey boasted one of the most representative governments of the thirteen colonies. The government was based on the principles of the Enlightenment, while at the same time the colony was the bastion of Calvinist denominations like the Presbyterians which included students of the Great Awakening.^{1 2} New Jersey was both secular in politics and home to established, powerful religious structures. As the American Revolution approached, what had been a contradiction became important to understanding how the state unified to support the Patriot cause.

This study examines the relationship between religion and the growing calls for republicanism that developed during the era of the American Revolution in New Jersey in

¹ The Great Awakening was a group of “loosely connected revivals of the 1730s and 1740s,” which helped to create a more genuinely American religious identity. The revivals sought to bring colonists back to religion by expanding the footprint of evangelicalism. The revivals made participation in religion a more active and beneficial experience for church members across various denominations. The Great Awakening put more power over ecclesiastical matters in the hands of laypeople in representative church governments, resulting in belief systems that were more responsive to the needs of individuals who had stepped away from practice. [Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), 83-87.]

² The Enlightenment was the political reaction to what had been a century of focus on religion in Europe, occurring as the result of the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation. Practitioners of the Enlightenment wished to apply reason to government and religion in order to protect against the religious “enthusiasm” that they perceived as negatively affecting Europe. This resulted in philosophers proposing the existence natural rights and the need for representative government. [Darren Staloff, *Hamilton, Adams, Jefferson: The Politics of the Enlightenment and the American Founding* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 5-9.]

order to determine the extent to which religious pluralism, ecclesiastical beliefs, structures, and leaders impacted the origins and execution of the conflict. While the state has been referred to as the “crossroads of the Revolution,” much of the scholarship in the field of colonial religion neglects the colony while focusing on the development of Puritan belief systems in New England, the internal debate and individual struggles of Quakers in Pennsylvania, and the impact of widespread Anglicanism in the South. New Jersey was the location of many of the significant battles, encampments, educational institutions, and demonstrations of the revolutionary era. In order to fully appreciate the role of New Jersey in promoting republicanism and revolution, it is necessary to analyze the impact of religion in the state to create a clear picture of the nature of the overall conflict. The major claim will therefore be that the cause of the American Revolution was directly established and furthered in New Jersey communities as a result of religious pluralism that empowered ministers and religious institutions to directly relate church doctrine to political liberty and to utilize existing structures to organize for wartime support efforts. Facing threats of elimination of religious liberty under a stronger royal authority after a failed revolution, organized religion and the republican governments in New Jersey were interdependent for survival in what was sometimes a colony hesitant to participate in radicalism and armed conflict. Through the efforts of political and religious leaders, the state would eventually develop into the true crossroads of the revolution.

This study analyzes the evolving nature of religious belief systems during this period. The American Revolution occurred shortly after the height of the Great Awakening in the colonies. It is important to determine whether the revolution was a consequence of religious revival, or if the two paradigm shifts simply occurred in close

proximity. The paper will examine the shared lexicon of the religious and republican movements in order to show a philosophical connection. The concepts of liberty and self-government are central to understanding the convergence of the two vocabularies. The difficulty with demonstrating a causal connection between abstract, individual religious beliefs and revolution is securing evidence that definitively demonstrates that revolutionaries engaged in specific actions as a consequence of church teachings. Therefore, the study will focus on the impact of ministers through specific evidence of their contributions, and will extend the discussion by examining religion as a tool of unity and organization.

Aside from political and governmental bodies, churches were generally the only form of existing social structure at the time of the American Revolution. While there were some examples of community organizing, such as volunteer fire departments, aid societies, and fraternal organizations, most did not have the infrastructure to communicate and act on revolutionary ideas on a large scale. It is therefore vital to study churches as agents for spreading a specific belief system, but also for their role in communicating the virtues of revolution. It is important to determine not only the extent of the involvement of communities of worship in promoting the philosophy of revolution but also their logistical support of the cause through building morale, engaging in recruiting efforts, gathering and distributing supplies, maintaining methods of communication, and engaging in medical relief efforts. Leading each of these initiatives were ministers or engaged lay leaders. As individuals and groups, these figures were vital to the communication and organization of revolutionary ideas and support efforts at the time. Their status not only as religious leaders but also as educated members of the

community established their ethos and respect for their messages. Sermons would espouse the virtues of liberty; ministers would actively organize resistance efforts; and many would join the physical battles, often with scores of parishioners following them. While many of the churches and ministers were actively in favor of revolution, other churches and ministers were recognized Tory leaders who used similar tactics to organize Loyalist efforts. The efforts of those who used their positions to argue against the revolution are also important to understanding the specific successes of those on the Patriot side who related religious doctrine with republicanism. Regardless of the political affiliation of a religious leader, any connection to that individual and either the cause of liberty or resistance to it demonstrates the power of clergy in the political realm.

New Jersey was not only a home to the physical struggle for liberty through armed revolution, it served as an exemplar of the virtues of choice and freedom. The role of religious beliefs, institutions, and leaders in New Jersey is particularly interesting because of the unique plurality of denominations and belief systems that the residents of the state enjoyed at the time. While there may have been only one church in a typical community, the history and geography of the state resulted in it being home to Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Dutch Reformed, Puritans, Baptists, Lutherans, Huguenots, Quakers, and Catholics. While each of these institutions had differing and somewhat competing ideologies, they were all able to communicate the cause of liberty. This pluralism distinguishes the state from many others where there was a common religious message resulting from the more uniform beliefs in the region. Central religious authorities in other areas were able to exert more influence over actions of churches, while pluralism in New Jersey provided for more independent thinking that became

shared through multiple denominations. Many of the Protestants of New Jersey, Anglicans and Methodists excepted, had experienced freedom to select their denominations, choose their ministers, and elect members to regional ecclesiastical governments.

Any study that includes religion as a component has the propensity to be driven by anachronistic understandings of religious denominations and movements. For the purposes of this dissertation, it will be important to differentiate modern secularism and modern evangelicalism from secular and evangelical beliefs of the revolutionary era.³ Modern secularism consists of an effort to demonstrate that religion was neither the driving force for the American Revolution nor a significant influence on political theory and practice of the time. Modern evangelicalism is an effort to use historical examples to demonstrate the power and importance of a religious basis for American principles and culture. Revolutionary secularism was a less conscious effort to disassociate religion and politics, with the ultimate goal of creating the most effective political system for the country. Period evangelicalism was the program, often associated with the aftermath of the Great Awakening of the mid-eighteenth century, to expand the presence and influence of Christianity, and more often individual sectarian goals. In either case, it is important to note that religion and organized religion had as much of an impact on government as political structures had on belief systems.

³ The term “evangelical” as used in this dissertation is defined using the framework of noted religious historian Mark Noll, who focuses much of his work on this movement. Noll asserts that the term describes “a set of convictions, practices, habits and oppositions that resemble what Europeans describe as ‘pietism.’ . . . It called for a renewal of inward spiritual life, more active lay participation in day-to-day Christianity, less fixation on church order and broader use of the Bible by everyone in the church.” The key ingredients of evangelicalism included conversion, the Bible, activism, and crucicentrism. [Mark Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 17-19.]

This dissertation will add value to the scholarship of religion and politics, New Jersey history, and the American Revolution. There has yet to be a study that comprehensively disaggregates the issues that have been identified here from a larger discussion of religion, revolution, and politics. First, this study will differentiate between the impact of colonies with religious pluralism and regions with dominant denominational influences. The study will demonstrate that the freedom of the pluralistic environment converged with republican principles in order to create an environment in which people felt more connected to the revolutionary cause. The analysis will demonstrate how this experience was different from the experience of residents of the more commonly analyzed Puritan North and Anglican South. This distinguishes New Jersey from other states, an approach overlooked by most of the scholarly community with the exception of Joseph Tiedemann and historians who focused on one specific denomination in the state.

This analysis further distinguishes itself in this scholarly field by establishing the existence of a spectrum between secularism and evangelicalism. Most scholars have seemingly engaged in a binary debate, but have still recognized that commonalities among their arguments exist, such as the bidirectional impact of religion and politics. The dissertation will expand on the works of historians Frank Lambert and Joseph Wilson by demonstrating that it is possible to take a more moderate approach on the spectrum in an effort to show the importance of religion as one of a variety of factors that had an impact on the American Revolution, and that it can be used as a tool to facilitate political involvement.

This dissertation will promote the study of New Jersey history, demonstrating that it is characterized by cooperation and common values despite religious choice, diversity, and sometimes animosity. State history had been popular in the first half of the twentieth century, and now increased attention to regionalism and identity have once again sparked interest in this field. Despite this resurgence of scholarship and a diverse church history in the state, there has not been a specific definitive study about the impact of religion in revolutionary New Jersey politics beyond that of Joseph Tiedemann who analyzed the middle colonies as a region. Others like Nelson Burr, John Hall, Alfred Jones, Barbara Wingo, and Nicholas Maring have approached this conversation with discussions of one denomination, but there has yet to be a comprehensive study.

This project distinguishes itself by differentiating and analyzing structural levels of religious influence. It is important to transcend the traditional argument of how “religion” affected the American Revolution by specifically analyzing how the actions of ministers and church structures facilitated the political and military efforts of the period. Studying a pluralistic environment allows one to compare these issues over a variety of churches, leaders, towns, and diverse individuals. The writings on the New Jersey-specific institutions, profiles of leaders such as John Witherspoon, and the discussion of Mark Noll on institutional changes to evangelical churches help to frame this discussion, but do not explicitly provide analysis of the various types of religious engagement.

The second chapter will examine the current scholarly arguments regarding secularism and evangelicalism in revolutionary politics. It will acknowledge that there is a consensus among historians that religion and politics enjoyed a bilateral impact in the revolutionary period, while recognizing that religious influence on political participation

was not a universal experience. This helps to differentiate New Jersey from other regions. The chapter will then provide a framework for the concept of a spectrum of impact and historical positions. The scholarship demonstrates how New Jersey was both representative of this growing force and unique in its application.

The third chapter will focus on the accounts of how the colony-turned-State of New Jersey and its inhabitants influenced the revolutionary cause through specific involvement. The section will trace the transition of government structures from those with royal influence to revolutionary committees and a provincial assembly. It will analyze the geographic and sociopolitical reasons why New Jersey was the crossroads of the American Revolution. The chapter will explore why religion was necessary in order to organize reluctant New Jersey residents to fight. The number of battles, encampments, and marches in New Jersey both allowed and forced the people of the state to become more involved in the war. The section will illustrate the diversity in New Jersey that both benefitted and arrested the revolutionary cause in the colony.

The study of diversity in New Jersey will continue to the fourth chapter, which will identify the variety of organized religions present in New Jersey during the period. It will evaluate the common and distinguishing characteristics of each system, and begin to more specifically relate these ideas to national politics. There will be a focus on comparing denominational strength and development during the pre-war and revolutionary periods. It will further demonstrate the impact of pluralism on interpretations of freedom and involvement of individuals and groups in the revolution.

The subsequent section will trace how churches as social and government institutions organized to become supporters of the revolutionary cause. Chapter five will

examine churches as examples of representative bodies, places for the sharing of revolutionary rhetoric, homes to prominent leaders, and encouragement to enlist. This chapter will explore resolutions taken by the governing institutions of churches in support or against republican rhetoric. The consequences of the decisions of governance structures and local churches will be analyzed. The Presbyterians and Quakers will be used as case studies to demonstrate the impact of strong organizational structures.

Some church governments empowered ministers to preach on the topic of freedom in furtherance of the revolutionary cause, while others regarded it as the responsibility of parish leaders to either work for neutrality or call for the support of the British authorities. The sixth chapter will first identify religious leaders who played visible roles in the revolutionary cause, who may not have been part of the armed forces. It will further explore how both famous and lesser-known pastors used their influence to inspire their parishioners to support the cause of liberty, or inhibit it. The chapter will examine how ministers became leaders in both religious and political spheres during the war. It will analyze the contents and role of sermons in a revolutionary context. In addition, this chapter will discuss how non-combatant ministers became de facto leaders of local resistance movements, often at the risk of their own person and property.

While some ministers chose to rally their congregations for the war, others fought alongside them and served other roles in the military. This differentiates ministers, the clergy ministering to churches and denominations, from chaplains, who participated within the military structure. Some chaplains literally changed from their vestments to a uniform, and asked their congregations to join them. The seventh and final substantive chapter will discuss the service of individual clergy members in combat and chaplain

roles. It will explore how chaplains rallied troops, ministered to those in war, and became vital members and leaders of military units. These mostly educated men were called upon by military commanders to provide advice, deliver meaningful and inspirational sermons, and add a sense of humanity to the conflict.

In addition to its analysis of Patriot religious leaders and structures, this study reviews the impact of non-resistance denominations like the Quakers, and Loyalist contingents within the Anglican and Methodist denominations. Such examples of organizations and leaders do not undermine the argument that there existed a convergence of political and religious liberty in pluralistic New Jersey. The stories of denominations which used their organizational strength to promote pacifism or resistance demonstrates how religious leaders and structures were tools of social influence and control during the period. The plurality and religious liberty in New Jersey allowed emerging leaders among the Presbyterians and Baptists to exercise power, while simultaneously providing mechanisms for the Anglican Establishment to fight for its survival. This illustrates the environment that existed within the New Jersey colony before and during the war. The war was not fought for the purposes of religion, but leaders and religious structures recognized the relationship between their denominations and ultimate desires for the future of America.

The Patriot war effort was most successful in towns and churches that boasted strong ministers and robust governance structures. Once New Jersey leaders recognized that the same freedom that provided for religious exercise and republicanism caused people not to answer quickly the call to arms, they exploited the organizational leaders and forces that could reach individuals. Regional denominational hierarchies such as the

Presbyterian Synod stated their approval of the Patriot cause by professing outward support and instructing their ministers to do the same. Patriot ministers deliberately infused terms like “liberty,” “freedom,” “self-government,” and “natural laws” into their sermons in order to promote a connection between the Enlightenment politics of the revolution and the enduring values of the Great Awakening. The convergence of these two concepts poised religious leaders and structures to fill roles in revolutionary recruitment and execution. The religious pluralism in New Jersey allowed people choice in their denominational alignment and permitted them to influence the governance of the Protestant churches. The result of these forces was a multidirectional relationship of necessity between religion and politics. Enlightened leaders in the religious and political spheres used religious virtues and forums to build military forces and support for the cause. Churches saw the war as a practical struggle for survival as they recognized that a loss in the war would result in the reintroduction of powerful colonial governments that would be enticed to establish a state church in order to maintain control. In order to strengthen churches, ministers employed losses in the war as evidence that Americans needed to be better Christians.⁴ The political and religious environment that was unique to New Jersey allowed for success for many competing Patriot interests.

⁴ It is ironic that while ministers successfully argued for their members to become more compliant with religious principles during various fasts and days of prayer in the war, it was the “rougher” Americans who were often the most successful and prolific fighters. Those men were more practically attached to victory than their more virtuous contemporaries. The nature of the army is evidenced by Washington’s constant fear of mutiny, as well as the willingness of the rank and file to rebel against him in 1783. [James Thomas Flexner, *Washington: The Indispensable Man* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 1974), 134, 172.]

Chapter 2

Providing Context for New Jersey: Review of Literature on Religion and the American Revolution in America

Introduction

The American Revolution has been studied by scholars who have endeavored to understand or explain its causes, events, and impacts through social, political, economic, philosophical, and cultural lenses. Each interpretation requires analysis of the period using a specific theoretical approach or a particular collection of occurrences. This study seeks to gain understanding of the revolution not simply through one of many available lenses, but by identifying religion and its connection to republicanism, one of multiple concurrent impacts on the conflict. This analysis is further qualified by interpreting within the context of the Colony and newly minted wartime State of New Jersey. In order to establish the philosophical basis for understanding the impact of religion in the colonies and later the United States, one must trace the changes that occurred in the conceptualization of natural rights, government, religion, and structural religious authority as a result of the Enlightenment and the Great Awakening.

While it is clear that religion changed in the decades leading to armed conflict with Britain, there is debate among scholars as to the extent of the impact that religion actually had on the political and revolutionary base. Among those who argue that there is a relationship, it is generally agreed that the impact was bidirectional in nature. It is therefore necessary to analyze the secular and evangelical schools of both the time period and modern historians. One of the most significant structural differences that grew

between Britain and the colonies was the emergence of religious pluralism in the colonies. While this was not universally present in the new United States, the presence of this movement of choice was expanding in New Jersey. An analysis of the impact of such a force is vital to explaining the connection between religion and politics. Once these philosophical concerns are discussed, it is necessary to engage in a discussion of the practical application of said developments. In order to fully apply this analysis to New Jersey, one must appreciate the uniqueness and importance of this state both independent of, and in comparison to, its twelve counterparts. This study will explore the unique role of New Jersey through social, economic, strategic, constitutional, and political lenses. While republicanism thrived in this state, there were communities of loyalists who either passively or actively supported the right of the British to control and regain authority in the land. The analysis of the literature will demonstrate that religion and Loyalism had connection similar to that of republicanism. When considering the impact of religion, one must differentiate between the actions of individuals based on personal conviction, the leadership of ministers, and the organization and social structure provided by individual church communities. When analyzed separately, it is apparent that each of these areas and the associated scholarship demonstrate clear connections to the American Revolution. The discussion that follows aims to connect these concepts in order to provide evidence of measurable impact on the philosophical and physical manifestations of the American Revolution. The analysis will first be conducted on a macro-level, and then the literature review will discuss the specific social and political situation in New Jersey.

The Relationship of the Enlightenment to the Great Awakening and its Impact on Religious Republicanism

In pre-revolutionary America, two philosophical forces dominated the calls for reform and structural change: the more secular Enlightenment and the religious Great Awakening. The Enlightenment in America was based on the European movement that relied on reason while questioning long-standing traditions like hereditary monarchy, oppressive class structures, and superstition. Political theorists like Locke, Rousseau, Montesquieu, and their contemporaries created models for republican governments based on natural rights. The British colonies in North America became laboratories for testing such political models. In the earliest years of the founding of the colonies, many like the Massachusetts Bay Colony enjoyed limited English involvement in most affairs. Domestic and foreign relations crises in England resulted in a period of salutary neglect in the North American colonies. The mercantile policies were relaxed, and colonies either suffered or flourished as a result of their own leadership and trade decisions. Due to the absence of Crown authority in many colonies, representative or cooperative governments were introduced on the community and provincial levels. Enlightenment scholar Darren Staloff argues that the United States is the nation in history that has demonstrated the greatest impact from the Enlightenment period.⁵ Staloff does not provide a metric with which to measure the effects of the movement; however, it is important to frame this discussion by noting that the Americans were exposed to the thoughts of this movement of reason largely after these thoughts had been filtered through Europe. While some argue that this dilutes the purity of the Enlightenment ideals that were eventually put into

⁵ Darren Staloff, *Hamilton, Adams, Jefferson: The Politics of Enlightenment and the American Founding* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 3.

practice in the United States, the beliefs had more time to be analyzed and tested in a political environment that for decades was not overly constrained by royalist involvement. Historians, Staloff contends, often define the Enlightenment based on their interpretations of the period.⁶ Reception at the time, he argues, was varied in response to structural changes in the status quo of the human condition.⁷ Despite this, most accepted the basic premise of applying reason not only to science but also to society and politics. It is reasonable to expect such a varied reaction to a paradigm shift that challenged basic human understanding of customs and governance. All individuals simply agreeing to one school of thought would have negated the premise of the Enlightenment. This experience would later be approximated by the progressive nature of the Great Awakening, suggesting an enduring issue in the definition of American republicanism. The reality surfaces that the nature of representative government was being developed not as a pure model, but rather one that was designed and lived within the constraints that existed.

For the purposes of this analysis, most discussion will center on how the Enlightenment helped to provide the environment for the Great Awakening; however, the goal of this study is to trace how the individual faithful, ministers, and church structures influenced the American Revolution. It is therefore important to remember that the Enlightenment feelings were not necessarily eclipsed by religious revivalism. The secular principles were certainly not forgotten. Rather, there is a continuing progression that educated and formed the philosophical and physical manifestations of the desire for liberty and republicanism during this period. Many scholars wish to separate the two movements based on their arguably incongruent goals. This study contends that greater

⁶ Staloff, 4

⁷ Staloff, 4

unifying elements than are generally recognized contributed to a change in the overall philosophical environment in America in the pre-revolutionary period.

The Enlightenment in America is generally associated with roots in politics and individual liberties; however, the original movement in Europe is derived from a rational response to greater social issues of the time. Staloff summarizes this development:

The Enlightenment was a reaction to more than a century of intense religious ferment across central and western Europe. The Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation of the sixteenth century ushered in an age of religious controversy, persecution, and war. . . . What made this religious ferment so explosive was the fact that it transformed the very nature of Christian piety and belief. Christianity had been a largely liturgical affair, with the church binding the local community through the shared rhythms of its rituals. Salvation hinged on obedience to the authority of the church—the greatest dispenser of grace that held the keys to the kingdom of heaven.⁸

There has been a widely studied correlation and causation model in which religious differences cause violent conflict. While the current study aims to demonstrate the inverse of this relationship, it is necessary to discuss the structural religious undertones of the Enlightenment. The events in Europe that were the impetus behind philosophical change that most closely resembled American development included a movement among individuals to find their own connection with God. Saloff suggests that “beginning with the Reformation, ritual gave way to revelation and customary obedience was displaced by the introspective search for saving truths.”⁹ The application of these truths to the “government of church, state, and society” combined with the desire to spread religion provided the opportunity for individuals to reconsider social and political structures.¹⁰

⁸ Staloff, 5

⁹ Staloff, 5

¹⁰ Staloff, 6

The exact roots and path of the Enlightenment in America remain controversial. While it is generally accepted that the principles of the period were initiated in Europe and transmitted by trade to the colonies, the reasons for the manifestation of the Enlightenment in America diverge in modern scholarship. While Staloff effectively connects social factors with the Enlightenment, Joyce Appleby challenges the basic assumptions of most scholars who seek to apply the concept of current-day liberalism to the era preceding the American Revolution.¹¹ Appleby suggests that the nature of the colonies created “traditionally structured, interdependent communities.”¹² As a result of the nature of individual reliance on others, Appleby argues that “this new social situation made contemporaries peculiarly sensitive to threats against their personal freedom.”¹³ While this is another social explanation of the development of the Enlightenment that is different from that of Staloff, both interpretations reinforce the idea that social situations and movements contributed to the spread of republican philosophy. The development of the connection of social and political consciousness played a role in the identification and organization of revolutionaries. The individuals in America who were leading calls for republican change would have been cognizant of the structural roots of the European Enlightenment. The extent of radical change resulting from the Enlightenment might not have been fully appreciated without the later—or, arguably concurrent—onset of the Great Awakening in America.

The economic success that occurred in the colonies as a result of British laissez-faire economics before the French and Indian War created an environment in which

¹¹ Joyce Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 143.

¹² Appleby, 144

¹³ Appleby, 144

money and success were valued over other factors. The Puritans, known for their exceptional work ethic based on the concept that one would reap the benefits of their labors upon ascending to heaven, grew farms and commercial ventures in their New England communities. However, the rewards found from economic successes soon eclipsed the benefits to the soul upon which Puritanism had relied for its doctrine. As a result, active involvement in church functions and worship declined. As the revolution approached, “only about 17 percent of Americans were churched.”¹⁴ Approximately twenty percent of New England residents were affiliated with a religion.¹⁵ The rate in this previously Puritan-dominated region was similar to that of the middle colonies.¹⁶ New Jersey had the highest religious adherence rate in 1776, at twenty-six percent.¹⁷ Religious activists at the time feared that this disconnect with the virtues and control of organized religion would lead to a perceived godless society. These fears led captivating preachers like George Whitefield, Theodore Frelinghuysen, and Jonathan Edwards to travel from town to town barnstorming with their messages of the necessity of returning to God. At the same time, however, these men and their layperson counterparts were cognizant of the fact that many were either alienated from or unmoved by traditional incarnations of religion. The only ways to convince non- or under-practicing Christians to return to faith would be to use the recruitment strategy favored by Edwards of instilling fear of a vengeful God into the minds of listeners through vivid descriptions of hell, or engaging in the method of Frelinghuysen which favored allowing individuals the chance to have

¹⁴ Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 22.

¹⁵ Finke and Stark, 25

¹⁶ Finke and Stark, 26

¹⁷ Finke and Stark, 31

direct communion with God while bypassing many of the most traditional church practices.

This Great Awakening, like the Enlightenment, was a philosophical revolution that advocated separation from traditional structures. The coexistence of these two movements arguably provided for an optimal environment for other paradigm shifts within the American colonies. In “The American Revolution and Protestant Evangelicalism,” Mark Noll argues that self-discovery and individual communion began to inform religious practice in lieu of customary religious and governmental authority.¹⁸ While this contention represents the traditional American narrative, it is important to note that the Anglican Church maintained a strong presence in America despite the celebrated changes. However, the practices of individual churches undoubtedly were informed by the evolving political and social concepts within the minds of their members.

While it appears to be universally accepted that the Enlightenment and Great Awakening overlapped, two significant debates have arisen with respect to this coexistence. The first point argued by scholars is the extent to which the secular Enlightenment affected the evangelical Great Awakening. The resulting significant controversy is over which of the two forces had a greater impact on the events leading to and subsequently during the American Revolution. One of the greatest challenges facing scholarship in the field of religion and politics in the United States is that often scholars explore these essential questions of the past using their own individual values. There is a desire among modern evangelical historians like Mark Noll to fit the American Revolution into the model that proves the consistent importance of religion in American

¹⁸ Mark Noll, “The American Revolution and Protestant Evangelicalism,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23, no. 3 (Winter, 1993): 615.

politics throughout the history of the Republic. There is an equally strong desire by modern secularists like Gordon Wood to explain period radicalism as the result of political and social forces so that modern individuals can feel independent of religious influence in government. It is therefore important to this study, as well as the remainder of the body of scholarly work in the field, to contextualize these arguments both within the historical time period and the debate over modern political virtue. This argument provides a new role for a moderate view of the question.

In order to appreciate the relationship between the Enlightenment and the Great Awakening, it is necessary to discuss the commonalities that have been acknowledged by both historical figures and historians. The most apparent similarity is the existence of choice and human free will in the two movements, and the value that is attached to that freedom. Enlightenment political theorists like Locke and Rousseau call for a civil voting process. Bernard Bailyn, in his discussion of Enlightenment rationalism and conservatism, offers insight into colonial philosophy based on period writings:

The ideas and writings of the leading secular thinkers of the European Enlightenment – reformers and social critics like Voltaire, Rousseau, and Beccaria as well as conservative analysts like Montesquieu – were quoted everywhere in the colonies, by everyone who claimed a broad awareness. In pamphlet after pamphlet the American writers cited Locke on natural rights and on the social and governmental contract, . . . Voltaire on the evils of clerical oppression, . . . and Vattel on the laws of nature and of nations, and on the principles of civil government.¹⁹

This point can be taken beyond the traditional context of solely civil libertarianism. The discussion of natural rights is incomplete without rhetoric on the presence of an active or inactive “clockmaker” Creator. The message of Voltaire that more power in religious

¹⁹ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 27.

structures should be in the hands of the people reflected the growing concerns of the Great Awakening. The reconsideration of the social contract in a religious context reflected the evolving discussion in political spheres.

The effects of the Enlightenment were evident in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Newly established local and provincial governments were formed and administered based on governing documents that called for election of representatives and executive offices. In Puritan New England, the town meeting style of government existed, approximating absolute democracy by allowing all eligible members of the community to vote on matters of common concern. However, in most government structures, property, gender, age, religious, and racial requirements were in effect, which limited the application of popular voting, except in rare circumstances like Rhode Island where Jews could vote but not hold office due to their refusal to swear on the Bible.

Choice was similarly present in the Great Awakening, as religious plurality permitted American Christians to select a denomination in which to participate. However, the availability of church affiliations was often limited in communities to those institutions which were approved by and received the financial support of the elites. Evangelical and developed mainstream sects called for deliverance from the traditional world and participation in a perfect society in the afterlife. Enlightenment-informed republicans offered the chance for Americans to transcend the oppression of monarchy and mercantilism through newfound choices. Mark Noll argues that Great Awakening “revivalists offered audiences the hope of ‘everlasting liberty’ from ‘bondage and servitude.’”²⁰ This suggests a connection between the two movements, but does not settle

²⁰ Mark Noll, “The American Revolution and Protestant Evangelicalism,” 627

the question of the impact of the secular Enlightenment on the religious Great Awakening, or of which of the two forces had a greater influence on the evolving notions of liberty and republicanism being spread throughout the American colonies.

The most peculiar and awkward discussion regarding sociopolitical movements during this period involves analyzing the effect the largely secular, sometimes described as anti-religious, Enlightenment had on the evangelical Great Awakening. One may argue against the utility of tracing this relationship of impact. However, it is important to understand that the evolution of religious doctrine and practice toward a focus on the individual rather than the institution was an experimental precursor for the equally shocking social change that would occur when individual liberties became regarded as paramount over state control. Darren Staloff makes the observation that “Whatever else they disagree about, historians of the Enlightenment recognize it as the source of our modern, secular worldview, from our ideals of religious toleration, individual liberty, and free speech to our practices of representative government and unfettered commercial development.”²¹ The concept that the religious tolerance that grew from the Enlightenment helped to create an American landscape of religious pluralism suggests that the successes of the first movement helped to usher in the second. However, the question remains of whether American religious diversity expanded due to increased political toleration, or as a result of earlier bilateral intolerance. American geographic regions had been religiously diverse as a result of settlements of individuals with different religious, political, and national affiliations settling in one place. However, within those communities, tolerance was not uniform, and individuals outside of the

²¹ Staloff, 3

ruling religion were often purposefully excluded from participating in local and provincial governments.

The discussion of the two coinciding social forces at the time introduces the question of which one was more consequential in the period and throughout the greater American historical narrative. Evangelical interpretations offer the argument that the Great Awakening was more likely the proximate cause of the convergence of the two movements. The alignment of individual and group interest between the religious revival and the American Revolution, coupled with the proximity in time and common leadership, provides one school of historians with the evidence for the contention that the impact of this movement was superior to that of the Enlightenment. The converse argument is that the Great Awakening did not deliberately serve the purpose of liberty in government, and therefore its impact was circumstantial. The Enlightenment specifically sought to challenge the political status quo in order to amplify calls for structural change in government.

Convergence of Religion and Republicanism

The discussion of commonalities and influences between the Enlightenment and Great Awakening suggests that a relationship between the two movements likely occurred in the pre-revolutionary era and helped to define the new American republicanism. Mark Noll suggests that the common goals and vocabulary of the Enlightenment and the Great Awakening converged in a manner that resulted in the development of a unified purpose.²²

²² Mark Noll, "The American Revolution and Protestant Evangelicalism," 615

By the mid-1770s their vocabularies became almost interchangeable. Evangelicals and republicans spoke alike on human nature, especially the belief that without restraint humans would drift naturally to corruption. They used similar language to describe the relation between individual morality and public well-being. The personal exercise of virtue (godliness as public spiritedness, and vice versa) provided the necessary foundation for a free and well-balanced society. In turn, liberty-civil and religious—was a prerequisite for the cultivation of virtue. Tyranny not only revealed the degeneracy of rulers, but made it impossible for virtue to be cultivated. Without virtue there could be no true liberty; without liberty, no health in society.²³

This interpretation successfully explains the mutually beneficial relationship between the forces to the extent that a new common sociopolitical culture in America was being established, redefining American norms. While it is generally more accepted that religion and politics were more closely related during the colonial period than during others in American history, there exists a great controversy surrounding the Noll interpretation that should be addressed. His writings suggest a causal relationship that is nothing less than providential in many ways. Secular historians like Gordon Wood diverge markedly from this theory. This polarization with respect to interpretations suggests that a more moderate approach exists to explain the relationship, and Frank Lambert suggests that a middle ground for interpretation exists. Thomas Kidd, who argues for a clear connection between religion and republicanism, acknowledges that the connection was not as simple as Noll would describe. Kidd introduces the concept that there were significant disagreements among the diverse religious sects that prevented the existence of one consistent religious message in politics.²⁴ However, he argues that despite this, a common concept of republicanism was developing. In his review of *God of Liberty . . .* by Kidd

²³ Mark Noll, “The American Revolution and Protestant Evangelicalism,” 631

²⁴ Thomas Kidd, *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution* (New York, Basic Books, 2010), 55.

and *Heavenly Merchandize* . . . by Mark Valeri, religious historian Frank Lambert notes that there is agreement between the two that “the influence between religion and American culture is bidirectional.”²⁵ While this may seem limited in nature, the shared impact argument opens a realistic and logical line of discussion. Considering the varied scholarly interpretations, primary accounts from the period provide the most comprehensive context. As noted in the collection of John Ward Dean, the Reverend Caleb Wallace observed: “. . . the few active members never had louder calls from both church and state to exert themselves; and I might add that as all attention to a thing of such unspeakable advantage to both.”²⁶ Wallace is asserting that the church and state had common interests, but does not specifically reveal the root cause of this phenomenon. Dean attributes the success of this connection to Americans feeling more comfortable that there was a unified direction to follow rather than the conflict between two distinct poles.²⁷

While a desire for a new republic seems to be a very affirmative mission, it is necessary to view the success of this movement as not only resulting from philosophical developments but also as the specific response to actions of government that were perceived as threatening. Noll offers that the common fear of oppression during this period was evident in a state-run church, hereditary monarchy, and a Parliament whose decisions were contrary to the will of the colonists.²⁸ Furthermore, oppression was specifically demonstrated through the levying of taxes in the American colonies. The

²⁵ Frank Lambert, “Religion in the Public Square: Interactions Between the Sacred and the Secular in Colonial and Revolutionary America,” *Reviews in American History* 39 no. 4 (December, 2011): 595.

²⁶ John Ward Dean, Ed, *The Historical Magazine, and Notes and Quires Concerning the Antiquities, History, and Biography of America*, Vol. I. (Boston: C. Benjamin Richardson, 1857), 355.

²⁷ Dean, 355

²⁸ Mark Noll, “The American Revolution and Protestant Evangelicalism,” 636

uproar surrounding these government actions is generally associated with the roots of revolutionary conflict. Such government actions were extended beyond civil authority and into religious institutions. Nelson Rightmyer supports the assertions of Noll when he suggests that in some colonies such as Maryland, inhabitants were required to pay taxes to support the Anglican Church. However, they were not consulted on the assignment of clergy.²⁹ This practice not only alienated the residents but also created a specific connection to the taxation without representation arguments used by revolutionaries. The situation caused residents not only to question religious authoritarianism but also to reject specific actions taken by colonial governments.³⁰ The result of such actions throughout the colonies was the eventual mobilization of Americans with specific grievances regarding British actions. Justin Winsor argued that “none the less did hostility to the English Church help largely to stimulate the spirit of rebellion.”³¹ The policies similarly caused individuals to reject the dominance of Anglicanism with republican principles of self-determination and representation. While this explanation provides evidence of a connection, one cannot minimize the impact of economic and political factors in fostering this environment of republicanism and rebellion. Immediately prior to the American Revolution, successful provincial assemblies, which had been formed and operated for many decades by Americans based on Enlightenment principles, were either disbanded or limited in their authority for the purpose of reestablishing royal rule on this level. While radical philosophy was a subtext of republican thought, individuals did not act on the

²⁹ Nelson Rightmyer, “The Anglican Church in Maryland: Factors Contributory to the American Revolution.” *Church History* 19, no. 3 (September, 1950): 187.

³⁰ Rightmyer, 198

³¹ Justin Winsor, Ed, *Narrative and Critical History of America*, Vol. VI (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1887), 243.

ideas until needing to respond to perceived oppression in the political and religious arenas.

While reasonable political, social, and economic explanations exist for the growing connection between religious and political vocabulary and liberty, one cannot discount the power and talents of individuals in achieving this objective. People who deviated from the English state religion would be more likely to break from tradition in other ways and would be willing to fight for the maintenance of their cherished freedom. While many of the great revolutionaries did not participate in the cause for purely or predominantly religious purposes, Noll asserts that key individuals such as “Sam Adams, John Jay, Patrick Henry, John Witherspoon, Elias Boudinot and Roger Sherman were more or less evangelical.”³² However, secularists and proponents of deism have claimed that there were equally as many of the founders in those camps. While this correlation is not necessarily evidence of causation, the overall belief systems of these men would help to educate them in crafting a more radical position on the fight for liberty. It is important to understand that the identified evangelicals were not the only Christians of the period. The majority of men and women of the period practiced locally without the resources or desire to spread their religious beliefs beyond their specific communities. A review of the literature on this subject reveals that scholars like Noll and Wood, representing the polar opposites, each would like to claim a founder for his camp. This demonstrates the importance of the evidence-based middle approach that will be employed in this study.

The nexus of religious and political liberty fostered by philosophical advances and communication from leaders would further help to create an American identity

³² Mark Noll, “The American Revolution and Protestant Evangelicalism,” 622

distinct from that of Great Britain. Noll argues that “throughout the colonies the practical effect of connecting religious and civil liberty was to prejudice the religion and the social philosophy of Anglican loyalism. In the South it helped to establish a political alliance between nominal Anglicans like Jefferson and Madison and sectarian dissenters.”³³ It was apparent that the desire to remain identified as Anglican became progressively less important to many Americans as political liberty was becoming a hotly debated point. It may have also been less convenient, and as a result this alliance occurred by default. During the American Revolution, many colonists believed that an effective metric by which to gauge one’s dedication to the cause was to determine how loyal the individual was to the Anglican Church. A similar metric was applied to Methodists, whose leader John Wesley instructed followers to remain on the side, and in the good graces, of the English.³⁴ Even after most of the British Methodist preachers left America on the eve of the war, American authorities surveilled the itinerant evangelicals who were from the American colonies.³⁵ One who remained loyal to these institutions may not have been as invested in the revolutionary cause as others among his/her contemporaries. This method of analysis allowed for easier identification of those who supported the revolutionary cause.

William Sweet asserts that it is important to note that there were more Anglican signers of the Declaration of Independence than those who supported another religious denomination.³⁶ The difference between those signers of the Declaration and other

³³ Mark Noll, “The American Revolution and Protestant Evangelicalism,” 628

³⁴ Dee Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America, 1760-1800: The Shaping of an Evangelical Culture* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 49.

³⁵ Andrews, 55-6

³⁶ William W. Sweet, “The Role of the Anglicans in the American Revolution,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (November, 1947): 52.

identified Anglicans is that the doctrine of the Church of England became comparatively less important to them than revolutionary principles. The relationship of revolutionaries to Anglicans would be most tenuous in regions such as New England where government regulation was most significantly experienced, thus causing more tenuous reactions. Sweet argues that in colonies such as Virginia, one's identification as an Anglican was less important than his perceived commitment to the doctrine of the revolution.³⁷ The southern colonies had additionally created a church governance system that was traditionally run by laypeople.³⁸ These colonies had benefitted from early success in establishing representative government with the powers of taxation and appropriations. This strength of these elected assemblies was a check on the ability of the English government to enforce its will upon them. Colonial officials who were appointed by the King or Parliament were predominantly Anglican.³⁹ Edgar Pennington asserts that this association would further the suspicion of other individuals committed to that philosophy.

The war provided an opportunity for the evangelical community to become more closely aligned to the republican movement. Noll points out that "during the Revolutionary period, evangelicals both ardently supported the war and eagerly adjusted their religion to the humanism of republicanism and commonsense moral reasoning."⁴⁰ At the conclusion of the war, participation on the victorious side of the conflict cemented their influence on the new government. This was especially important in the eyes of the leaders of the evangelical movement, as many of the founding fathers of the new

³⁷ Sweet, 53

³⁸ Sweet, 61

³⁹ Edgar Pennington, "The Anglican Clergy of Pennsylvania and the American Revolution," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 63, no. 4 (October, 1939): 403.

⁴⁰ Mark Noll, "The American Revolution and Protestant Evangelicalism," 637

government did not share their beliefs. The influence of evangelicals would provide an alternative to the non-evangelical practices of some high-profile government leaders like George Washington, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, and Benjamin Franklin.⁴¹ The non-evangelical nature of these men has created a debate over whether they were deist. It is clear, though, that Protestant evangelicals were able to serve both their country and their religious institutions by participating in the American Revolution.

The Protestant evangelicals were not alone in the association of religious practice and political power. Officials of the Anglican Church recognized that they needed to assert dominance in order to maintain political power. Sweet explores this topic through contemporary statements. Thomas Chandler used the legislated dominance of the Anglican Church as justification for protest against the colonial power:

The Church of England is the only true- Church and no one could be a Christian or be ordained to the ministry outside its fold; legitimate marriages could only be solemnized by an Anglican clergyman; the King ruled by divine right and submission, obedience and loyalty to the King and Government were Christian duties; an established national Church is essential to the life and security of every nation, and one can-not live without the other; “independency in religion will naturally produce republicanism in the State, and from their principles too prevalent already, the greatest evils may justly be apprehended;” since the Church of England was the only true Christian Church, the Dissenters had no inherent rights, but were merely tolerated as a necessary evil in as few privileges as possible until they could be either persuaded or forced to conform to the Established Church.⁴²

A 1767 letter from the Reverend Samuel Auchmuty, the rector of Trinity Church, New York, validates the fears of the colonists: “These restless people [dissenters] enjoy

⁴¹ Mark Noll, “The American Revolution and Protestant Evangelicalism,” 622

⁴² As quoted in Sweet, 55

privileges enough by the Act of Toleration; should they be vested with more, they will endanger the Established Church to say nothing of the state.”⁴³

This purposeful attempt at control over the colonists and their belief systems effectively demonstrates the organizational causes for the revolutionary dissent of evangelical leaders. Despite gaining significant momentum and followers during the colonial period, British legal systems prevented evangelical and other non-Anglican ministers such as Scottish Presbyterians from performing their duties as clergymen on an equal footing. This included officiating over legally binding marriages, one of the basic rights and privileges enjoyed by clergy. These restrictions resulted in calls for reform by New York Presbyterians such as Alexander Cumming.⁴⁴

The British recognized the growing role of the clergy, as evident when Arthur Lee noted the “violent temper of the ministry.”⁴⁵ As a result of the perceived radical Protestant threat, the British engaged in policies that specifically promoted the state religion over others present in the colonies. However, James Grahame argues that it was difficult for the Protestant revolutionaries to claim moral superiority with respect to religious freedom. The radicals prohibited Quakers and other similar religious groups from adhering to the requirements of the Stamp Act.⁴⁶ The Quaker policy was pacifism and conscientiousness, which was impeded by such actions from the other Americans. Individuals who take actions in the name of religion or ideology face, whether knowingly or not, the dilemma that their actions will affect the rights of others. The use of religion

⁴³ Sweet, 55

⁴⁴ A.S. Barnes, Ed., *The Historical Magazine of American History with Notes and Queries*, Vol. III, Part II (New York, A.S. Barnes and Company, 1879): 620

⁴⁵ Winsor, 111

⁴⁶ James Grahame, *The History of the United States of North America from the Plantation of the British Colonies till Their Assumption of National Independence*, Vol. IV (Philadelphia: Lee and Blanchard, 1845): 231.

as an organizing tool in the American Revolution was not always pure and just; however, the level to which it was would have been determined at the time by parishioners and ministers of varying sects, who would deliberately tailor actions to elicit a particular reaction or result.

Relationship of the Scholarship to New Jersey and the American Revolution

New Jersey has a legacy of being a uniquely diverse colony and state socially, politically, and economically. The peninsular geographic placement, construction of ports, and access to a variety of other cities made New Jersey a crossroads in colonization and the American Revolution. Frank Greenagel describes the impact on religion on New Jersey. “There are two fundamental reasons why the Jersey ‘churchscape’ developed differently from that of other colonies: religious diversity and the settlement patterns that arose from the speculative activities of the colony’s proprietors and early landholders.”⁴⁷ Greenagel argues that this situation would not have occurred without the leadership and financial goals of Sir George Carteret and Lord Berkeley who had been granted the proprietorships of the split Jersey colony by the English Crown.⁴⁸ Religious diversity reflected social, political, and economic pluralism. The founding documents of the colony granted religious “freedom” by fiat.⁴⁹ As a result, communities were, in theory, able to be formed without the fear of being identified for persecution. Thomas Kidd contends that this was a sharp contrast to the popular view that was held by members of many religious

⁴⁷ Frank Greenagel, *The New Jersey Churchscape* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 7.

⁴⁸ Greenagel, 7

⁴⁹ Greenagel, 8

groups that did not necessarily believe in absolute religious freedom.⁵⁰ Furthermore, Kidd argues, most American Protestants wished to have their religion recognized and preserved as the official provincial practice, while banning others.⁵¹ Frank Lambert argues that pluralism was not as benevolent as it is popularly regarded.⁵² It caused increased competition among different denominations, and to an extent eliminated the community between religions that included sharing ministers and space.⁵³ Evangelicals like George Whitefield caused members of local governing bodies to be concerned that his message was blurring denominational and parish boundaries, as he held services in church buildings that were operated by different established traditions.⁵⁴ These explanations challenge the general view that pluralism was appreciated because it did not exist everywhere. A specific geographic analysis of New Jersey, which will be the focus of the next chapters, will inform and refine these assertions.

⁵⁰ Thomas Kidd, *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 41.

⁵¹ Kidd, 41

⁵² Frank Lambert, *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 113.

⁵³ Frank Lambert, *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America*, 113

⁵⁴ Mark Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003), 13.

Chapter 3

New Jersey in Revolutionary Politics and War

The political affairs in the New Jersey colony were demonstrative of the greater issues of the pre-revolutionary period. The diversity of class, social structures, wealth, land quality, and access to trade ensured that individuals would have a variety of inconsistent experiences that could have been equally as concerning or salient to each resident. In many ways, this diversity defined the existence and attitude of New Jersey more than any other characteristic.⁵⁵ David Fowler suggests that “settlers of English descent comprised slightly more than half of the population; the remainder was divided among Dutch, Scots, Scots-Irish, German, French, and Swedish. With this plural society were ‘ethnic communities’ that maintained distinctive cultural, economic, religious, and even political spheres.”⁵⁶ However, the distinctions were not as great as in other colonies, and a common political culture developed that focused on the expansion of liberty and wealth.

In a manner similar to the growing discontent with prescribed hierarchical religious structures, many New Jersey residents rejected the status quo of the provincial governing bodies. Internal issues in the colony became clearly evident during the revolutionary period. It had been the existing government, religious, and economic

⁵⁵ David J. Fowler, “These Were Troubling Times Indeed: Social and Economic Conditions in Revolutionary New Jersey,” in *New Jersey in the American Revolution*, Ed. Barbara Mitnick (New Brunswick, NJ: Rivergate Books / Rutgers University Press, 2014), 17.

⁵⁶ Fowler, 17

structures that restrained potential violence and organized discontent.⁵⁷ When it became time for the revolution to proceed in earnest, the change was a relatively natural progression for New Jersey, though particular groups and regions in the colony took much longer to recognize that reality. This was further exacerbated by New Jersey residents having very specific problems and grievances that needed to be resolved in order to provide for the contentment of the people.⁵⁸ As a result, religious and political leaders would have to engage in a concerted effort to recruit those who took longer in their response to the issues of the day.

The government structures of American colonies often saw internal conflict due to the complex nature of mixed government. Citizens who enjoyed the privilege of suffrage were able to choose members of the lower house of the legislative bodies which resembled the English House of Commons in their composition and authority to introduce laws that required higher approval. In colonial governments that included bicameral legislatures, a council or upper legislative house would represent the needs of the elites in government. These bodies would either be appointed by the governor or elected by the lower house of the legislature from amongst their members. The government was completed by an executive who was often selected through royal authority, by legislative representatives, or in rare cases, popular election. New Jersey experienced an ongoing conflict between the elected assembly and the more aristocratic elements found in the council and executive branch.⁵⁹ This was representative of the struggles of the underrepresented groups in society to wield authority over their own

⁵⁷ Leonard Lundin, *Cockpit of the American Revolution: The War for Independence in New Jersey* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1940), 48.

⁵⁸ Lundin, 48

⁵⁹ Lundin, 48

affairs, as was present in the vestries and elected boards of trustees of local religious institutions. The New Jersey Assembly deliberately asserted its power in an effort to establish and maintain political liberties.⁶⁰ The remainder of the government powers agreed with this approach. Leonard Lundin describes this trend:

As early as 1739, Governor Lewis Morris had complained that the Assembly fancied itself “to have as much power as a British house of commons, and more,” and prophesized darkly that if the pretensions of its members were suffered long to pass unnoticed, the aid of British parliament to persuade the legislators to entertain “juster sentiments of their duty and their true interest.”⁶¹

The regional fragmentation in the colony conceivably made it more difficult for a central executive authority to exert definitive control over the entirety of the land. Each region was divided by cultural, economic, social, and religious differences. As the executive branch changed hands to new governors, administrations appeared to develop inconsistently, while the goal of the legislative branch to exert its power and autonomy remained consistent. In 1758, the governorship transferred from Jonathan Belcher, an individual who chose to allow legislative independence in the name of cooperation, to Francis Bernard, who became an intermediary between the legislature and the colonists in order to resolve conflict and keep the peace.⁶² The role of the provincial governor had drastically evolved during this period from one who was an enforcer and communicator of English policy to one who facilitated the inclusion of the assembly in the colonial policy-making process. This change redefined the New Jersey Assembly in a positive manner, and had the lasting effect of creating a new status quo, from which it could be

⁶⁰ Lundin, 48

⁶¹ Lundin, 48-49

⁶² Lundin, 49

politically disastrous to deviate. Colonial assemblies at this time generally sought to keep the power that they had gained from the royal governors. There was a limit to the power that could have been exercised at the time; thus, there was competition among the branches. The New Jersey Assembly proved to be a leader in this movement. They were wholeheartedly against returning any power in the delicate balance to the executive.⁶³ The somewhat liberal, hands-off approaches of the original landowners for the purposes of profit led to a gradual power transition to elected bodies. The same allowances often were extended to social structures.

New Jersey and Religious Freedom

Under proprietors Sir George Carteret and Lord John Berkeley, the colonies of East and West Jersey practiced uncommon levels of religious tolerance. The men originally made allowances of free exercise in order to attract more settlers to the land, which would increase their profits through land sales, rent, trade, and taxation. William Penn practiced the same tolerance in order to ensure that his neighboring land grant would be profitable. This decision was utilitarian in nature; however, it established a culture and expectation of religious liberty in the colonies. In his 1765 *History of Nova Caesaria, or New Jersey*, Samuel Smith cites the July 31, 1674, declaration of Sir George Carteret, that included:

“All persons acknowledging one almighty and eternal God, and holding themselves obliged in conscience to live quietly in civil society; shall no way be molested, or prejudged for their religious persuasions and exercise

⁶³ Lundin, 50

in matters of faith and worship, nor be compelled to frequent and maintain any places of worship or ministry whatsoever . . . ”⁶⁴

Carteret clearly directed that individuals believing in God had freedom to align themselves with a denomination that suited their spiritual needs. Such guarantees were certainly unusual in a century that saw the persecution of Catholics and Puritans in England. Certainly the rule of Oliver Cromwell put a halt to the systemic persecution of Puritans, but his lack of a successor reverted control to kings and the Church of England. This declaration was made over a century before the independence movement, and was legislated by a proprietor rather than an elected assembly of the representatives of the people.

The geography, diversity of settlement, and proprietor-guaranteed freedom created a relatively unique expectation in New Jersey that individuals would enjoy religious liberty. This established a culture of free exercise, permitting development of faith-based communities and the expansion of denominational influence throughout the colony. Newark was established as a Puritan settlement but developed into a Presbyterian and Anglican stronghold. Thus, it is equally important, however, to note that Carteret was not completely tolerant of religious differences:

“...but none to be admitted to places of publick trust, who do not profess faith in Christ Jesus, and will not solemnly declare, that he is not obliged in conscience; to endeavor alteration in the government, nor does not seek the turning out of any in it, or their ruin or prejudice in person or estate, because they are in his opinion hereticks, or differ in judgement from him; but none under the notion of liberty, by this article, to avow atheism, irreligiousness, nor to practice prophaneness, murder, or any kind of

⁶⁴ Samuel Smith, *The History of the Colony of Nova-Caesaria or New Jersey*, reprint of 1890/1765 editions (Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Publishing Company, 1975), 271.

violence; or indulge themselves in stage-plays, masks, revels, or such like abuses.”⁶⁵

While Carteret permitted diversity of Christian denominations, it is understandable that he worked to ensure that non-believers would be excluded from significant roles in the colonies. At a time during which public education and government were scarce, and thus did not reach most individuals, religion acted as a tool of social control.⁶⁶ While Carteret did not live in the colony, he had an expectation of a lawful one made of God-fearing individuals with a complementary work ethic that would lead to peace and profit. More New Jersey residents accepted these toleration practices from the incorporation of the colonies and thus the attitudes became more ingrained in the culture of New Jersey.

The aforementioned ethnic diversity in New Jersey brought with it a wider variety of religious denominations and practices than in other colonies. Particular groups were more prone to participate in certain religious denominations, but there were certainly deviations and more freedom in association.⁶⁷ Settlement in particular regions tended to dictate the denominations that one might practice, due to the presence of specific churches. While this constrained practice to an extent, it also helped to blur the ecclesiastical lines in order to focus on God rather than denominational doctrine. There was a unique diversity of religions in New Jersey that was consistent with the variety of ethnicities.⁶⁸ Religion was central to the political and social climate of New Jersey in the pre-revolutionary period. David Fowler observed that “Although religion sometimes surfaced in voting alignments in the assembly, it did not, as in neighboring Pennsylvania,

⁶⁵ Smith, 1765, 271

⁶⁶ Fowler, 17

⁶⁷ Fowler, 17

⁶⁸ Fowler, 17

result in the formation of cohesive blocs. For pragmatic reasons, the cultural and religious diversity of New Jersey tended to promote compromise, accommodation, and tolerance.”⁶⁹ The statement by Fowler can be reduced to a simpler thought: the people of New Jersey understood the power of liberty. Not only were they able to apply this to religious environments but they also valued it in all facets of their lives. Despite the diversity that in other colonies tended to cause further factionalism, New Jersey made progress toward being comparatively more unified than other colonies with respect to political philosophy and government administration. This helped to gradually create a more cohesive political environment in New Jersey as the war loomed.

New Jersey and Revolutionary Politics

The central location of New Jersey and its relative ease of access to information ensured that it would be home to the debates that became more heated as the divisiveness of colonial politics increased. New Jersey radicalism was evident early in the road toward revolution.⁷⁰ The inhabitants of the colony widely celebrated and practiced democratic ideals.⁷¹ The Stamp Act demonstrated the power of the communication structures that existed in the colony.⁷² While the response of New Jersey to this legislation was not

⁶⁹ Fowler, 17

⁷⁰ Thomas Fleming, “Crossroad of the American Revolution,” in *New Jersey in the American Revolution*, Ed. Barbara Mitnick (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 1.

⁷¹ Fleming, 1

⁷² The Stamp Act of 1765 was introduced to the American colonies after the repeal of the Revenue Act (Sugar Act) following colonial protest. The act placed duties on stamps that were required to be affixed to paper items like legal documents, newspapers, etc. A similar act had been in effect in revenue-strapped England for several years prior to its introduction in America; however, the colonists challenged the act based on their lack of representation in Parliament. [John Pomfret, *Colonial New Jersey: A History* (New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1973), 179.]

nearly as organized and extensive as those of its sister colonies, pockets of protest did arise. Attorneys organized in order to make a concerted effort to not conduct business in such a manner that would require adherence to the tax, while James Parker used print media to publicize resistance in the *Constitutional Courant*.⁷³ Once the protest became more evident, the colony agreed to send delegates across the Hudson River to the Stamp Act Congress, where its representatives endorsed the declaration by the body that challenged the right of Parliament to tax the colonies when they were not represented in the English houses.⁷⁴ Despite the Stamp Act being repealed, New Jersey reacted even more vigorously to the replacement Townsend Acts.⁷⁵ ⁷⁶ The distrust and resentment of Parliament occurred simultaneously with the increase in power of the New Jersey colonial assembly, which was advocating more for the colonies, and succeeding with governors who supported the body or were afraid to cross it. Civil unrest became more common, as individuals felt the pain of government policies that were not designed for their benefit. Scott Rohrer points out that “In 1769 and 1770, riots broke out in Essex and Monmouth Counties owing to tensions over debts and proprietorial policies.”⁷⁷ The colony later raised money and supplies for the City of Boston when it was occupied by the British government as part of the Intolerable Acts.⁷⁸ It was the Reverend Jacob Green

⁷³ Scott Rohrer, *Jacob Green's Revolution: Radical Religion and Reform in a Revolutionary Age* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014), 131.

⁷⁴ Rohrer, 131

⁷⁵ Rohrer, 131

⁷⁶ The Townshend Act (Duties) enforced taxes on commonly used items in America like lead, painters' colors, and tea. The Act was in a series of several that were introduced and then repealed following American dissent. Only the tax on tea remained in effect following its repeal. [Pomfret, 184]

⁷⁷ Rohrer, 131

⁷⁸ Rohrer, 130

who helped to spearhead this effort in Morris County and became an exemplar for other communities.⁷⁹

The increased power of the colonial assembly in New Jersey represented the growing Whig movement in America. The evolution of this group created a significant social and political divide from the Loyalists in New Jersey. The Whig movement was rooted in the desire for government reform and further democratization of Parliament and political processes in England. As revolution became apparent, the divide widened as many New Jersey residents more strongly allied with one of the camps. In the colony, the Loyalist faction was comprised of a diverse set of individuals; however, its base of power was those who had held executive branch political offices that were appointed by British authorities.⁸⁰ This included Governor William Franklin, whose father, Benjamin Franklin, was one of the key intellectual leaders of the revolutionary cause.⁸¹ Franklin was not a Tory who simply rejected the plight of the colonists in their desire for change. Lundin supports this with his assertion that “in May 1775, he wrote to urge upon his superiors in England the advisability of calling a duly authorized congress in the colonies to discuss grievances with commissioners appointed by the King.”⁸² The attempts by Governor Franklin demonstrate the growing appreciation of a more democratized New Jersey. While the central authority did not act upon his enlightened recommendation, it is evident that the Governor had recognized, and was attempting to meet, the needs of his increasingly revolutionary people.

⁷⁹ Rohrer, 130

⁸⁰ Lundin, 70

⁸¹ Lundin, 70

⁸² Lundin, 71

Despite the internal government issues and increasing tensions in the colonies, there was a great deal of ambivalence toward intrastate and interstate politics, as the hardships had not reached the state like they had Massachusetts.⁸³ While many New Jersey residents rejected the revolutionary cause, the concepts of popular rule, direct elections, and representative government had become the norm. The efficacy of Franklin diminished severely when revolutionary leaders introduced a Provincial Congress that assumed the powers of the constitutional assembly. Even then, however, supporters of war, like the Reverend Dr. John Witherspoon, were in a relative minority.⁸⁴ Other revolutionary mechanisms like Committees of Correspondence began to set policy and communication expectations for the region.⁸⁵ Much to the chagrin of the wealthy, land-owning elite, the growing populist powers in the state rejected an offer by the crown to accept special privilege in exchange for petitioning the king for “a restoration of peace and harmony,” effectively offering allegiance to the Crown.⁸⁶ Franklin and other government officials found protection in the Loyalist stronghold at Perth Amboy, where he was later arrested by troops under the direction of the unlikely revolutionary leader Lord Stirling.⁸⁷ ⁸⁸ Franklin faced detention until he was released, and eventually appeared before the Provincial Congress having been labeled “an enemy to the liberties of his country.”⁸⁹ It was the Presbyterian minister and President of the College of New Jersey,

⁸³ Fleming, 3

⁸⁴ Maxine Lurie, “New Jersey: Radical or Conservative in the Crisis Summer of 1776,” in *New Jersey in the American Revolution*, Ed. Barbara Mitnick (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rivergate Books / Rutgers University Press, 2014), 34.

⁸⁵ Lundin, 71

⁸⁶ Fleming, 4

⁸⁷ Lundin, 72

⁸⁸ It was unusual for a member of the British aristocracy to take action against the representatives of the very government that guaranteed his special privilege.

⁸⁹ Lundin, 72

the Reverend Dr. John Witherspoon, who viciously attacked the deposed governor in Congress.⁹⁰ Witherspoon was a formidable force and leader in the fields of education, politics, and religion. As radicalism grew, Witherspoon was able to use his status as a religious and educational leader to validate his opinions and prominence in the revolutionary period. The statement against Franklin demonstrated the comfort of Witherspoon with the political process and his desire to be at the forefront of the radical movement.

Politics in New Jersey were evidence of the growing intersection between the Great Awakening and the Enlightenment. Each of the forces promoted dissent, valued natural rights, and was suspicious of authoritarian hierarchies which acted inconsistently with the expressed needs of the people. Had an identifiable need for reform been absent, the convergence of the forces would not have been important or defining. The vocabularies of the republican cause, including self-government, freedom, natural laws, representation, and reason in politics and government structures, intersected with the Great Awakening rejection of forced liturgy, non-elected religious hierarchies, appointed ministers, and lack of local control over the ecclesiastical matters. At times of stability that allowed for gradual reform, the secular and religious reform efforts competed for recognition.⁹¹ As the war forced the open and urgent debate of the concepts of government and freedom, the movements aligned both philosophically and pragmatically. More people agreed in general terms on the basis of Great Awakening and Enlightenment principles, and regarded their existence in society as the only way for political and

⁹⁰ Lundin, 72

⁹¹ Fowler, 21

religious liberty to survive. David Fowler brilliantly summarizes this concept (that was further explored in Chapter 2) and its application specifically to New Jersey:

The classical republican tradition was akin to the dissenting religious tradition in that it emphasized virtue versus vice; in addition good republicans fear arbitrary power and tended to view imperial problems as a conspiracy of corrupt, venal bureaucrats intent on enslaving the colonies. . . . Evidently local conditions, tensions, and anxieties that pervaded society, and the rhetoric of religious rationalists and republicans intersected at a momentous point when pragmatic imperial administrators launched a ‘rational, logical, and equitable’ program to tighten fiscal control of a vast empire.⁹²

Many New Jersey leaders were concerned with reforming based on these virtues, but the imperative to do so was increased when the colony was faced with decreased profits through steadily tightened control by British authorities. This became an impetus behind early radicalization in the state, but the sentiment needed to be transferred to the people. Ministers were able to use their understanding of the underlying philosophies to preach the virtues of republicanism and just war.

The convergence of religious and political liberty was memorialized into the New Jersey Constitution when the document was developed at the time of independence. Leaders like the Reverend Jacob Green who distinguished themselves in both sectarian and secular realms ensured that the freedoms that were used as justification for the ministers preaching war were actually granted by the newly established government, to the extent that women and minorities could vote under the original legal structure in New Jersey. The Constitution included language that protected the religious liberty to which most New Jersey residents had grown accustomed. They provided for both liberty of

⁹² Fowler, 21

conscience and the prohibition of an established church. Section XVIII of the constitution ensured:

That no person shall ever, within this Colony, be deprived of the inestimable privilege of worshipping Almighty God in a manner, agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience; nor, under any presence whatever, be compelled to attend any place of worship, contrary to his own faith and judgment; nor shall any person, within this Colony, ever be obliged to pay tithes, taxes, or any other rates, for the purpose of building or repairing any other church or churches, place or places of worship, or for the maintenance of any minister or ministry, contrary to what he believes to be right, or has deliberately or voluntarily engaged himself to perform.⁹³

New Jersey residents were guaranteed the right to free exercise and protection against an established state church. The establishment clause was particularly important in New Jersey because the diverse denominations that existed would have had to give way to one, which would have been supported by special privilege and tax revenue.⁹⁴ While the existence of significant religious diversity might suggest that the concept of a state church would never occur, the passage was partially a direct response to the desire of Governor Franklin to call upon the Anglican hierarchy to have a bishop installed in New Jersey to preside over a state-funded and recognized institution.⁹⁵ While this was not a war over religion, the threat signaled to many religious leaders at the time that the survival of their denominations, freedom, and power was potentially contingent on the outcome of the war, especially if the British wished to install a religious hierarchy as a tool of social control to support their introduction of completely royal rule should they be victorious and need to maintain authority in the colony.

⁹³ New Jersey Constitution of 1776

⁹⁴ Lurie, 41

⁹⁵ Lurie, 41

The Constitution was not overly generous with its religious freedoms, however, as it maintained certain civil protections and eligibility to hold office for Protestants only.⁹⁶ Since the Constitution was developed and signed by individuals of diverse religious affiliation, the clause, while discriminatory, was designed to promote religious freedom rather than deny it.⁹⁷ The chance of a powerful denominational organization assuming control of the state was too great a threat. The protections in the New Jersey Constitution were broad, but not revolutionary enough to radicalize the population at the start of what would grow into a protracted conflict that tested both state and national organizations.

New Jersey in the War

The legacy of New Jersey in the American Revolution is one that is a combination of pockets of radicalism, Tory factions, and a significant degree of apathy by a large majority of the population. The geography of the state eventually provided the critical environment which political and religious leaders could use as a tool for organization and recruitment efforts. The New Jersey colony-turned-state both enjoyed and was threatened by its geographic position. The central location of the state allowed for its inhabitants to be well informed about news from other provincial areas. New Jersey lay between the important colonial cities of New York and Philadelphia, which ensured both that New Jersey would be influential in the revolution and that the state would host British occupation and battles. Individuals in the state would be more likely to select sides for the conflict, as the war would be occurring within close proximity. The political leaders

⁹⁶ New Jersey Constitution of 1776

⁹⁷ Lurie, 42

demonstrated unity, but were somewhat separated from the general residents, who were unconvinced early on of the ability of the state to survive the conflict.

While many of the residents of the state elected neutrality as the path of least resistance and consequence, specific regions would become closely aligned to either the rebel or British causes.⁹⁸ The original provincial seat of Perth Amboy and the town of New Brunswick in Middlesex County remained the center of power for the British government and Loyalists.⁹⁹ It was these places that represented the roots of the issues related to royal governance. Morris County, among other areas in the north-central part of the state, became closely aligned to the revolutionary cause, embracing the Whig philosophy that was spreading throughout the state.¹⁰⁰ This was strengthened by the growing cadre of intellectual ministers who preached the virtues of the revolution. This had the predictable consequence of making the area both a safe haven for American troops and a target for British retaliation. The newly minted state remained one divided in loyalty, geography, and level of involvement in the conflict.

The lack of unity throughout New Jersey made it a prime subject of both British and revolutionary attention. The strategic importance of the state created interest within the command structures of both British and Continental Armies in securing support and control among the residents. On July 1, 1776, lookouts in New Jersey observed the arrival of what appeared to be in excess of 30,000 troops on Staten Island.¹⁰¹ The military officers reported this quickly to the Provincial Congress, which quickly recognized that

⁹⁸ Rohrer, 15

⁹⁹ Towns referenced may be found in Appendix B, which contains a map of selected places in New Jersey

¹⁰⁰ Rohrer, 15

¹⁰¹ Fleming, 1

the newly minted state would soon be host to those forces.¹⁰² The state was very quickly forced into a position of prominence in the war. On November 19, 1776, General Lord Cornwallis led the forces under his command from New York to New Jersey.¹⁰³ While many of the radicals in North Jersey were under the impression that the militia would muster in support of the Continental Army, there was a significantly weaker response.¹⁰⁴ Some simply feared the strength of British troops, while others lacked confidence in what they saw as a weak and undisciplined Continental Army.¹⁰⁵ Some of those who did muster left quickly after learning of the size of the forces that awaited them.¹⁰⁶ Rohrer notes that:

One Continental Army officer was positively livid with New Jersey's residents and its government during this chaotic period. "This State is totally deranged, without Government, or officers civil or military in it that will act with any Spirit," Brigadier General Alexander McDougall fumed in a December 1776 letter to Washington. "The Militia are without leaders and many of them not in the Power of the enemy are dispirited."¹⁰⁷

The great revolutionary writer Thomas Paine accompanied Washington and the Continental Army as they retreated through New Jersey in search of safety in Pennsylvania.¹⁰⁸

Paine witnessed a mere 1,000 people in New Jersey answering the Washington-ordered call by Governor Livingston for 17,000 troops.¹⁰⁹ He shared the concern over the New Jersey population that General McDougall had expressed. Paine highlighted the

¹⁰² Fleming, 2

¹⁰³ Rohrer, 173

¹⁰⁴ Rohrer, 173

¹⁰⁵ Rohrer, 173-4

¹⁰⁶ Rohrer, 173

¹⁰⁷ Rohrer, 173

¹⁰⁸ Rohrer, 174

¹⁰⁹ Fleming, 5

strength and resolve of the Continental troops who expected that the state residents would be there to support them, but noted that middle states like New Jersey were highly deficient in that area when he penned *The American Crisis* in 1776: “Why is it that the enemy hath left the New England Provinces, and made these middle ones the seat of war? The answer is easy. New England is not infested with Tories, and we are.”¹¹⁰ While McDougall and Paine may have been somewhat harsh in their generalizations of the New Jersey population, these observations are vital to understanding the state of affairs within the province at a time when its lands were the host to a war. It is important to clarify that while New Jersey had pockets of committed revolutionaries, there was still much confusion and anxiety within its borders. This increased the importance of local and state leaders in rallying the forces. Leaders such as ministers were necessary in executing the official and unofficial organizing campaigns that were necessary to increase the size and strength of both military and support networks. The leaders had to accomplish this goal while facing the threat of the six battalions of “New Jersey Volunteers,” Loyalists that Cortlandt Skinner raised as a militia in the state, and the British willingness to exchange pardons for support from the public.¹¹¹ The problem called for an organizational response in which individual leaders would connect directly with people on individual, small group, and large group levels. Due to the lack of other social and organizational structures at the time, ministers and churches became the vital vehicles for this effort. This challenge forced ministers like James Caldwell and Jacob Green to increase the severity of their rhetoric and to engage in more deliberate recruiting efforts. When Morristown, New Jersey, became home to the Continental Army, the fates of those forces

¹¹⁰ As qtd. In Rohrer, 174

¹¹¹ Rohrer, 174

and the New Jersey population became intertwined, and the groups had to focus on survival.

At the beginning of the conflict, New Jersey was a fraction of the revolutionary power that it would become. The British continued in their plans to cement the region as the “first loyal colony.”¹¹² With the help of royal forces, the Loyalists in the state worked to outwardly resist radicalism and its growth.¹¹³ They burned and looted property of rebel leaders like Samuel Tucker and Richard Stockton.¹¹⁴ The British were able to intimidate these men into withdrawing from the war effort.¹¹⁵ This success gave the Loyalist forces the hope that they would be able to maintain and spread their authority. Women were not immune from the ravages of war, as they suffered rape, theft, and destruction of property.¹¹⁶ Through their attention to New Jersey, the British succeeded in angering a group that would be part of the resistance. While gender roles were traditional during this time period, women would attend church alongside men, listen to the same sermons, and follow current events. Women were expected to be pious, and thus had the capability to use that practice to convince their husbands and sons of the virtues of the revolution.

The focus of the British on the strategic importance of New Jersey resulted in Washington increasing his attention to the security of the state.¹¹⁷ The General recognized that Loyalist control of New Jersey could reasonably be expected to spread to nearby mid-Atlantic states like Pennsylvania and Delaware.¹¹⁸ New York City had been a

¹¹² Fleming, 6

¹¹³ Fleming, 6

¹¹⁴ Fleming, 6

¹¹⁵ Fleming, 6

¹¹⁶ Fleming, 11

¹¹⁷ Fleming, 6

¹¹⁸ Fleming, 6

Tory stronghold that was home to British military forces, and thus was not as subject to change. The invasion of Trenton was calculated not only to be a victory for morale but also to establish a Continental Army presence in New Jersey in December of 1776.¹¹⁹

In November, Washington had ordered General William Heath to enter New Jersey from the Hudson Highland in order to engage in a campaign of intimidation and weapons seizure that was focused on the concentrations of Loyalists in that region that had migrated from New York in order to establish presence in the state.¹²⁰ Heath was forced to withdraw to the Peekskill on December 22 and December 23 in fear of a sudden action by General Howe.¹²¹ This withdrawal created a more immediate need for a victory in Trenton. The victories there, combined with rising revolutionary sentiment in Morris County and the headway that Heath had made before retreat, helped to force a British evacuation after the victories at Trenton and Princeton.¹²² The greater turnout can be attributed to increasing organizing efforts bolstered by apparent national concern for the state. As the war progressed, African Americans were organized in order to fight in the Continental Army and provide logistical support.¹²³ Some owners in the North freed slaves in exchange for their serving in the militia.¹²⁴ Many slaves chose to exploit the tumultuous times and left their owners in order to serve in combat zones.¹²⁵ Organizing African Americans proved at times to be a difficult task, as many opted to serve in

¹¹⁹ Fleming, 6

¹²⁰ Fleming, 6

¹²¹ Lundin, 192

¹²² Fleming, 6

¹²³ Fleming, 11

¹²⁴ Donald R. Wright, *African Americans in the Colonial Era: From African Origins through the American Revolution*, 4th edition (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 197.

¹²⁵ Wright, 197-8

Loyalist units in an attempt to gain freedom and wealth.¹²⁶ This was particularly evident in New Jersey, when slaves from the region followed the British Army into New York after military engagements in the area.¹²⁷ The organizing in New Jersey included every available resource, and made an early recognition that blacks could participate alongside whites without a structural breakdown. The continuation of these efforts was necessary in order to combat the Skinner forces and other Loyalist concentrations.¹²⁸

The New Jersey leaders had to contend with and isolate significant pockets of Loyalism. Eventually, the New Jersey Council of Safety gained the strength and legitimacy required to prosecute and sanction offenders.¹²⁹ The body imposed harsh sentences in an effort to combat the intimidation and power that the Loyalists were exuding.¹³⁰ The tribunal offered Loyalists the opportunity to fight in the revolution as an alternative to being hanged for their crimes. All but few of those offered the deal accepted its terms.¹³¹ The leaders recognized that they had the ability to change minds through coercion and sought to mitigate the anti-revolutionary organizing influences of major Loyalist leaders, including ones in the religious sphere. The body prosecuted Anglicans like the Reverend Jonathan Odell for what its members perceived to be actions that were subversive to liberty. The Reverend Thomas Chandler was forced to flee the colonies in fear for his life, as his Tory sentiment and Anglican alignment were well advertised. The committee arrested and intimidated other Anglican leaders like Thomas

¹²⁶ Michael Adelberg, "An Evenly Balanced County: The Scope and Severity of Civil Warfare in Revolutionary Monmouth County, New Jersey." *Journal of Military History* 73, no. 1 (January, 2009): 20-21.

¹²⁷ Wright, 178.

¹²⁸ Fleming, 7

¹²⁹ Fleming, 8

¹³⁰ Fleming, 8

¹³¹ Fleming, 8

Hewlings, Colin Campbell, Dr. John Laurence, Robert Cooke, and Thomas Thompson.¹³²

The progressive attacks on and diminishing of the organized and individual Loyalist sentiments helped to foster more confidence in the independence movement.

As the war intensified within the boundaries of New Jersey, its residents became more engaged in the conflict, as personal experiences and leaders were able to convince them of the urgency of their participation. General Washington recognized that in order to radicalize the state for the good of the war effort, its inhabitants would need to experience the war firsthand.¹³³ The geography of the state increased its susceptibility to non-traditional warfare and raids.¹³⁴ As local areas suffered increased losses of people and property at the hands of the British and Loyalists, more individuals were convinced to participate in the war effort.¹³⁵ This provided the opportunity for ad-hoc committees, political leaders, and religious leaders to organize their constituents, often by example. The impact of the hundreds of skirmishes in New Jersey was amplified by significant battles in which the combined forces of militia and regular army fought. Washington ordered some engagements in order to build public confidence. The strength the Americans maintained at the Battle of Monmouth changed the paradigm of the war in New Jersey and demonstrated to the British the resolve of the national and state forces. Despite the evident strength, Washington was never able to use New Jersey as a base of operations for an invasion of New York.¹³⁶ As such, both British and Continental forces

¹³² Nelson Burr, *The Anglican Church in New Jersey* (Philadelphia: The Church Historical Society, 1954), 382-3.

¹³³ Fleming, 8

¹³⁴ Fleming, 9

¹³⁵ Fleming, 8-9

¹³⁶ Fleming, 9

remained in the state for the duration of the conflict, either protecting New York, or preventing invasion from or retreat to the City.

Gains in New Jersey and other states resulted in some gradual departure of the British from the area.¹³⁷ Throughout the war, the land in the recently established state experienced unique military, political, economic, and social situations. The 238 battles and skirmishes fought in New Jersey are evidence of the impact of the war on the state and of New Jersey's importance during the conflict.¹³⁸

Introduction to Battles in New Jersey

New Jersey was forced to embrace its “crossroads of the revolution” distinction. The 238 military engagements that occurred in the state provided opportunities for participation by ministers, chaplains, and their followers in capacities as both soldiers and non-combatants. The role of ministers at some of the major conflicts will be examined in later chapters. In order to contextualize the importance of the actions of the members of the clergy, it is important to briefly describe the importance of major battles in New Jersey.

Battle of Trenton

General Washington recognized from his camp in Pennsylvania in December of 1776 that re-entry into New Jersey was a necessity following the retreat across the state.

¹³⁷ Fleming, 13

¹³⁸ Fleming, 13

The Battle of Trenton occurred following the famous crossing of the Delaware that Washington and his commanders orchestrated, against significant odds.¹³⁹ The American troops employed the element of surprise in order to hold a strategic advantage over the enemy.¹⁴⁰ The American forces marched from the banks of the Delaware River in the Titusville Area to the Hessian barracks in Trenton early in the morning of December 26, 1776.¹⁴¹ The Americans were able to make significant gains before the Hessian mercenaries could organize themselves after spending the Christmas holiday with generous portions of libations.¹⁴² The victory, however, was not solely the result of Hessian hangovers. The Americans were able to block the major road from Trenton to Princeton and New Brunswick, arresting the retreat of the forces in the town. The force similarly engaged in intelligent deployments of artillery, which prevented any substantive use of Hessian guns and chances of significant retreat.¹⁴³ The Americans successfully captured nine hundred Hessians, and killed one hundred six others.¹⁴⁴ There were no American deaths.¹⁴⁵ The four hundred that eluded capture concentrated at Assanpink Creek, where a detachment of Hessians had been stationed before the attack.¹⁴⁶

General Cornwallis opted to march his troops toward Trenton in an effort to diminish any Patriot gains.¹⁴⁷ The British and Americans occupied opposing banks of the Assanpink Creek and engaged in the second battle at Trenton beginning on January 2,

¹³⁹ Lundin, 196

¹⁴⁰ James Thomas Flexner, *Washington: The Indispensable Man* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1974), 94.

¹⁴¹ Lundin, 196

¹⁴² Lundin, 196

¹⁴³ Lundin, 197

¹⁴⁴ Lundin, 198

¹⁴⁵ Flexner, 96

¹⁴⁶ Lundin, 198

¹⁴⁷ Lundin, 205

1777.¹⁴⁸ Neither side gained much ground due to the strength of the British army and the well-placed American artillery.¹⁴⁹ The British belief was that they would be able to crush what remained of an inferior army at the Creek in the coming days. Cornwallis underestimated the ability of the Americans to strategize, which resulted in the Continental Army being free to engage in a march to Princeton in an effort to control the roads leading toward New Brunswick.¹⁵⁰ The engagements at Trenton provided Washington with the opportunity to conduct impassioned recruitment and retention efforts in order to maintain what he could of the strength of the American forces.¹⁵¹ This battle also facilitated the evolution of the role of chaplains in the Continental Army. As will be explored further in subsequent chapters, Baptist Minister John Gano saw his role alter from that of a more pastoral chaplain into a combat role after he crossed the Delaware with the American forces.¹⁵² Congregational Chaplain David Avery was inspired to take up arms during the conflicts at Trenton, fighting alongside the combat soldiers.¹⁵³ Presbyterian Chaplain John Rosbrugh was brutally killed by mercenaries in the days following the military engagement.¹⁵⁴ Trenton was a transformative battle in many ways, as it improved the strategic position of the Continental Army while challenging basic assumptions regarding the war for independence. The sacrifices made by chaplains increased in intensity, further connecting them to the rank-and-file soldiers.

¹⁴⁸ Lundin, 205

¹⁴⁹ Flexner, 97

¹⁵⁰ Lundin, 207

¹⁵¹ Flexner, 96

¹⁵² Crowder, 71

¹⁵³ Thompson, 148

¹⁵⁴ Thompson, 148

Battle of Princeton

Like Trenton, the town of Princeton was of significant strategic importance to the British army. Its Central New Jersey location made the area a crucial point in the chains of communication for Cornwallis and his troops.¹⁵⁵ It lay in a line of important towns that included New Brunswick, Trenton, and Burlington.¹⁵⁶ The British Army held Princeton in early 1777 and withdrew to the fields outside of the town following their withdrawal from Trenton.¹⁵⁷ The engagement at Princeton began on January 3, 1777, shortly after the end of the earlier hostilities.¹⁵⁸ Washington was able to overwhelm the 700-strong British Army, and then left the field quickly after in an effort to bring his troops to safety at Morristown, which was connected by main roads to Princeton.¹⁵⁹ The British loss in this battle significantly decreased their ability to control New Jersey from the Hudson to the Delaware.¹⁶⁰ The American victories changed the landscape of the war in New Jersey. The British were forced to remove themselves to New Brunswick, their stronghold in New Jersey, and the priority for defense in the eyes of Cornwallis.¹⁶¹ The victory at Princeton liberated the College of New Jersey, the chief vehicle for Presbyterian and often radical education in New Jersey. Young ministers were again secure in their ability to be educated in both ecclesiastical and Enlightenment principles.

¹⁵⁵ Mark Edward Lender, "The 'Cockpit' Reconsidered: Revolutionary New Jersey as a Military Theater, in *New Jersey in the American Revolution*, Ed. Barbara Mitnick (New Brunswick, NJ: Rivergate Books / Rutgers University Press, 2014), 48.

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¹⁵⁶ Lender, 48

¹⁵⁷ Lender, 49

¹⁵⁸ Flexner, 97

¹⁵⁹ Lender, 50

¹⁶⁰ Lender, 50

¹⁶¹ Lundin, 213

Battle of Monmouth Courthouse

The Battle of Monmouth Courthouse, which occurred in current-day Freehold, provided a third opportunity for the American troops to challenge the holdings of the British.¹⁶² The engagement began on the hot morning of June 28, 1778.¹⁶³ The battle demonstrated that Washington was able to both maintain and improve his troop numbers, training, and advancement, while securing much of New Jersey for eighteen months.¹⁶⁴ The British forces withdrew from the battlefield in the dead of night, and were far enough away by dawn that Washington could not safely pursue them.¹⁶⁵ Both sides claimed victory in the conflict, as the British had been able to safely withdraw to Sandy Hook and New York, while the Continental forces held the land in Freehold.¹⁶⁶ The battle has been considered a “draw” by some historians.¹⁶⁷ In the context of this study, an American victory is an appropriate assertion. Washington was able to control land in the eastern section of the state, and occupied more of the central-southern portion which had not been as radicalized as more northern lands. The Americans were further able to demonstrate the maturity of their army, demonstrating that it was a more competent, lethal force.¹⁶⁸ The battle further showed that civilians in New Jersey were more willing and likely to provide outward support to the revolutionary army and more likely to show outward hostility to the British.¹⁶⁹ This was a significant change and victory in what had been a more apathetic environment at the beginning of the conflict. The battle

¹⁶² Lundin, 399

¹⁶³ Flexner, 121

¹⁶⁴ Lundin, 399

¹⁶⁵ Lundin, 400

¹⁶⁶ Lundin, 400

¹⁶⁷ Lender, 55

¹⁶⁸ Lender, 55

¹⁶⁹ Lender, 56

demonstrated the importance of New Jersey in the conflict and cemented the inability of the British to control the peninsula state. Washington reflected following the conflict:

It is not a little pleasing nor less wonderful to contemplate that after two years maneuvering and undergoing the strangest vicissitudes that perhaps ever attended one contest since the creation, both armies are brought back to the very point they set out from, and that that which the offending party in the beginning is not reduced to the use of the spade and pickax for defense. The hand of Providence has been so conspicuous in all this that he must be worse than an infidel that lacks faith, and more than wicked that has not gratitude enough to acknowledge his obligations—but it will be time enough for me to turn preacher when my present appointment ceases, and therefore I shall add no more on the Doctrine of Providence.¹⁷⁰

Washington deliberately invoked God in his discussion of the victory and changes at Princeton as he analyzed the reasons for American success. While Washington held beliefs in God that were not the same as those of his more evangelical counterparts, he argued that the higher power was present and purposeful in His support of the American cause at Freehold. Washington made the connection between the divine and combat, indicating his appreciation and faith. Such beliefs are certainly influenced by the trials of war.

Conclusion

The fact that there was a delay in large-scale military participation by New Jersey residents, or that suffering needed to be experienced before participation, should not detract from the thesis that ministers and organized religion played a significant role in mobilizing New Jersey for the conflict. A concerted effort among social, political, and

¹⁷⁰ Flexner, 125

religious leaders was needed in order to convince the residents of the state to support the revolutionary cause. While some soldiers from New Jersey enlisted upon hearing the news of revolution or American gains, often with the help of radical ministers, others needed to be persuaded. This demonstrates, rather than undermines, the importance of religious leaders in the New Jersey war effort. Ministers and church structures made clear their expectations and engaged in deliberate, concerted activity. The structures used the convergence of religious and political vernacular on liberty and natural rights to show that there was a just conflict that required specific support. In the end, the people of New Jersey were free to make their own decisions about participation, provided that they were not caught in outwardly subversive activity, or had the resources to pay fines or send someone in their place in the case of a draft.¹⁷¹ They required help in recognizing that freedom would only survive as a consequence of war. Individuals who were able to appreciate their freedom became more willing to fight for it, and the religious communities in New Jersey were able to connect that freedom to God.

¹⁷¹ Fleming, 13

Chapter 4

The Religions and Pluralism of New Jersey

While much of the discussion of the expansion and free exercise of religion during the revolutionary period centers on experiences in New England, the mid-Atlantic states set significant precedents for the future of American religious practice due to the comparatively higher incidence of religious plurality in the central region. The dominance of the Congregational Church in New England limited the diversity of faith in the region. The pluralism in New Jersey was the result of a series of historical occurrences, policy decisions, and trends that were unique to the area. The proprietary founding of East and West Jersey was designed as more of an economic enterprise than a separatist one. It was similarly not created to mirror the experiences and goals of the British homeland. This allowed for free exercise to occur by a variety of Christian denominations in different New Jersey communities.

The founding powers and governments of East and West Jersey purposefully avoided legislating mandates or limits to religious practice. However, the colonies, in their founding, shared an assumption of common Christian morality. When early governor Philip Carteret convened the original assembly in New Jersey in 1668, he declared the purpose to be: “for the making and Constituting such wholesome Lawes as shall be most needful and Necessary for the good gouernment of the said Prouince, & the maintaining of a religious Communion & ciuil society one wth the other as becometh

Christians without which it impossible for any boddy Politicq to prosper or subsist.”¹⁷² It was clear that the desire of Carteret was to maintain a profitable colony, which would require a common sense of purpose and morality.¹⁷³ This goal continued to exist as denominational influence grew in various regions of the province. Douglas Jacobsen argues that “by the mid-1680s New Jersey was rapidly becoming an informally established Christian society. While no direct institutional ties existed between the various religious societies and government, numerous laws had been passed that indissolubly tied Christian religious sensibilities to the New Jerseyans’ expectations of civil comportment and good citizenship.”¹⁷⁴ These same Christian sensibilities converged with political beliefs in the next century. Jacobsen further discusses that “The idea of society as an interdependent and interpersonal organization—a neighborly and egalitarian ideal of community slowly spread.”¹⁷⁵ It was the concept of egalitarianism that would help to connect the Great Awakening and Enlightenment principles.

Before the English influence was present in New Jersey, the Dutch settled the western banks of the lower Hudson River Valley. The Reformed tradition thus remained embedded in towns in the northeastern part of the state. The Quaker settlers in the Philadelphia area similarly expanded their reach into southern New Jersey into the eighteenth century, creating a longstanding tradition in the state that would have difficulty reconciling with the war of revolution. The presence of fertile land between the significant trade centers of New York and Philadelphia, as well as New Jersey ports such

¹⁷² Douglas Jacobsen, “Conflict, Community, and Religious Affiliation in New Jersey,” in *Religion in New Jersey Life Before the Civil War*,” Ed. Nancy Murin (Trenton, New Jersey: New Jersey Historical Commission, Department of State, 1985), 56.

¹⁷³ Jacobsen, 56

¹⁷⁴ Jacobsen, 57

¹⁷⁵ Jacobsen, 62

as Elizabeth Town, with few barriers to settlement, ensured that the colony-turned-state would experience an increase in settlement by ethnically and religiously diverse populations. This trend, within the context of the Great Awakening, accounted for the rise of increasingly popular Protestant sects such as Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, and Baptists. It was, however, often not until after the revolution that New Jersey residents experienced pluralism within town limits. One organized church would typically exist in each town. This would either be a draw to the community, or a product of individuals simply joining the congregation that had the presence in the municipality. Church buildings were often the only structures that existed that would not be specifically classified as residential or commercial. In Elizabeth Town, the Presbyterian meetinghouse and Anglican church were joined only by a courthouse and military barracks.¹⁷⁶ These two classes of edifices represented the competing yet complementary methods of social control: law and religion.

Populous places like Perth Amboy and Newark had similar structure balances.¹⁷⁷ Both were home to organized Presbyterians and Anglicans.¹⁷⁸ Elizabeth Town housed the final tool of control: the power elite in society.¹⁷⁹ In addition to being leaders in trade and commerce, those of the wealthiest classes had the ability to influence their respective churches. The funding needs of local religious establishments provided a pathway for the elite to exercise control over particular governance and ecclesiastical matters as they offered their contributions.

¹⁷⁶ Lundin, 11

¹⁷⁷ Lundin, 12

¹⁷⁸ Lundin, 11-12

¹⁷⁹ Lundin, 11

Despite the pluralism that existed, New Jersey continued to be a relative stronghold for the Anglican Church, the symbol of the criticized interconnection between the state and religion. In places like New Brunswick and Perth Amboy, the Church of England retained its dominance in theology, politics, and social control. The residents of the provincial capital of Perth Amboy were “almost exclusively adherents of the Anglican Church—the communion of wealth, conservatism, and loyal obedience to authority.”¹⁸⁰ This early state of loyalty foreshadowed the common practice of Anglicans supporting the royal cause during the revolution due to the significant concentrations in which they existed during this period. However, the Anglican churches and their members would be faced with the reality of a political division between England and the colonies. As a result, the church suffered a division that for the American Patriots demonstrated the strength of its challenge to the accepted mainstream religious traditions of the period. The division of Loyalist and Patriot Anglicans further demonstrates the existence and breadth of religious pluralism in the state. The lack of a dominant, ruling religion in New Jersey created an environment in which social control was not universally established and enforced through such a power.

Despite the pluralism, there was a common morality at the heart of all of the Christian religions that permeated New Jersey. Jacobsen notes that:

New Jersey never had an official, state-supported church, but uniformity as the model of community persisted. This uniformity was rarely sought in religious doctrine. Instead, the history of the colony before the eighteenth century exhibits a consistent sense of the need to define the limits of behavior in line with the moral and ethical sensibilities of the Christian religion. The result of this process can be described as an informal establishment of religion. While no specifically religious arm of the state

¹⁸⁰ Lundin, 13

was never created, community was still seen as an ideal that needed to be imposed on society, and this ideal was generally conceived in institutional and legal terms.¹⁸¹

The assessment by Douglas Jacobsen underscores the concept of the convergence of religion and politics. The establishment of common ideals in this sense provided the framework for a similar approach to the desire for political liberty by many groups and communities throughout the colony.

It should, however, be noted that while the extent of religious pluralism in New Jersey was comparatively unique at the time, the practice of condoning or criticizing radicalism by New Jersey churches did not occur in a vacuum. Denominations throughout the thirteen colonies each engaged in such behaviors. New Jersey distinguished itself by the more universal acceptance of the convergence of religion and revolution by its churches who did not remain loyal to the British empire. The denominations enjoyed freedom to exist without molestation, and they were able to translate this into freedom of expression. Overall, religious groups were growing in New Jersey as a result of the Great Awakening.¹⁸² Each denomination built influence through geographic and political power that allowed it to enjoy a role in colonial and revolutionary society. The religious pluralism in New Jersey ensured that no single denomination gained a level of precedence or power that created an imbalance that would become inconsistent with revolutionary politics. The development of these democratic principles regarding religion aligned to the revolutionary ideas that were permeating the

¹⁸¹ Jacobsen, 55

¹⁸² Nancy Murrin, Ed., *Religion in New Jersey Life Before the Civil War* (Trenton, New Jersey: New Jersey Historical Commission, Department of State, 1985), 9-10.

region. Each denomination and church location would have a specific role in the events and outcome of the conflict.

The challenges that individuals faced in settling relatively uninhabited areas of New Jersey created a need for the comfort of religion, and the desire to be part of a group that would meet individual needs. Lundin describes this trend:

Harsh though as their existence was, the inhabitants of this backwoods district were not without their enjoyments. The consolations of religion were of greater importance and more varied nature here than in most other parts of the colony; for in this poverty-stricken frontier region there was a more diversified array of sects than could be found in any of the wealthy towns. Quakers, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Anglicans, Moravians, Anabaptists, and Methodists, competing for attention and converts, afforded one of the chief means of diversion to the hard-working settlers.¹⁸³

The difficulties during these times in the depressed southern regions required people to find solace, pleasure, and understanding in life through organized religion. Pluralism existed when individuals required a church in their area, and shared a common history or experience that called for a particular denomination to be present in a region. When one ties economic conditions to religion, the extension of the relationship to political liberty is not a far stretch. The same individuals who unite in suffering will seek mechanisms by which to change their positions. The Enlightenment promoted the use of reason to evaluate one's role in society, economics, and politics. This movement sought explanations for what had previously been accepted as the hardened status-quo. In a manner similar to the use of religion by the upper classes as a tool of social control, the

¹⁸³ Lundin, 34

poorest members of society saw organized religious bodies as mechanisms to gain influence through change.

This belief that individuals could exert control in ecclesiastical matters was evident through the desire of individuals to find religious denominations that met their individual needs, whether spiritually, politically, or ideologically. However, this was not met with universal approval by the religious authorities of the area, including Nicholas Collin, the pastor appointed by the Swedish government to fulfill the religious needs of settlers and to ensure compliance to cultural norms that were consistent with those of the homeland.¹⁸⁴

“Frivolous people in this country,” complains Pastor Collin, “run from one sect to another. . . . Independence is so rampant that in all congregations several leave, if a pastor speaks the truth without regard to persons, saying that he has pointed them out.” And again he writes bitterly of “some old women who, I believe, could be converted and backslide again fifteen times a day,” and who let themselves be baptized two to three times as they change denominations.¹⁸⁵

While Pastor Collin expressed his disappointment, his reflection demonstrates the structural shift in religion that made it more egalitarian, free, and parishioner-focused. His words demonstrate firsthand not simply the desire, but the demand that his contemporaries had for decision-making, diversity, and influence in religious spheres. Collin specifically used the term “independence” in his description of the situation. The modification of this term with the word “rampant” suggests a fervor for religious liberty. Some historians have characterized the increasing existence of liberty in religion as somewhat more subtle or accidental. Collin was later detained under suspicion of being a

¹⁸⁴ Lundin, 35

¹⁸⁵ Lundin 35-36

spy for the Loyalist forces.¹⁸⁶ While Swedish, Collin was a pastor for the Episcopal¹⁸⁷ Church, and was thus more inclined to reflect and represent the Loyalist views. The observations of this period minister suggest that people had a clear concept that they could independently move from one place to the next. This was not an accidental occurrence. The convergence of a desire for economic improvement and spiritual independence constitutes a driving force for political liberty when individuals begin to assign responsibility for the absence of those things to the colonial power. Some of this manifested in significant disagreements among the different denominations. Leonard Lundin argues that

For the most part, the preachers of the various sects preserved an appearance of mutual tolerance; but at times their latent animosities blazed forth in a manner that must have furnished more pleasurable excitement than spiritual edification to their flocks. The bitterness of the interdenominational and intradenominational squabbles which we can trace in the ecclesiastical records of this region suggests a general emotional instability in the populace—a condition doubtless due at least in part to the unremitting toll and lack of normal emotional release in their lives.¹⁸⁸

The observation by Lundin that preachers offered tolerance to their counterparts suggests an understanding and appreciation for the sanctity of the freedom that individuals had to participate in religions of their choice. The “emotional instability” that Lundin references is a precursor to revolution. Individuals are not as likely to engage in armed insurrection when they are content with their stations in life. Those who resided in the depressed areas

¹⁸⁶ Ellis Derry, *Old and Historic Churches of New Jersey*, Volume I (Medford, New Jersey: Plexus Publishing, 2003), 170.

¹⁸⁷ The term “Episcopal” was used to describe the Anglican Church (Church of England), especially in the Americas. For the purpose of this paper, the terms “Episcopal” and “Anglican” will be used interchangeably to identify adherence to the principles and structure of the Church of England.

¹⁸⁸ Lundin, 36

of southern New Jersey would prove to be some of the most active members of the revolutionary militias.¹⁸⁹ Their passion for, and experience of, liberty and economic improvement became driving forces in their fight for change.

The pluralistic denominational structure of colonial New Jersey was a microcosm of the greater religious diversity that was growing in America during the period. “By the first Great Awakening, the colony had taken in several denominations, among them Anglicans, Baptists, Congregationalists, Dutch and German Reformed, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Quakers.”¹⁹⁰ The pluralism in New Jersey not only represented the lack of one dominant sect, but also the denominational affiliations of surrounding colonies. The close proximity of New Jersey to comparatively more populated New York and Pennsylvania allowed for further migration from those places. The growth and decline of particular denominations was the result of the Great Awakening, political realities, and apprehension during the time of the revolution. The figure below demonstrates changes in the denominational pattern at the time:

¹⁸⁹ Lundin, 36

¹⁹⁰ Murrin, 7

Table 1: Congregations based on Denomination Identity¹⁹¹

Denomination	1702 ¹⁹²	1730	1750	1775	1800
Anglican or Episcopal	2	15	19	29	25
Baptist	4	6	12	30	30
Dutch or German Reformed	7	20	28	34	37
Lutheran	2	8	14	18	13
Methodist				9	20
Moravian			15	2	1
Presbyterian/Congregational	9	23	52	81	50
Quaker	22	24	38	41	40
Roman Catholic			1	3	
Total		96	179	247	216

This varied identity created a unique situation in New Jersey during the Great Awakening. The more global conception of the movement does not necessarily represent what happened in this state. Milton Coulter argues that “middle-colony Awakeners in particular deserve careful study because of the unique characteristics of the revival movement in their region. In New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Delaware, an unprecedented mixture of ethnic and theological backgrounds among the populace fostered a many-sided conflict. . . .”¹⁹³ It is important, therefore, to understand the development of individual denominations in the colony.

¹⁹¹ Murrin, 8

¹⁹² Nicholas Maring, *Baptists in New Jersey: A Study in Transition* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: The Judson Press, 1964), 43. (This column only)

¹⁹³ Milton Coulter, “Gilbert Tennent, Revival Workhorse in a Neglected Awakening Tradition,” in *Religion in New Jersey Life Before the Civil War*, Ed. Nancy Murrin (Trenton, New Jersey: New Jersey Historical Commission, Department of State, 1985), 74.

Presbyterians in New Jersey

Religious pluralism became manifest in America in the years leading to the revolution. Much scholarship focuses on the role of Congregationalist preachers and churches in New England which had evolved from the Puritan establishments in the region. In the mid-Atlantic states, Presbyterianism was the denomination with the most followers and influence. The geography of their settlements coincided with many populated areas that also served as trade centers; “Presbyterians clustered in the Raritan Valley, Hopewell, Maidenhead, the Freehold area, and northern New Jersey.”¹⁹⁴ The growth of the Presbyterian Church in America was not coincidental. The Scottish settlers in America brought to the continent their national religion, which was governed in doctrine and administration by a representative assembly. Ecclesiastical control by members was attractive to the English dissenters who adopted the Presbyterian name and principles in new churches which were controlled locally without the elected hierarchy. Regardless, the denomination had a history of proud dissent that informed its actions in the colonies. Whether the dissent was purposeful or a byproduct of the normalization of Enlightenment thought, the Presbyterian religious structure in New Jersey played a central role in not only the spread of revolutionary theory but also support to those engaged in the fight for political liberty. Presbyterianism grew as a result of the connection of a series of groups in the early eighteenth century, including “Scots and Scots-Irish Immigrants, New England and Long Island Puritans, Dutch Reformed converts, and the offspring of marriages between Dutch and Scottish families.”¹⁹⁵ The

¹⁹⁴ Murrin, 7

¹⁹⁵ Joseph Tiedemann, “Presbyterians and the American Revolution in the Middle Colonies,” *Church History* 19, no 1 (June, 2005): 308.

Presbyterian Church grew to claim twenty percent of the population of the middle states by the time of independence.¹⁹⁶

The legacy of Presbyterian dissent did not emerge in the New Jersey colony at the time of the revolution. The denomination had been closely associated with democratic principles since the outset of the Enlightenment and in its Scottish heritage.¹⁹⁷ Its members were antagonistic to and suspicious of the British due to a history of colonization and war. Presbyterian theology was related to Puritan theology, and many of the Presbyterians residing in New Jersey were related to the generations of Puritans who had settled in New England.¹⁹⁸ The northeastern contingent had already exhibited its willingness to engage in open dissent for political and denominational purposes, as was apparent in their political activity in Boston.¹⁹⁹ Decades prior to the American Revolution, Presbyterian ministers openly supported their parishioners in land disputes with the proprietors of the East Jersey colony.²⁰⁰ Period Presbyterian ministers, like Aaron Burr of Newark and Jonathan Dickinson of Elizabeth Town, acknowledged the legality of the land claims held by their congregants over those of proprietor Robert Hunter Morris.²⁰¹ While these leaders would become overshadowed in revolutionary lore by the likes of Pastor James Caldwell, their influence as Presbyterian ministers helped to set a precedent that denominational leaders had the right and responsibility to become involved in significant political issues facing the colonies. The land claim issue that

¹⁹⁶ Tiedemann, 308

¹⁹⁷ Lundin, 13

¹⁹⁸ Lundin, 13

¹⁹⁹ Lundin, 13

²⁰⁰ Tiedemann, 311

²⁰¹ Tiedemann, 311

occurred caused there to be close to a decade of rioting in the Eastern colony.²⁰² While the religious leaders have not been credited with openly calling for rioting against the government, they have not been completely separated from responsibility for the drastic escalation in the conflict. It is certain that beginning in the 1740s, ministers in New Jersey demonstrated that they did not find their pastoral duties to be insulated from the issues of the period. Early on, the Presbyterians “rejected, as did William Livingston in the *Independent Reflector*, the idea of ‘passive obedience and non-resistance’ to authority.”²⁰³ This originally set apart the Presbyterians from other denominations in New Jersey.

The Presbyterian Church was distinguished as one of the most democratic denominations in the colonies. The order and its members, especially in the eastern part of the colony, were more likely to be radical than were members of other denominations.²⁰⁴ The Presbyterians enjoyed significant influence and were regarded as the church with the most influence in New Jersey.²⁰⁵ The Presbyterian Church was organized with a structure that was representative of the concepts that were espoused by political reformers of the period. Each congregation had an elected committee of lay elders that served as the trustees and governing body of the church. The local bodies chose and worked with the ministers, as they were not subject to the assignment of ministers by higher ecclesiastical authorities. The churches elected representatives to the

²⁰² Tiedemann, 311

²⁰³ James Smylie, “Presbyterians and the American Revolution: A Documentary Account,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 108, no. 4 (Winter, 1974): 329.

²⁰⁴ Rohrer, 130

²⁰⁵ Rohrer, 130

sub-regional presbyteries, and those bodies chose delegates to the Synod, the closest of which to New Jersey was the one seated in New York.²⁰⁶

The Reverend Dr. John Witherspoon, distinguished New Jersey clergyman and educator, was the presiding officer of this assembly, which ensured that the opinions and intentions of his home colony would be sufficiently heard and applied during the meetings of the body.²⁰⁷ Witherspoon served as co-Presbyter, or chairman of the regional assembly, with future Chaplain Elihu Spencer.²⁰⁸ The New York Synod was very clearly Whig-controlled, and as an organized structure in support of the revolution.²⁰⁹ As armed conflict approached, the Synod communicated in writing to all ministers that they should prepare themselves for war.²¹⁰ It was clear that religious administration and politics were very closely intertwined. This created an environment in which ministers were not only permitted but expected to engage in actions in support of radicalism. The structures worked diligently to prevent the introduction of an Anglican bishop into the colonies, which would have added legitimacy and power to the imperial denomination.²¹¹ This foreshadowed the high level of Presbyterian involvement in Whig actions in the revolutionary era.

The convergence of the Enlightenment and Great Awakening was apparent in New Jersey. Political, religious, and educational structures became more united as their leaders were more identifiable. The College of New Jersey, founded in Elizabeth Town

²⁰⁶ Rohrer, 130

²⁰⁷ Rohrer, 130

²⁰⁸ John Hall, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Trenton, N.J.* (Trenton, New Jersey: MacCrellish and Quigley, 1912), 159.

²⁰⁹ Rohrer, 130

²¹⁰ Rohrer, 130

²¹¹ Smylie, 329

and later housed in its current home of Princeton, was established not only as an educational institution, but one to train the increasing numbers of ministers who would be needed to shepherd the growing Presbyterian congregations in the region. John Witherspoon was President of this institution while serving as a leader in the Somerset Committee of Correspondence, New Jersey Provincial Assembly, and the Continental Congress.²¹² Witherspoon, as a leading Presbyterian, shared responsibility not only for the expansion of the influence of the denomination but also for the connection of political and religious principles in New Jersey. This relationship is further analyzed in Chapter 6, which focuses on the impact of individuals on the convergence of these concepts.

Witherspoon both led and was influenced by prominent revolutionaries in the Presbyterian community. In addition to being the spaces occupied by highly visible ministers like James Caldwell and Jacob Green, Presbyterian churches were the spiritual homes to many of the most influential New Jersey figures in the revolution. The congregation in Elizabeth Town was particularly saturated with the political elite. This included William Livingston, who was selected as governor after the revolutionary provincial constitution for New Jersey was adopted in 1776.²¹³ His fellow members included Abraham Clark, signatory of the Declaration of Independence and New Jersey delegate to the Continental Congress.²¹⁴ The congregation similarly boasted Elias Boudinot, who served as president of the same body.²¹⁵ Generals Elias Dayton and Matthias Ogden transitioned from Elizabeth Town parishioners to military officers upon

²¹² Tiedemann, 307

²¹³ Rohrer, 130

²¹⁴ Rohrer, 130

²¹⁵ Rohrer, 130

the organization of the militia and regular army.²¹⁶ This created a significant and diverse base of influence for the Presbyterian Church. This base of influence allowed the radical group in Elizabeth Town to extend its philosophy and influence to other Presbyterian bodies throughout the state.

It is reasonable to suggest that the power of the Presbyterian denomination had been established because period individuals wished for credit to be assigned to the organization. Similarly, the democratic structure of the church suggests clear parallels to the new institution of American liberty. Conversely, church responsibility for revolutionary actions can be assigned based on blame that the group received from those who were loyal to crown and country. Royalist Joseph Galloway assigned partial responsibility for subversion to the growing Presbyterian influence, calling their representatives in political gatherings

Persons, whose design, from...the Stamp Act, was to throw off all subordination and connexion with Great-Britain; who meant by every fiction, falsehood, and fraud, to delude the people from their due allegiance, to throw the subsisting Governments into anarchy, to incite the ignorant and vulgar to arms, and with those arms to establish American independence.²¹⁷

Galloway further suggested that “it was their ‘political and religious principles’ that were ‘original cause of the rebellion.’”²¹⁸ During the controversy of the Stamp Act, New Jersey Governor William Franklin, son of radical Benjamin Franklin, “argued that ‘Presby[terian]s of N. England [or Congregationalists]’ were ‘endeavor[ing] to stir up the

²¹⁶ Rohrer, 130

²¹⁷ as qtd. In Tiedemann, 306-307

²¹⁸ Tiedemann, 307

Inhab[itant]s of each Colony' against the tax."²¹⁹ While Franklin did not provide rationale for his assertions, the statement demonstrates that Presbyterians were a target as provocateurs by political leaders. This recognition potentially would increase the profile of the denomination, and its own acceptance of a radical role in New Jersey and national politics. In a letter to Lord Dartmouth, one of his colonial representatives

. . . reminded his lordship significantly that Calvinists had "a pretty strong Inclination to every sort of democracy." A few months later his feelings had become much stronger. "When the war is over," runs a letter written in April 1777, "there must be great Reform established, ecclesiastical as well as civil; for, though it has not been much considered at Home, Presbyterianism is really at the Bottom of this whole Conspiracy, has supplied it with Vigor, and will never rest, till something is decided upon it."²²⁰

These types of observations regarding the influence of the Calvinist sects were becoming more common among the English political elite. While they may have been observations of what had occurred, the acceptance or understanding of this trend likely fueled the confidence and boost of perceived political efficacy of the combination political-religious leaders. Leonard Lundin considers the words of the aide to Lord Dartmouth to be exaggerated; however, it is clear upon the examination of politics, religious structures, and individual religious practice that the political radicalism of mainstream religious organizations significantly influenced the minds of both revolutionary colonists and Loyalist authorities. The Anglican clergy also recognized that the Presbyterian denomination enjoyed a significant degree of influence over the colonies. As a result, Presbyterian churches became targets for destruction by the British. The members of the denomination, however, continued in their practice. One member remarked: "King of

²¹⁹ Tiedemann, 311

²²⁰ Lundin, 100

kings Heaven forbid! We despair not of being able soon to rebuild our churches; till then the canopy of heaven, a barn, or the shady woods will serve the purpose.”²²¹ The relative dominance of the Presbyterian denomination allowed its ecclesiastical governments, local church bodies, and pastors to influence Congress, the provincial governments, and individuals.

Congregationalists

While the Congregationalists dominated New England at the time, their presence in New Jersey was minimal compared to the growing Presbyterian influence. The Congregational Church was founded as the reformed evolution of the Separatist, Puritan, and non-conforming traditions in New England. The Puritan tradition had faced significant challenges, and its rigidity was responsible for a loss of membership in the period preceding the Great Awakening. The “Puritan Work Ethos” that was transmitted to new generations resulted in individuals neglecting religious practice in order to succeed in economic pursuits. The episcopal governance practice of the Congregational Church separated it from the growing traditions that had developed belief in local control. Theologically, the Congregationalists were of the Calvinist tradition, and thus most closely associated with Presbyterians.²²² As a result, the individuals who migrated from New England tended to join Presbyterian churches rather than establish new congregations. Many of the transitions away from the Congregationalist identification

²²¹ As qtd. In Smylie, 412

²²² Murrin, 8

resulted from reasons of polity.²²³ In his letter identifying religious organizations as the instigators behind political protest, Franklin grouped the Congregationalists with the Presbyterians due to the accepted nature of the relationship during this period.

Dutch Reformed

A Calvinist relative of the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches, the Dutch Reformed congregations were most prevalent in areas within proximity to New York and central New Jersey. The Dutch had sporadically settled New Netherland, in an area along the Hudson River that encompassed parts of what became the colonies of New York and East Jersey. The clusters were found in “Bergen, northern Essex, northern Morris, Somerset, and Middlesex counties.”²²⁴ Despite the historic relationship to Dutch settlement, there was not a high incidence of such churches throughout New Jersey during the early colonial period. However, when famous Great Awakening preacher Theodorus Frelinghuysen appeared with his impassioned sermons, individuals were more frequently drawn to the denomination.²²⁵ Frelinghuysen, while a Dutch Reformed minister, was responsible for the augmentation of many of the Protestant sects, as he was instrumental in spreading the barnstorming Great Awakening movement by traveling throughout the colonies. The Dutch Reformed tradition would later establish Queen’s College in New Brunswick, which eventually evolved into Rutgers University. The

²²³ Murrin, 8

²²⁴ Murrin, 8

²²⁵ Murrin, 8

tradition faced challenges during the war, as the British maintained Middlesex County areas like New Brunswick under their control.

Despite the Dutch Reformed tradition being Calvinist philosophy that echoed a majority of the sentiments of Presbyterianism, its influence was not nearly as significant or consequential as its more prolific counterpart. However, the denomination played a role in the escalation and radicalization of the conflict. Furthermore, the existence of multiple denominations engaged in the same behaviors demonstrated that this was not solely a Presbyterian effort. It reveals that the issues were important to a wider range of individuals and denominations, and that factions in the state were becoming increasingly more unified. The relationship between religious leaders and revolutionary politics became more normalized. There are several examples of Dutch Reformed influence in American politics. The denomination

. . . did bring to the fore men of high caliber and wide influence. Such were Jack Hardenbergh, parson of Raritan, and later head of Rutgers College, whose political activity in behalf of the Revolution was tireless; William Jackson of Bergen, who defiantly preached Whig sermons to a churchful of lukewarm or Tory parishioners within the reach of the British garrison at New York; and Dominie Romeyn of Hackensack, who did much to sustain the morale of his Whig congregation in a Loyalist county.²²⁶

The denomination was unique among the Calvinist groups, as it had a presence in many Loyalist areas. This resulted from the early Dutch settlement of key areas before the British claimed the area by force. Since they had been previously settled and had more infrastructure, these areas became population and power centers for British colonial

²²⁶ Lundin, 100

forces and governments upon the transfer of power. This allowed the Reformed tradition to have a presence in regions that were strongholds of the English government.

Anglican / Episcopalian

The colonial extension of the Church of England maintained a strong presence in New Jersey during the pre-revolutionary period. Many of the Anglican churches were present in communities that had been traditional seats of English power. Murrin acknowledges that “Anglican churches were located near the Delaware in Amwell, Hopewell, Trenton, Burlington, Greenwich and Maurice River, and on the other side of the colony in Middletown, Shrewsbury, Perth Amboy, Elizabeth Town and around New Brunswick.”²²⁷ The capital at Perth Amboy was almost exclusively populated by Loyalist members of the Anglican Church who had pledged to abide by the regulations of the British and provincial governments.

As the Presbyterians and their Calvinist counterparts espoused revolutionary principles, the Anglicans increasingly resented and dissented from these movements. The original threat to the spread of Anglicanism was the presence of pluralism. The American Anglicans had desired to create a more concrete and organized religious and governance structure in the colonies that was headed by a bishop.²²⁸ This would have added credibility and legitimacy to the colonial churches. The remainder of the Protestant sects saw this as a grave threat, as it had been the organized Anglican Church that had

²²⁷ Murrin, 8

²²⁸ Lundin, 101

persecuted and subjugated their followers and belief systems.²²⁹ The prevailing political attitude and evident public opinion at the time would have suggested that the Anglicans participate as one of many churches, to avoid creating a perceived threat to religious liberty. However, the Anglican Church leaders chose the strategy of attempting to expand their influence, creating unrest. Lundin articulates that “so violent did the controversy become that public opinion grew almost hysterical, and the Anglicans increased general irritation by their unwise tactics. Instead of attempting to conciliate hostile opinion, they emphasized their loyalty to the King and the British government, accused the Dissenters of republican principles. . . .”²³⁰ The leaders of this denomination chose to make public statements that were divisive and incited debate. While this was not politically savvy, it did represent the prevailing intention of British authorities to maintain control over the colonies, and to continue their ongoing work of building an empire that met their social, political, and economic needs.

The Anglican clergy relied on the support of the British government to maintain their existence and special privilege. As followers of the state religion, Anglicans wished to reserve privileges by eliminating the right of civil authorities to conduct marriages.²³¹ The parish sizes of the Anglican churches were comparatively smaller than those of more popular religious organizations. This disparity in size threatened their survival, placing Episcopal churches in the precarious position of attempting to attract followers in a more democratic environment while maintaining fidelity to a government and church government structure that were regarded as oppressive and antiquated. Prospective

²²⁹ Lundin, 101

²³⁰ Lundin, 101

²³¹ Lundin, 101

members of the clergy for this denomination were required to “acknowledge the supremacy of the King and promise conformity to the doctrines, discipline, and worship of the Church of England.”²³² The philosophy that they were espousing was determined and propagated by English sectarian authorities.²³³ As a result, it was clear that the majority of Anglican ministers would be inclined or forced to support the English government in the impending revolution. In the period before independence, “ministers frequently preached sermons ‘calculated as much as the Times would permit, to mitigate the general Infatuation,’ or to ‘inculcate the principle of peace, order and good government,’ and occasionally receive unwelcome attentions from the Sons of Liberty for their pains.”²³⁴

While Protestant churches preached political issues, normalizing this experience, any furtherance of pro-English principles would have been interpreted as a deliberate effort to reject the increasingly sacred principles of self-government. The liturgy went as far as including prayers for “the King, the Royal Family, and the High Court of Parliament . . . virtually all the Anglican clergymen preferred closing the churches to altering the form of service.”²³⁵ In order for a priest to minister to the more radical Americans, he would have to deviate from the governing doctrine of the church. This created philosophical, governance, and moral issues for such members of the clergy. This issue was present in New Jersey, where “only one minister of the denomination, Robert Blackwell, S.P.G. missionary at Gloucester, Waterford, and Greenwich, definitely joined the Americans; another, Abraham Beach of New Brunswick, reopened his church in the

²³² Lundin, 102

²³³ Lundin, 102

²³⁴ Lundin, 102

²³⁵ Lundin, 103

course of the war, omitting the objectional prayers from the service.”²³⁶ Uzal Ogden, who was a Sussex County pastor, originally moved to New York when the revolution began in earnest. He later returned to northern New Jersey, where he returned to ministry, but dispensed with the standard liturgy.²³⁷ While so few New Jersey Anglican ministers supported the radical cause, this does not minimize the impact of religious leaders on the American Revolution, as the remainder continued to either deliberately support the royal government or preside over a liturgy that was a de facto acknowledgement of the power of the government authorities. The Anglicans were able to organize themselves to expand Loyalist influence and participation on the English side of the conflict. The presence of these competing forces demonstrates just how integral religious leaders and structures were to the execution of the war efforts.

The Anglican Church faced significant challenges in the colonies. The denomination was one that was based on authority and structure, yet the organizational leadership resided in England. There was not a diocese in New Jersey that could direct the actions of the individual churches, either ecclesiastically or organizationally.²³⁸ This permitted local churches to have a great deal of autonomy, which threatened the status quo and basic tenets of the Church of England.

The Reverend Thomas Chandler of Elizabeth campaigned to import a bishop to be seated in New Jersey in order to effectively administer the denomination.²³⁹ The bishop would also be empowered to ordain priests in the colonies, which would potentially assist

²³⁶ Lundin, 103

²³⁷ Lundin, 103

²³⁸ Rohrer, 126

²³⁹ Rohrer, 126

in mitigating the significant priest shortage that existed in New Jersey, as there were only five ministers for twenty-one congregations.²⁴⁰ This allowed for control to lay in the hands of laypersons rather than those of authoritative ministers who carried out the desires of the Anglican Church with great fidelity. Eventually, this would create an environment in which there was variation among churches in practice and adherence to the prescribed liturgy. This was effectively pluralism on a micro-level scale. People were able to use their liberty to exercise individual and group desires over those of the structures of religious governance. While most Anglicans did have a bias toward Loyalism, individual ministers and parishioners were able to deviate from the official mandates. This led to pockets of outward or silent support of the revolutionary cause and allowed ministers and laypersons to use the churches as vehicles for spreading such beliefs.

New Jersey was an excellent test case for the ability of the Anglican Church to exert its influence in favor of the British cause during the revolution. While the church was an established power in the colonies, the pluralism that existed in New Jersey had the potential to diminish the power of the denomination as an organizing mechanism for the Tories. While many of the Calvinist denominations were effective in shepherding followers toward the revolutionary cause, the Anglican ministers were equally successful in achieving corresponding confirmations of loyalty to the British government. As a rule, the Anglican pastors in the colony maintained allegiance to the British government.²⁴¹ The same clergy were able to use their influence to retain a great proportion of their pre-

²⁴⁰ Rohrer, 126

²⁴¹ Lundin, 103

revolutionary members.²⁴² However, the extent to which they had to exert effort to do so is a matter of debate. While it required more extensive actions to convince a colonist to reject the ingrained status quo in order to join the revolutionary cause, maintaining membership based on pre-existing conservative philosophy was not as difficult. While some Anglican parishioners aligned with the revolutionaries, most chose to support the philosophies and structure that they had always followed. The conservatives who wished for political temperance and the maintenance of the status quo remained aligned to their Anglican traditions.²⁴³ However, once political liberty and self-rule became the more normalized philosophy of New Jersey, individuals were more inclined to sever ties with the denomination and joined one of the various other sects, thus depriving the Anglican congregations of members.

Most individual Anglican churches aligned with the British cause. However, there was not unanimity among all of the members. Many of the most powerful Anglicans fled in order to avoid persecution from revolutionary forces, leaving the congregations to provide for their own spiritual and political guidance. Anglican churches were popular places for the Patriot armies to attack, as they were symbols of the authoritarian government. Some interesting mysteries result from such encounters. Christ Episcopal Church in Shrewsbury was used as a barracks by American soldiers during the war.²⁴⁴ At the Monmouth County Church, there is an additional marker on a grave nestled in a right angle of the church building that reads “PLACE OF ORIGINAL TABLET MELTED FOR BULLETS DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.” The tablet loosely

²⁴² Lundin, 103

²⁴³ Lundin, 103

²⁴⁴ Robert Kelly, Jr., “History of Christ Church in Shrewsbury,” christchurchshrewsbury.org.

supports the concept that church institutions were deliberate agents in the armed conflict; however, the stone does not clarify the side for which the lead marker was collected and melted. The traditional interpretation would be that Episcopalians were Loyalists and supported the British cause; however, the more detailed scholarship previously discussed proves that this was not always the case.

The Anglican Church experienced a significant loss of popularity during and immediately after wartime as a consequence of its direct and indirect support of the Loyalist cause during the conflict. While the Anglican population experienced close to a 100% increase over the two decades following 1730, their population began to decrease just as drastically in the period between 1775 and 1800.²⁴⁵ The revolution created suspicion toward Anglicans, the practitioners of the English state church. Members transferred to other denominations in the wake of revolutionary politics, especially when they did not live in strongholds like Perth Amboy. The trend following the revolution, however, was a sharp increase in membership in this church.²⁴⁶ Individuals were incentivized to return, as they would be able to practice within the familiar denomination and theology without the cumbersome control of overseas authorities. The identification of the Anglican Church in America as Episcopal helped to differentiate the two structures. The Anglican Communion continued to establish liturgy; however, individual congregations found themselves in the position to assert more independence.

²⁴⁵ Murrin, 8

²⁴⁶ Murrin, 8

Baptists

The Baptist movement was in some ways a shock to its Anglican and Calvinist counterparts. The Baptist tradition required years to take hold in New Jersey. One of the most radical new denominations that expanded in scope as a result of the Great Awakening, the Baptist tradition did not expand beyond a few central New Jersey churches until the religious revival.²⁴⁷ Once the churches became established, their number doubled every 25-30 years in the state. This was a deviation from places that were largely politically radical like Massachusetts and Virginia, which were outwardly hostile to the Baptists.²⁴⁸ New Jersey was the ideal environment of relative tolerance that permitted this group to expand despite significant differences in theology and worship practice. However, some regarded the Baptist denomination as a relative clone of Presbyterianism, with a few doctrinal variations.²⁴⁹ Presbyterian giant John Witherspoon remarked that “Baptists are Presbyterians in all other respects, differing only in the point of infant Baptism.”²⁵⁰ The Baptists held closely a desire for universal liberty.²⁵¹ Despite the commonalities, the Baptists were very much a minority. However, New Jersey was an environment in which this denomination could grow. This growth was likely aided by toleration on the part of the powerful Presbyterian denomination. The New Jersey colonies contained the earliest and largest population of Baptists in North America.²⁵² As such, the denomination was of more consequence in New Jersey than in other provinces.

²⁴⁷ Murrin, 9

²⁴⁸ William Cathcart, *Baptist Patriots and the American Revolution* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Guardian Press, 1976), 3.

²⁴⁹ Maring, 59

²⁵⁰ As qtd. In Maring, 59

²⁵¹ Cathcart, 32

²⁵² Maring, 37

Baptists migrated to New Jersey from New England and from various regions in Britain like England, Ireland, and Wales.²⁵³ This diversity did not derail the growth of the denomination; instead, it helped to foster additional transplants to the New Jersey area. Despite the differences in individual background and the ability of the local churches to engage in relatively independent decision-making as aligned with their appreciation for freedom, there was a common experience for the Baptists.²⁵⁴ They were able to engage in consistent doctrine and practice, which strengthened the unity and health of the denomination.²⁵⁵ Recognition of their strength propelled the New Jersey representatives to possess significant influence in the Philadelphia Baptist Association, which ensured consistency and growth in the denomination.²⁵⁶ Individuals and churches from other states were thus poised to follow the lead of the New Jersey Baptists. However, this same reverence for such individuals was not as universal throughout New Jersey or the colonies in general.

Despite the calls of many individuals and ecclesiastical leaders for religious and political liberty, other Christian denominations were not accepting of the Baptist practices. Mainstream sects considered the group and its actions highly suspicious. However, this simply resulted in the Baptists engaging in more deliberate organization in order to develop legitimacy and equality.²⁵⁷ Members of the denomination ran for public office and began to establish influence throughout central and southern New Jersey.²⁵⁸

²⁵³ Maring, 37

²⁵⁴ Maring, 37

²⁵⁵ Maring, 37

²⁵⁶ Maring, 37-38

²⁵⁷ Parker Thompson, *The United States Army Chaplaincy: From its European Antecedents to 1791*, Volume 1 (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Department of the Army, 1977), 86.

²⁵⁸ Maring, 41-42

They had a proportionately higher rate of participation in political office than comparable denominations, as there were fewer members total.²⁵⁹ The lack of a training center for their ministers resulted in problems growing the denomination.²⁶⁰ The Baptists formed a college at Providence in order to train ministers and to educate members.²⁶¹ Its president and chaplain was the Reverend Dr. James Manning, who became a representative to Continental Congress.²⁶² His representation of the religious, educational, and government institutions ensured that there would be communication and articulation of common and divergent interests. The New Jersey Baptist community had representatives in a Caucus of the Continental Congress that explored the concept of ensuring that their denomination would be afforded the same rights as established sects like the Congregational Church.²⁶³ Dr. Manning from Rhode Island used his influence to propel this cause.²⁶⁴ The established organizations considered this a radical argument. However, the Baptists continued to advocate for rights. This was especially evident in New Jersey, where denominations had more freedom to operate, and were part of the mainstream political system. The members of the New Jersey organization were able to use the pluralistic environment and increasingly liberal government to their advantage. Their gains established a precedent for the growth of sister institutions throughout other colonies. Across North America, the Baptists were determined not to be silenced, and were central to the struggle for religious liberty. Ralph Torbet argues that

²⁵⁹ Maring, 43

²⁶⁰ Maring, 70

²⁶¹ Thomas Griffiths, *A History of Baptists in New Jersey* (Hightstown, New Jersey: Barr Press Publishing Company, 1904), 270.

²⁶² Griffiths, 270

²⁶³ Parker Thompson, 86

²⁶⁴ Griffiths, 270

the efforts put forth by Baptists in behalf of religious freedom, during and after the American Revolution, contributed greatly not only to the ultimate achievement of the goals, but also their popularity. Indeed, the Revolution provided them with a unique opportunity. They had little to lose and much to gain. Like Congregationalists and Presbyterians, they were bound by no ties of loyalty to a state church in England. Their participation in the War of Independence was therefore a contribution to the cause of religious liberty.²⁶⁵

The Baptist struggle demonstrates the connection between political and religious equality that was commonly sought in America during this period. In this case, the Baptists had to fight for political equality in order to achieve the same on a religious level. The political situation in New Jersey allowed for the Baptists to actively participate, resulting in members of churches and the clergy playing an active role in the conflict. This was fueled in part by the willingness of some congregations to organize in support of the war effort.

The response of local Baptist organizations to the outbreak of the war was not consistent. There was significant disagreement on the parish level as to whether the churches should take sides.²⁶⁶ This could be attributed to the geographic concentrations of Baptists in central New Jersey, an area that had more Tory influence. Baptist ministers were placed in more difficult positions than were some of their counterparts in other denominations. The Reverend Abel Morgan remained in a centrist role, continuing to serve his Middletown congregation throughout the conflict.²⁶⁷ The ardent support for the revolution exhibited by the Reverend David Jones of the Crosswicks Church in Upper Freehold was controversial.²⁶⁸ He eventually had to forfeit his position in the church. The

²⁶⁵ Robert G. Torbet, as qtd. In Parker Thompson, 86

²⁶⁶ Maring, 71

²⁶⁷ Maring, 71

²⁶⁸ Maring, 71

controversy over certain radical ministers was largely caused by disagreements with prominent laypersons in particular congregations.

Most individual members, and thus the Baptist congregations in their entirety, supported the revolutionary cause. This was evident in Hopewell, where the front of the Baptist Church became the site of an impassioned recruitment effort:

Sunday, April 23, 1775, news of the battle of Lexington reached Hopewell while the people were worshipping in the First Baptist Church. At the close, Joab Houghton, standing on this block, inspired the men with love of liberty and desire for independence. In closing he said: "Men of New Jersey, the Red Coats are murdering our brethren of New England. Who follows me to Boston?"²⁶⁹

The service was interrupted so that Houghton could be told of the losses.²⁷⁰ It was largely Houghton's fellow church members who joined him in numbers significant enough to result in him being granted a commission as a Captain.²⁷¹ The respect that Houghton demonstrated for the worship service and sanctity of the space is evident based on his decision to wait until the conclusion of the service to make his pronouncement and issue his invitation; however, as the audience was specifically Baptists, he shared his belligerent words on the Sabbath.

Houghton represented the many prominent Baptists who engaged in active support of the war effort. While the total number of ministers from the denomination who participated as chaplains was minimal, there were few congregations from which to draw fighting parsons. Some churches did not have university-trained or officially ordained ministers. Thus, the rate of those ministers who did participate was impressive. In the

²⁶⁹ Griffiths, 69

²⁷⁰ Cathcart, 58

²⁷¹ Griffiths, 69

place of the ministers, many identifiable prominent Baptists supported the Patriot effort. John Hart, a deacon and member of the important Hopewell Church, exemplified this trend. Hart was an important member of the Baptist movement, one which suffered from a lack of ministers. He was regarded as an individual within the denomination who could resolve the disputes of its members, a role traditionally held by the local pastor.²⁷² He was known for his modesty and good deeds rather than fiery rhetoric, but was seen as a leader among his peers.²⁷³ Hart was elected by the Hunterdon County contingents to the Provincial Congress, in which he served as Vice President.²⁷⁴ He was the only Baptist signer of the Declaration of Independence, and was one of five from New Jersey.²⁷⁵ The fact that he was permitted to serve in such a role in the revolutionary government as a representative from New Jersey is indicative of the tolerance and unique religious atmosphere in the new state. He served as speaker of the New Jersey Assembly, until the body had to disband due to its inability to effectively meet during wartime.²⁷⁶ Hart was forced into hiding, and was unable to reside in one place for too long an interval.²⁷⁷ The British quickly destroyed his property, burned his crops, and stole his livestock.²⁷⁸ He came home to find his wife deceased and his children in hiding.²⁷⁹ Like other targeted leaders, Hart paid a price for his relatively newly minted stature. Hart died during the

²⁷² Cathcart, 49

²⁷³ Cathcart, 49-50

²⁷⁴ Cathcart, 50

²⁷⁵ Maring, 73

²⁷⁶ Maring, 73

²⁷⁷ Cathcart, 51-2

²⁷⁸ Maring, 73

²⁷⁹ Maring, 73

war, and was buried in the churchyard that he had previously donated to the congregation in his capacity as one of its most significant leaders and benefactors.²⁸⁰

While John Hart was among the highest profile Baptists, he was joined in public service by members of the denomination from around the state. There were twelve Baptist members of the New Jersey legislature in 1774, and many more served on committees of correspondence and in military capacities.²⁸¹ Their impact was statistically more significant than that of other denominations due to their comparatively lower population. The Baptists developed a taste for freedom and equality as they advocated for the rights of their organization and its members in the period leading up to the war.

While there were many radical Baptists, some chose to remain loyal to the Crown.²⁸² Due to the relatively libertarian leanings of the mainstream Baptists, individuals and congregations were very suspicious of anyone from their tradition who did not fully embrace the Patriot cause. Even ministers like the Reverend David Sutton, the original pastor of the Kingwood Church, were not permitted to minister to their congregations despite taking loyalty oaths to the revolutionary cause, because senior laypeople did not find them to be radical enough.²⁸³ The war fragmented many small congregations, as they did not have the infrastructure to continue in existence.²⁸⁴ The leaders were forced to regard success in the revolution as necessary for the continuation of the health and existence of the denomination. While the fragmentation weakened them, the reintroduction of British control in New Jersey would have significantly undermined

²⁸⁰ Cathcart, 53

²⁸¹ Maring, 74

²⁸² Maring, 74

²⁸³ Maring, 74

²⁸⁴ Maring, 75-6

the progress that the Baptists had made. Conversely, their distinguished attention to the war effort would help to propel the validity and popularity of the denomination.

Lutheranism

There were denominations in New Jersey that aligned themselves with the Patriot cause but often did not participate in an overt way due to fear of destruction or lack of communication between churches due to the recent introduction of the groups into the colony. This was the case for the Lutheran sect. Their churches were mainly present in the northern part of Bergen County, as well as the Raritan Valley in what is now Somerset and Hunterdon Counties.²⁸⁵ Many of the Lutherans originated from Germany, the birthplace of the Reformation at the hands of the namesake of the denomination. In a manner consistent with the German tradition, the Swedish government also continued to provide a pastor to serve the residents of Swedesboro.²⁸⁶ This expanded the Lutheran influence in the southern part of the colony.²⁸⁷ While the Lutherans were a relative minority, their theology became more closely associated with that of other denominations over time. The war had the potential to destabilize the Lutheran denomination in New Jersey.²⁸⁸ Its men were leaving for war, there was a shortage of clergy, and their property existed on the front lines of the conflict.²⁸⁹ Missionary Henry Melchior Muhlenberg visited New Jersey, before and during the war, and engaged in deliberate and successful

²⁸⁵ Murrin, 9

²⁸⁶ Lundin, 34

²⁸⁷ Wallace Jamison, *Religion in New Jersey: A Brief History* (Princeton, New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1964), 80.

²⁸⁸ Jamison, 80

²⁸⁹ Jamison, 80

efforts to secure property and ministers for the newly established congregations. The relative infancy of Lutheranism in New Jersey in comparison to the Presbyterian denomination meant that there would not be Lutheran chaplains in New Jersey. The local parishes would have collapsed had their few pastors left for military service.

Methodism

Like the Lutherans, the Methodists were a recent addition to the New Jersey religious landscape. While the Methodist denomination became prevalent as an independent church in New Jersey after the American Revolution, it existed until that time as a group within the Anglican Church.²⁹⁰ Due to their ties to the Church of England, many of the Methodists, particularly leaders, aligned with the Tories.²⁹¹ John Wesley, the leader of the evangelical movement, was an English pastor who had deliberately indicated his reverence for the crown.²⁹² Despite the dissent that the Methodists exhibited, they were not separated from England by matters of polity. Their governance structures mirrored those of the Anglican Church, as local congregations were unable to elect or appoint their own ministers.²⁹³ The Methodists distinguished themselves after the war due to their purposeful evangelism. Members of the growing Wesleyan movement began settling in the Philadelphia area in 1769, as it was an area with religious toleration and diversity.²⁹⁴ The significant religious liberty that the New Jersey government structures granted made the colony to the east as attractive. For the

²⁹⁰ Murrin, 9

²⁹¹ Murrin, 9

²⁹² Andrews, 39-40

²⁹³ Jamison, 84

²⁹⁴ Andrews, 39

Methodists, the desire for such liberty did not translate to participation as Patriots in the war.

The leaders of the denomination attempted to keep close ties to the British.²⁹⁵ This was especially important as influential individuals in the home country were funding the evangelical mission. The ministers preached moderation and sought to remove their members from militia forces.²⁹⁶ However, the leaders of the fledgling group in America did not universally or specifically advocate for resistance to the revolution in a manner consistent with the Anglican leaders. Many ministers simply ignored the growing political issues in the colonies, as their focus was on evangelism.²⁹⁷ Even if they were educated on the issues, the leaders kept their sentiments private. Engaging in support of one side of the dispute would serve only to alienate prospective members in the opposite camp.²⁹⁸

While John Wesley did not outwardly support the revolutionary cause, the objectives of the movement were closely aligned with his reformist and populist past.²⁹⁹ This created an interesting internal conflict for the evangelist. In his private writings to the Earl of Dartmouth, both a major benefactor to Methodist evangelism and Secretary of State for the American Colonies, Wesley shared his concerns:

“I cannot avoid thinking . . . That an oppressed People asked for nothing more than their Legal Rights.” The war, Wesley wrote, would not be easily won, since the Americans were “Enthusiasts for Liberty,” even if “calm, deliberate Enthusiasts,” and men who fought “for their Wives, Children,

²⁹⁵ Andrews, 40

²⁹⁶ Andrews, 40

²⁹⁷ Andrews, 47

²⁹⁸ Andrews, 48

²⁹⁹ Andrews, 48-9

Liberty!” would have an important advantage “over men who fight only for pay.”³⁰⁰

Wesley further shared his concerns about the state of America when he advised his patron that the Americans in general were radicalizing, and that the revolutionary sentiment was not a collection of isolated occurrences.³⁰¹ Despite his keen observations, Wesley did not show overt sympathy for the Patriot cause, and he published works like *A Calm Address* which made a reasoned political argument against independence based on historical precedent.³⁰² While Wesley was largely publishing in order to ensure the survival of the mission, an American loss could have had a paradoxical effect on this group.

The publication of Tory sentiments caused the Methodists to be a target for Patriot organizations.³⁰³ Prominent Methodists like lay exhorter Thomas Webb deliberately provided support to Britain by revealing information on American troop movements.³⁰⁴ Webb is credited with providing a warning to British forces that the Americans would be invading Trenton.³⁰⁵ The Crown forces did not heed his warning, however. Webb was later expelled from New Jersey by Governor Livingston after he refused to swear a loyalty oath to the state on the orders of George Washington.³⁰⁶ After leaving, he returned to New Jersey while traveling to New York, and was arrested for spying.³⁰⁷ While a technicality led to the charges being dropped, Webb was regarded as a very dangerous man.³⁰⁸ As a result, he was confined to a prisoner-of-war camp until his

³⁰⁰ Andrews, 49

³⁰¹ Andrews, 49

³⁰² Andrews, 49-50

³⁰³ Andrews, 50

³⁰⁴ Andrews, 52

³⁰⁵ Andrews, 52

³⁰⁶ Andrews, 52

³⁰⁷ Andrews, 53

³⁰⁸ Andrews, 53

return to Britain could be negotiated.³⁰⁹ Like their Quaker counterparts, many Methodists chose to purposefully abstain from fighting.³¹⁰ This was not a Wesleyan requirement, but several of the ministers chose to practice refusal to participate in the military.³¹¹ In New Jersey, preachers Benjamin Abbott and David Abbott were jailed and fined for refusal to participate in the draft for militia personnel.³¹² Individuals like Wesley, Webb, and the Abbotts brought suspicion to the Methodist cause, which created concerns regarding the security of the state if the denomination were to be treated equitably.

While prominent Methodists were clearly part of the Tory camp in New Jersey, this was not a global representation of the Methodist movement and alignment. Andrews argues that “Methodists John Fitch of Trenton, James Sterling of Burlington, and Thomas Ware of Mount Holly were known to be resolute patriots.”³¹³ Many soldiers and militia members practiced Methodism.³¹⁴ This demonstrated that while Wesley himself had specific intentions and motives, the denomination was ruled by a common doctrine that required resistance to the war effort. The distribution of revolutionary leaders throughout central New Jersey helped to moderate some of the suspicion. It was the continuation of a government without denominational preference in New Jersey in the 1776 Constitution that signaled to Methodists that they might have some security.³¹⁵ Since the Methodists were effectively migrants for most of their introduction to America, they were able to continue their itinerant preaching and mission during and after the war.³¹⁶ Eventually,

³⁰⁹ Andrews, 53-4

³¹⁰ Andrews, 56

³¹¹ Andrews, 56

³¹² Andrews, 56

³¹³ Andrews, 53

³¹⁴ Andrews, 56

³¹⁵ Andrews, 51

³¹⁶ Andrews, 55

most of the ardent Loyalist Wesleyan preachers left America during the conflict out of concern for their security.³¹⁷ This allowed the local organizations to distance themselves from the Loyalist cause in order to ensure peace with their neighbors.

Following the conflict, the Methodists officially separated from the declining Anglican Church.³¹⁸ The structures of the latter failed in New Jersey due to often outward resistance to independence, retaliation from revolutionaries, destruction of church property, and flight of pastors to England or safer regions.³¹⁹ This divergence from the Anglican policies resulted in the Methodists being differentiated from their more traditional and anti-independence counterparts, and thus facilitated progressive acceptance of the denomination. The strong views on liberty in New Jersey allowed the denomination to grow. It expanded greatly into the nineteenth century, as disaffected former Anglicans and dissenters from other traditions found homes in the newly established churches. The lack of significant and ongoing reprisal against the fledgling denomination demonstrates the tolerance and desire for religious freedom in the state. While the Methodists do not account for stories of brilliant chaplains who led men into battle, the denomination is representative of the social movements and change that were occurring at the time of the war. The Methodist story most importantly provides insight as to the practical influences on pastoral and ecclesiastical decision-making in an effort for survival.

³¹⁷ Jamison, 74

³¹⁸ Andrews, 62

³¹⁹ Andrews, 63

Quakers

The refusal of prominent Methodists in central New Jersey to participate in the Patriot war effort marginally aligned them with their influential neighbor: the Society of Friends. The Quakers developed a significant presence in New Jersey early in the existence of the Colony. The proximity of South Jersey to developed parts of Pennsylvania resulted in large numbers of the group settling in West Jersey.³²⁰ The Quakers were known to have settled on fertile land on the Delaware River, in areas that were more likely to provide for success with farming and economics.³²¹ This action created a significant divide between this religious group and others that were not achieving nearly the same success living in the internal areas of the southern part of the state.³²² While the Quakers are known to be pacifists, their impact on the American Revolution was significant nonetheless. Understanding the desire of the denomination for non-violence illustrates how they engaged with the conflict. Purposefully removing the group from the war demonstrates how religion had a role in the conflict. The question that arises from this knowledge concerns what the level of success of the New Jersey militia may have been had it benefitted from increased enlistments of Quakers. Conversely, the pacifism of the group makes any involvement of one of their members interesting to study further, as one must determine what the reasoning was for one to temporarily reject religious doctrine for another cause. The analysis of Quakers, therefore, assists in illustrating the greater points of this study. The presence of this group cannot be understated:

³²⁰ Murrin, 7

³²¹ Lundin, 34

³²² Lundin, 34

Although the earliest Quaker monthly meeting was established in 1672 in the East Jersey town of Shrewsbury, most Quakers settled in West Jersey. Salem Monthly meeting was established in 1676, followed by Burlington in 1678. In 1745 Quakers or reputed Quakers represented substantial portions of the white populations of three counties in what had been West Jersey—Salem (16%), Gloucester (43%), and Burlington (51%)—and one in what had been East Jersey—Monmouth (41%). By 1730, there were twenty-four Quaker meetinghouses throughout New Jersey. The number of Quaker meetings continued to grow until the period around the Revolution.³²³

The Quaker presence provided for dissent when other organized religious groups were beginning to have common views on the war. Dissent remains a vital component of democracy.

While the Quakers did not specifically support the revolutionary cause as a matter of common policy, many of the group were ardent abolitionists.³²⁴ While this trend was not specifically connected to the war effort, the movement suggests that the Quakers were interested in the concepts of individual liberty and equality, essential components of the republican system for which the colonists were fighting. During drafts and deliberations on the Declaration of Independence, Patriots such as Thomas Jefferson argued to blame the King for the existence of slavery in the colonies. The pacifism of the Quaker tradition did not exclude them from participating in the cause of freedom. The group was able to successfully interact with individuals from the remainder of the religions in the state once independence was finalized. Original Quaker meetinghouses continue to exist throughout New Jersey, maintaining centuries-old history.

³²³ Murrin, 7

³²⁴ Jean R. Soderlund, "Quaker Abolitionism in Colonial New Jersey: The Shrewsbury Chesterfield Monthly Meetings," in *Religion in New Jersey Life Before the Civil War*, Ed. Nancy Murrin (Trenton, New Jersey: New Jersey Historical Commission, Department of State, 1985), 23.

The Quaker theology was very much egalitarian in theory; however, there was a definite challenge that prevented global application of such principles. Many powerful Quaker families had been able to amass large plots of land on which to build farms and plantations.³²⁵ This created observable social classes. While this may seem to negate the fight for equality, the wealth of these members translated into increased political power. The Quakers, despite a unique status even in a heterogeneous society, could use their economic power for influence. The Quakers regulated themselves by supporting the concept of abolitionism when many of their members held slaves. Due to the internal pressure, most members gave up using slaves for labor, and replaced them with indentured servants.³²⁶

As the war approached, the Quakers were forced to analyze their potential actions within the contexts of both ideology and practicality. The philosophical paradox of desiring liberty but not taking the actions to acquire it was a matter of significant discussion. In addition, there were practical reasons for purposefully separating themselves from the radicalism that was overtaking many parts of the colony. As a minority religious sect, the Quakers had benefitted from significant protection from persecution at the hands of both the British and other denominations.³²⁷ The colonial governments ensured that the Quakers were unmolested in their corners of New Jersey. This protection was even more vital as the Quakers espoused the aforementioned radical social views. It would have been unwise to challenge the establishment in such an overt fashion as making a community-wide statement in favor of political liberty. Any

³²⁵ Lundin, 31

³²⁶ Lundin, 31

³²⁷ Lundin, 103

protection that the sect did receive might be lost. The Quakers had found throughout their somewhat perilous existence that in order to survive, they needed to exist within the legal government system, and provide deference to its leaders.³²⁸ Leonard Lundin offers a further explanation for the reluctance of this group to participate in the revolutionary cause: “. . . the Quakers in the Delaware Colonies comprised some of the most prosperous merchants and farmers of the region, and shared the conservative views of many other members of those classes.”³²⁹ The Quakers had advanced economically in southern and western New Jersey. Any movement toward political egalitarianism might have brought with it economic changes that would have threatened the control of influential individuals. The practical nature of this need contrasts with the philosophical egalitarianism that the denomination practiced internally. A wider appreciation of these thoughts would have bred significant animosity among other New Jersey residents.

Eventually, the Quakers could no longer continue the practice of avoiding a public stand. Their bias certainly was in favor of the established government, and thus at a meeting in January of 1775, regional Quakers declared the same:

“The Divine principle of grace and truth which we profess leads all who attend to its dictates to demean themselves as peaceable subjects, and to discountenance and avoid every measure tending to excite disaffection to the King, as supreme Magistrate, or to the legal authority of his government. . . . The late political writings and addresses to the people . . . [are] not only contrary to the nature and precepts of the Gospel, but destructive of the peace and harmony of civil society, [and] disqualify men in these times of difficulty for the wise and judicious consideration and

³²⁸ Lundin, 104

³²⁹ Lundin, 104

promoting of such measures as would be most effectual for reconciling differences, or obtaining the redress of grievances. . . . ”³³⁰

The Quaker pacifism is apparent in the resolutions from this meeting. Evidence suggests that it was clear to them that the only way to avoid armed conflict was to recognize the civil authority of the Crown. The extent to which this statement was made in furtherance of their actual pacifist philosophy or to appease the colonial authorities in exchange for special privilege is unknown and subject to interpretation. Regardless, the Quakers assigned to the revolutionaries any responsibility for a shift in the relatively peaceful status quo. While the English government had engaged in some militant colonialism, the violence in the 1770s would be at the hands of political dissenters. This passage is intriguing, not just for its intentions and consequences but for its clarity and truthfulness. The first portion is certainly a matter of interpretation; however, the last clause correctly acknowledges that revolutionary actions would lead to the potential threats to peace. The passage is true to Quaker philosophy when it calls for alternative methods of dispute resolution. The pacifist group certainly wished to avoid war not only for their own members, but for the health of the greater society. The Quakers do, however, seem to betray either a lack of understanding of greater colonial issues, an extremely simplified view of the concerns, or a desire to misrepresent or undermine the revolutionary cause for the purpose of survival. The Americans had previously attempted to use civil bodies to address their grievances with the King, Parliament, colonial leaders, and judicial authorities. Their efforts were unsuccessful, which prompted the escalation of political action and hostilities. While there was certainly disagreement over which group bore

³³⁰ The Testimony of the People Called Quakers,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, February 22, 1775, in Gerlach, *New Jersey in the American Revolution: A Documentary History*, 111-112.

responsibility for the breakdown of relations between the government and those desiring change, it is clear that attempts had been made by this point. The situation had worsened in New Jersey to the point that an illegal provincial assembly assumed legislative and executive authority over the colony. It was naïve, yet true to Quaker principles to engage such calls for dispute resolution through established civil mechanisms.

While calling for diplomatic solutions, the deliberations of the Quakers suggest that it became more evident to them and the colony that those desiring change were willing to seize government power in order to do so. Their meeting in 1775 resulted in a statement of concern and call for obedience:

We are, therefore, incited by a sincere concern for the peace and welfare of our country publicly to declare against every usurpation of power and authority, in opposition to the laws and government, and against all combinations, insurrections and illegal assemblies; and as we are restrained from them by the conscientious discharge of our duty to Almighty God, by whom Kings reign and princes decree justice, we hope thro' his assistance and favour to be enabled to maintain our testimony against any requisitions which may be made of us, inconsistent with our religious principles, and the fidelity we vow to the King and his government, as by law established.³³¹

The Quakers from New Jersey and Pennsylvania witnessed the transfer of power from the chartered government organizations to the hands of political radicals. Their statement clarifies that they find the actions of the growing number of New Jersey revolutionaries to be repugnant to statutory, natural, and common laws. They further clarify that they are engaging in deliberate fidelity to such laws and are outwardly loyal to the King. It is interesting that the connection that the Quakers make to the monarch is through the

³³¹ “The Testimony of the People Called Quakers,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, February 22, 1775, in Gerlach, *New Jersey in the American Revolution: A Documentary History*, 111-112

philosophy of divine right of Kings. The Quakers do not outwardly analyze the actions of the King or show support to him for specific actions. They are not actually defending him, but rather suggest that they are obligated to show him allegiance because his power is bestowed on him by the same God that they worship. In the final clause of the passage, they once again invoke their religious principles for the allegiances that they have identified.

The written support given to the King in 1775 through religious justification was interpreted as an overt statement against the revolutionaries. While the Quakers had previously lived somewhat secluded lives of minimal controversy with their neighbors of other denominations and beliefs, this arguably religiously motivated political statement was certain to invite persecution.³³² The tactical error on the part of the Quakers was their reliance on the established authorities for civil administration. Once the revolution had begun, radical bodies assumed much of the political power in the colonies. By 1776, the colonists had attempted to address their grievances through documents like the Declaration of Causes for Taking Up Arms, the Olive Branch Petition, and the Declaration of Independence. The Quaker desire to be apolitical had resulted in achieving the exact opposite: a specific political stand. Eventually, the group was able to retreat once again to the apolitical, once the ideas of the Declaration of Independence were in full force, and there was no longer a pragmatic need to declare obedience to the English monarchy.³³³

³³² Lundin, 105

³³³ Lundin, 105

While the group was able to avoid additional overt political statements during the war, the Quakers faced difficulties as armed conflict ensued. Once the war was being fought in earnest, there was an expectation by revolutionary authorities and militia leaders that all New Jersey residents would defend the cause of liberty. The central geography of the colony contributed to the repeated battles that were fought on its fields and in its towns. There was a severe shortage of militiamen necessary to defend the state. Many of their provincial counterparts had passed laws of conscription; however, the payment of fines to avoid service needed to be abolished in order to strengthen the militia to the level deemed adequate by the military authorities.³³⁴ The payment of a fine had been regarded as the mechanism that would have allowed the Quakers to avoid military service while maintaining the favor of the authorities; however, records of the Quaker meetings demonstrate that to many of the organized local authorities, payment of a fine was as egregious as participation in military service. The revolutionary cause required funding in addition to personnel. Once it became apparent that the fine might no longer be an option, the Quakers had to be more deliberate in their opposition. The refusal of the Quakers to participate, in addition to a quiet reluctance by others in the state and pockets of Loyalism present in well-established communities, prevented compulsory service from becoming a requirement. The denomination and its followers were no longer simply dissenters but could have been characterized as obstructionist. However, the existence of the other groups that were against conscription made this controversy not solely a religious or denominational issue. Despite the lack of support by the Society of Friends for the war, the New Jersey government accommodated the religious doctrine of the

³³⁴ Lundin, 240

group when it allowed Quakers to “affirm” rather than “swear” the compulsory loyalty oath.³³⁵ This demonstrates respect on the part of the state governing body for the religious doctrine of the group. However, this same courtesy did not extend to waiving payment of fines in lieu of service.

While the Society of Friends was able to develop a workable, if strained relationship with the radical governments, its members suffered during the war. The group practiced public non-resistance, which was not always met with respect by the military forces.³³⁶ The armies relied on foraging in order to maintain supply levels. The lack of Quaker resistance meant that they “allowed their homes and goods to be pillaged by the foraging armies, they gave up their houses to quarter soldiers, at the same time being accused of treason by both sides for refusal to cooperate.”³³⁷ The new meetinghouse in Mount Holly was used by Hessian troops as a slaughterhouse and butcher shop.³³⁸ The Crosswicks meetinghouse was damaged by artillery fire.³³⁹ The historic benches in the meetinghouse that is still used today show evidence of damage from butcher tools.³⁴⁰ Several Quakers faced harassment for their failure to participate, while others were imprisoned and hanged.³⁴¹ Despite the constant pressures, the Quakers maintained their principles.

The study of the Quakers does not include the same radicalizing effect on its members or furtherance of the revolution that was effected by other Protestant

³³⁵ Lurie, 38

³³⁶ Jamison, 68

³³⁷ Jamison, 68

³³⁸ Derry, 137

³³⁹ Derry, 130

³⁴⁰ Derry, 137

³⁴¹ Jamison, 69

denominations. However, their influence cannot be marginalized. The Quakers were able to apply the liberty that was so sacred to the revolutionaries to engage in a deliberate, educated political statement. This action clearly aligned with the themes of political freedom that were espoused by those who wished to make change in America. Furthermore, the followers of the denomination were not faced with brutal retaliation that historically might have been suffered by groups that did not overtly participate in a revolution. While they did not participate as Whigs, their views did not label them as Loyalists. One of the most regionally organized denominations took no official action to thwart the cause of independence, except by not participating in the armed conflict in the name of Patriotism. The governing bodies of the group similarly chose to not fight in support of the monarch. However, individual Quakers did break with the central denominational authorities, participating in the Patriot cause.³⁴² These members were generally expelled from the Society. The Quakers were a group that took a philosophical stand for offering obedience to the civil authorities. Once the revolution concluded with an American victory, the revolutionaries became the legal, mainstream civil leaders. Once the divine right of kings was no longer a controlling philosophy, the Quakers recognized the legal authority of the United States and New Jersey Constitutions.

Results of Plurality

Religious plurality ensured that many would have the ability to select denominational affiliation. However, this was not universally available due to the lack of

³⁴² One famous example of this is Nathaniel Greene. More specific examples of Quakers who joined the revolutionary cause are contained in Chapter 5.

presence of more than a singular religious institution in one town or region. This was not the case, however, in an economically depressed region encompassing parts of Salem, Gloucester, and Cumberland counties.³⁴³ Since there had not been established, wealthy communities in this area, there was not one controlling institution. “Quakers, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Anglicans, Moravians, Anabaptists, and Methodists, competing for attention and converts, afforded one of the chief means of diversion to the hard-working settlers.”³⁴⁴ The diversity that was present permitted individuals to have freedom of choice in this aspect of life, where they may have been more restricted in other areas due to socioeconomic limits. Those interested in practicing religion could make an educated choice. The pluralism, while creating a more democratic environment, helped to demonstrate more specifically the practical and theological differences between the distinct sects. This system was not met with universal acceptance. Individuals like Pastor Nicholas Collin had found the plurality to be chaotic.³⁴⁵ ³⁴⁶ While this commentary appears to be the voice of a dissatisfied preacher, it alludes to the nature of religious choice. People began to apply more pressure on individual ministers and congregations in order to force the groups to meet their needs. The Great Awakening taught that not only could the individual have direct communion with God but also that s/he could create a religious environment in which s/he would feel most fulfilled. South Jersey became a microcosm for the growing trend in New Jersey. People applied the concept of liberty to institutions that people had previously regarded as having a certain amount of sovereignty over the individual due to their teachings being the pathway to salvation. In the case of

³⁴³ Lundin, 34

³⁴⁴ Lundin, 35

³⁴⁵ Lundin, 36

³⁴⁶ The frustration of Collin was previously explored in Chapter 4.

this region, the economically disadvantaged found the opportunity to practice control over a part of their lives. This would serve as a lesson for future political interactions.

Chapter 5

Church Bodies-The Structure of Revolution and Non-Resistance: A Case Study of Presbyterians and Quakers

The Philosophical and Practical Basis for New Jersey Church Participation

During the revolutionary period, churches and their governing organizations served as social structures and were based on principles of governance that were growing in popularity in Enlightenment Europe and the American Colonies. In many cases, religion has historically competed with government to be a vehicle of social control, thus making it attractive and necessary for governments to exert authority over religious doctrine and local religious structures in order to cement political authority. In a manner reflective of the political governments of the time, churches utilized both democratic and hierarchical organizational schemes in local and regional governments. The democratic principles that were utilized included the right of members to vote for trustees, the independent selection of ministers, and the right of local church bodies to elect and send representatives to higher-level governance organizations. These structures provided for a more egalitarian environment to be found within local congregations.

The revolutionary period did not include large-scale access to fraternal organizations for individuals. Additionally, communities did not universally allow for democratic selection of leaders. Despite the undertones of freedom in the Great Awakening, most individuals relied on organized churches for guidance with religious practice. The revivalism provided for individual communion with God but also suggested

that the practice of religion was necessary for salvation. These trends resulted in local churches serving as the most significant social and fraternal organizations of the time. Other such organizations would include labor/trade organizations and volunteer fire departments. However, the relatively agrarian nature of New Jersey limited the scope of both. When it became necessary to organize the people of New Jersey to respond to the American Revolution, the existing church structures were easily adaptable into revolutionary or Loyalist forces. While some might argue that religious organizations might deliberately separate themselves from belligerence, one must consider that the governing structures of churches, like those of political bodies, are comprised of individuals who hold sets of beliefs regarding issues greater than simply church doctrine. As a result, local and regional church structures became agents for recruitment, interstate communication, gathering of materials, logistical support, and medical aid, while retaining their roles as spiritual shepherds, but expanding to wartime.

In New Jersey, the pluralistic religious environment allowed for individual church bodies to have more significant influence because they were not as strongly controlled by the hierarchies. Denominations like the Presbyterian Church had more centralization, but much of the representative body existed in the northern, more radical sections of the country. Less established and institutional denominations like Baptists and Methodists experienced more freedom on the local level, but in some ways that advantage of self-rule provided these smaller groups with less of a mandate and did not give them the interstate support necessary to make as great of an impact on the revolutionary cause.

The Presbyterian Church as a Case Study in Organized Support

The Presbyterian Church operated through a hierarchal but representative government structure. Local churches elected their governing bodies, which sent representatives to presbyteries, mid-level regional governments, who in turn were permitted representation in larger-scale synods.³⁴⁷ The Synod was the closest model of an interstate assembly for individuals who wished to organize on a larger scale. While designed to create policy for the church, annual conferences allowed for both lay leaders and pastors to engage in conversations regarding a broad spectrum of contemporary issues.³⁴⁸ In many ways, the hierarchy was based on the structure of the Anglican Church; however, the republican philosophies that were included in church governance created a new, more democratic structure. The experience of religious organizations with respect to more demanding hierarchies created a lens through which their followers could view government structures. Patricia Bonomi argues that “the colonists’ experience with religious republicanism made them inherently sympathetic to civil republicanism. Conversely, their aversion to church hierarchies made them uneasy about civil hierarchies.”³⁴⁹ The Presbyterians demonstrated greater fluency with republican and democratic concepts than their contemporaries, which provided them with a desire to create political change. The local, regional, and interstate structures of the Presbyterian organization created the structures necessary to deliberately spread revolutionary ideas that aligned with Presbyterian and political goals.

³⁴⁷ Tiedemann, 337

³⁴⁸ Tiedemann, 337

³⁴⁹ Tiedemann, 337

As the revolution neared, the discussions of the governing bodies evolved from the philosophical to the practical. In 1770, the Presbyterian Synod created “a special committee appointed to obtain a record of all instances of Anglican oppression in the four southern colonies.”³⁵⁰ The steadily increasing interest in the role of the denomination in political affairs became a major theme of the Presbyterian existence. The Synod was put in the position to use its democratic structures to craft a statement of position on the relationship between England and the Colonies.³⁵¹ Once hostilities began, the Presbyterian Church made the official statement that it was in favor of liberty for the colonies.³⁵² This position reflected the opinions and preaching practice of the large majority of the clergy.³⁵³ The denominational governing body demonstrated the will of its clergymen when it formed a committee whose purpose it would be to actively promote rebellion by visiting and writing to local church affiliates.³⁵⁴ In 1775, the Presbytery of Trenton approved the request of the Synod to dispatch the Reverends Elihu Spencer and Alexander MacWhorter to the South in order to garner support for preaching the cause of liberty.³⁵⁵ The body paid the men their wages, provided funding for the trip, and arranged for interim pastors to cover the ministerial needs of their congregations in their absence.³⁵⁶ The religious structures had transitioned from philosophical bodies to deliberate and active fomenters of rebellion. They cemented this practice by acting through official resolution when creating the committee. The Synod chose active New

³⁵⁰ Norman Brydon, *Reverend James Caldwell: Patriot 1734-1781* (Caldwell, New Jersey: Caldwell Bicentennial Committee, 1976), 23.

³⁵¹ Brydon, 23

³⁵² Brydon, 28

³⁵³ Brydon, 28

³⁵⁴ Brydon, 28

³⁵⁵ Hall, 160

³⁵⁶ Hall, 160

Jersey preachers Witherspoon, Rodgers, and Caldwell to lead the committee.³⁵⁷ They were given the authority to use their status as official representatives of the Synod to advocate for both rebellion and all-out war if necessary.³⁵⁸ The action of the Presbyterian Church in America calling for war is clear evidence of the deliberate participation of church hierarchies in the process. The official and relatively public nature of these resolutions would have ensured that the central leaders became regarded as enemies of the British authorities.³⁵⁹

The Presbyterian Church governance structures deliberately worked to communicate the position of the elected body to the sending governments from presbyteries and local church trustees. Instead of relying solely on the organizing capacity of renowned ministers like John Witherspoon and James Caldwell, the Synod of New York and Philadelphia generated a “pastoral letter” that was distributed to the leaders of member churches after the body met on May 20, 1775.³⁶⁰ The letter was effectively a position paper generated by one of the most powerful special interest groups of the time, designed to call on its members in service of the cause of freedom. The preface of the letter was a warning of upcoming events, but a reflection of hope that God would intercede:

“Very Dear Brethren—The Synod of New York and Pennsylvania being met at a time when public affairs wear so threatening an aspect and when (unless God in his sovereign Providence speedily prevent it) all the horrors of a civil war throughout this great Continent are to be apprehended, were of opinion, that they could not discharge their duty to the numerous congregations under their care without addressing them at this important crisis. As the firm belief, and habitual recollection of the power and

³⁵⁷ Brydon, 28

³⁵⁸ Brydon, 28

³⁵⁹ Brydon, 28

³⁶⁰ Thompson, 149

presence of the living God, ought at all times to possess the minds of real Christians, so in seasons of public calamity, when the lord is known by the judgment which he executeth, it would be an ignorance or indifference highly criminal not to look upon him with reverence, to implore his mercy . . . ”³⁶¹

The leaders of the Synod not only called for the intercession of God but also planned for an ongoing struggle that would require the education of church members. They understood the power of the minister in being able to guide his members toward an understanding of virtue as defined by the organization. The Synod alluded to the fact that church members required the mercy of God to become better Christians in order to be successful in the conflict. The body later called for individuals to confess their sins and to act in a prayerful and repentant manner.³⁶² The governance structure reminded the local organizational leaders that “profaneness and the contempt of God, his name, Sabbaths, and sanctuary; pride, luxury, uncleanness, and neglect of family religion and government” were the worst offenses that members could commit in a time when adherence to the tenets of the denomination was necessary to gain the favor of God.³⁶³ The Synod included attention to both religion and government as vital in the effort, as they appreciated the connection between the two complementary forces. The central ecclesiastical authority made it clear that the war effort was a virtuous one, and that members should participate and would be strengthened and protected by their faith in God and religious practice:

“Suffer us then to lay hold of your present temper of mind, and to exhort especially the young and vigorous, by assuring them that there is no soldier so undaunted as the pious man; no army so formidable as those who are superior to the fear of death. There is nothing more awful to think

³⁶¹ As qtd. in Smylie, 379

³⁶² Smylie, 379

³⁶³ Smylie, 379

of, than that those whose trade is war, should be despisers of the name of the Lord of hosts, and that they should expose themselves to the imminent danger of being immediately sent from cursing and cruelty on earth, to the blaspheming rage and despairing horror of the infernal pit.”³⁶⁴

The officials of the Presbyterian Church not only absolved their members from any sin related to participation, but assured them that it was necessary and appropriate. The subtext of this passage in the letter suggests that the British side and soldiers did not enjoy the same virtue, and would thus be at a disadvantage, both mortally and immortally.

While the war was being waged for overtly political ends, the Presbyterian Church had an interest in a positive outcome for the revolutionaries. There had been religious tolerance in many of the colonies prior to the revolution. The Anglican Church benefited from its relationship to the Crown, but in many regions, this did not result in a particular disadvantage for the Calvinist Protestant denominations, as local control had been left to the growing influence of the non-sectarian assemblies. These provincial governing bodies had secured more rights for individuals and institutions. This was a result both of their strategically expanding their power and of the proprietary and royal representatives doing little to curtail their advances. A loss in the revolution had the potential to cause major political retribution at the hands of the British. The colonial assemblies might face dissolution, as many were bodies that organized resistance to the British government. Central authorities could not allow that threat to continue in fear of replication of war. With the protection of the colonial assemblies and friendly governors minimized, the Anglican Church had the potential to be installed as an institution of

³⁶⁴ As qtd. In Thompson, 149

special privilege, politically and ecclesiastically. This would have threatened both the political power and free exercise of other denominations. In addition to liberty, the Presbyterians were effectively fighting for the survival of the denomination. The Synod called for each member to “. . . offer himself as a champion of his country’s cause.”³⁶⁵ This same request could be transferred to the preservation of the Presbyterian Church in America.

The Synod did not simply engage in philosophical discussions; rather, it gave particular directives to its members to support the institutions of the independence movement. In particular, the Synod requested that the members support the Continental Congress and was sure to note that the representatives to the body were “chosen in the most free and unbiased manner, by the body of the people,” which necessitated that “they be treated with respect, and encouraged in their difficult service.”³⁶⁶ The church was outwardly imploring its members to offer unwavering support to what was an increasingly radical political body. The ecclesiastical government requested that the ministers deliberately promote the respect of the Continental Congress.³⁶⁷ They requested that ministers lead prayers that would “be offered up to God for his direction in their proceedings—but adhere firmly to their resolutions; and let it be seen that they are able to bring out the whole strength of this vast country to carry them to execution.”³⁶⁸ The churches would be praying for the practical application of the Enlightenment principles for which the colonists were fighting. The Synod believed that the mission of the

³⁶⁵ As qtd in Thompson, 149

³⁶⁶ As qtd in Thompson, 149

³⁶⁷ Smylie, 381

³⁶⁸ As qtd. In Smylie, 381

delegates necessitated the support of Presbyterians through both conspicuous action and prayer.³⁶⁹

During the revolutionary period, the larger regional Presbyterian governments were acutely aware of the imbalance of support throughout the American colonies. Presbyterians in New England and the middle states were far more likely to support the revolutionary cause than their counterparts in the Deep South. As an organizational power, the denominational governments attempted to secure greater support for the revolutionary cause by sending representatives to the South.

In November 1775, the New Brunswick, New Jersey Presbytery sent Rev William Tennent III and Col. William Henry Drayton to the South Carolina backcountry to persuade Presbyterians there to become Patriots. The two stayed for about six months, albeit unsuccessfully. In 1776, Elihu Spencer, pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Trenton, New Jersey, and Alexander McWhorter, pastor of the same in Newark, spent four months in North Carolina vainly working to win over their co-religionists there to the Patriot cause.³⁷⁰

While the envoys to the South did meet the objectives for which they were dispatched, the action of the local presbytery demonstrates that the religious organizations exhibited particular interest in furthering the revolutionary cause. The direct relationship between organized religious structure and Patriot recruitment early on in the conflict suggests that the relationship between religious structures and wartime efforts was not merely coincidental. The efforts of the central New Jersey presbyteries similarly differentiate religious structures of the colony/state from those in other regions. While this suggests that the Enlightenment-Great Awakening convergence was not universally accepted, it

³⁶⁹ Thompson, 149

³⁷⁰ Tiedemann, 315

demonstrates that New Jersey distinguished itself as a revolutionary leader through the application of its religious structures to the cause of liberty. This was visible in a practical sense as most of the operational decision making with respect to the conflict was reserved for individual congregations, as liberty was understood to be present and sacred at the lowest levels of the hierarchy. Thus, local pastors and church governing bodies were able to make the final determination as to the extent that their respective organizations would participate in the war effort.

Local churches and their congregations constituted the base of religious structures in New Jersey; however, the Presbyterian authorities in the state maintained roles as leaders in interstate relations and organizing. While the Synods provided the opportunity for communication among religious leaders on an annual basis, the most significant intercolonial and interstate impact emanating from the province was as the result of the influence of the College of New Jersey in Princeton.

In addition to its original period mandate of educating clergymen, the institution graduated lawyers, physicians, schoolmasters, and political leaders.³⁷¹ The college was established and administered by Presbyterian leaders and practiced the same religion. While many of the alumni of the school were famous New Jersey figures, close to 70 percent of its student body, including revolutionary and future President James Madison, came from other colonies.³⁷² This geographic diversity allowed the New Jersey Presbyterian teachings to be brought to other provinces, and the relationships between the men who attended this school would become lasting paths for communication and

³⁷¹ Tiedemann, 338

³⁷² Tiedemann, 338

cooperation during wartime. The philosophy taught by the institution was representative of the greater New Jersey Presbyterian-libertarian mindset. This was evident during the conflict. “In 1775, 279 of the students matriculated between 1746 and 1768 were still alive. Ninety-four performed some sort of military service on the Patriot side, and only eight became loyalists.”³⁷³ The vast majority of College of New Jersey alumni actively participating in the conflict did so in support of revolutionary political ideals.

It is important to note that there were 177 former students either whose affiliation either could not be determined or who practiced neutrality. Therefore, the institution did not radicalize every pupil. However, the statistic does not take into consideration the relatively older age of some of the graduates during the revolution, nor can it account for material and unspecific support that the remainder of the individuals could have provided. In a polarized conflict such as the American Revolution, one would expect more equal numbers of Loyalist and Patriot participants emanating from a single institution; however, most were purposefully uninvolved or became marginally involved in response to an action that affected their person or livelihood. The participation of College of New Jersey alumni demonstrates a much higher rate of Patriot identification. Alumni participation further becomes distinguished. “Between 1769 and 1775, 178 scholars studied under Witherspoon’s tutelage. Together, these students held 105 significant state or national offices. Only two became Royalists. By comparison, about 50 percent of King’s College students and about 22 percent of Yale students, whose allegiance is known, espoused the King’s cause.”³⁷⁴ The data demonstrate that not only

³⁷³ Tiedemann, 339

³⁷⁴ Tiedemann, 339

was liberty permeating the ideas of religion but also organized religion in the form of Presbyterianism had a level of influence in shaping national political discussions. It is to be expected that the Anglican King's College would have a higher incidence of Loyalism than an institution teaching the Presbyterian values of dissent. The difference between the Congregational Yale and the Presbyterian College of New Jersey demonstrates the success of the latter institution in espousing the virtues of liberty.

The Organizational Strength of Local Presbyterian Churches

Churches built significant capacity to organize the unconverted and their own members during the Second Great Awakening. This movement required establishment of structures to both captivate new members and maintain congregations. Martha Blauvet argues that "the Awakening provided not only lay zeal but organizations with which to express that zeal."³⁷⁵ The expression is what maintained the interest of individuals and established the role and permanency of churches in communities. Blauvet further suggests that "at the same time, lay societies helped preserve the historical memory of revivals and the way they worked. They thus both heightened sensitivity to declension and provided the knowledge and organizational impetus needed to combat it."³⁷⁶ This capacity to organize was transferred to the revolutionary cause when the time came. The validation of these efforts by powerful ministers and organized lay leaders was able to give liberty the same imperative that had previously facilitated the revival.

³⁷⁵ Martha Blauvet, "The Mechanics of Revival: New Jersey Presbyterians During the Second Awakening," in *Religion in New Jersey Life Before the Civil War*, Ed. Nancy Murrin (Trenton, New Jersey: New Jersey Historical Commission, Department of State, 1985), 91.

³⁷⁶ Blauvet, 91

As a consequence of their leadership abilities, it was wise for chaplains to be employed by the military to organize local resistance. The Reverend Chapman of the Presbyterian Church of the Oranges was instrumental in identifying locations along the First Mountain of the Watchung Range as observation posts. The elevation of such locations between what is currently Verona and Montclair permitted the locals there to signal the military encampment at Morristown regarding any movement of British troops from New York.³⁷⁷ Chapman was then highly successful in organizing his parishioners to man the observation posts along First Mountain.³⁷⁸ This represented well the role of clergy and church organizations in the conflict. The geography, resources, and support in New Jersey were vital to wartime strategy. There was a limit to what the scarce militia and regular army resources could accomplish. As a result, a group of Presbyterians that included both men and women were able to provide vital intelligence to the military. This helped to facilitate the American evacuation into the safety of Morristown after failed efforts in New York. The war effort was not the only beneficiary of actions of the Orange Presbyterians. The members who participated were able to accurately claim that they had identifiable roles in and effects on the outcome of the conflict. This provided efficacy for civilians and gave them a stake in the cause for liberty.

In a location relatively close to the Oranges, the Presbyterian Church of Elizabeth Town was one of the oldest and most established congregations in the New Jersey colony. Its location in a significant trade center ensured that there would be a larger, educated, and politically engaged membership. Many of the occurrences related to this

³⁷⁷ Stephen Wickes, *History of the Oranges in Essex County, N.J. from 1666-1806* (Newark, New Jersey: Ward and Ticchenor, 1892), 200.

³⁷⁸ Wickes, 200

church are tied closely to its famous pastor and revolutionary hero, the Reverend James Caldwell. However, it is important to distinguish the church from the pastor in order to fully appreciate the actions and sacrifices of its many members. The church produced significant numbers of recruits for both the militia and Continental forces. Colonel Dayton, the first commander of the New Jersey regiment, was an Elizabeth Town parishioner.³⁷⁹

The Elizabeth Town church building became a hospital for American soldiers, which became an interesting challenge when it was time for Sunday services:³⁸⁰

“[Caldwell] gave up his church as a hospital for the sick and wounded soldiers, who, in making tables of the seats, often so covered them with grease and fragments of bread and provision that the congregation on the Sabbath would be compelled to stand during the whole service.”³⁸¹ The congregation saw firsthand the sacrifices that were being made regularly by the members of the military in defense of New Jersey. This created a strong bond between the Elizabeth Town Presbyterians and the fight for independence. The congregants and pastor chose to offer their own sacrifices for a greater cause, a theme consistent with the teachings of Christian scripture and Calvinist philosophy. The congregation accepted the inherent risks of being a deliberate partner in the war effort. This is evident when they opted to ring the church bell as an alarm to signal the approach of enemy troops.³⁸² Headley argues that “. . . Pastor, congregation, and church were all consecrated to the same holy cause.”³⁸³ This action was especially risky, as it

³⁷⁹ Joel Headley, *The Forgotten Heroes of Liberty: The Chaplains and Clergy of the American Revolution*, Reprint (Birmingham, Alabama, Solid Ground Classic Reprints, 2005), 218.

³⁸⁰ Headley, 223

³⁸¹ Headley, 223

³⁸² Headley, 223

³⁸³ Headley, 223

demonstrated clear collaboration between the church and the rebel military in the eyes of the British. In doing so, the church had to recognize and accept that it would become a target. Headley examines the consequences of church actions:

It was not to be expected that a minister and people that occupied so prominent a place in the cause of the Colonies could long escape the vengeance of the British. It was well known that threats of the most malignant kind had been made against [Caldwell], but they took no positive shape till in January, 1780, when a refugee fired the church. The villain, in confession of the deed afterwards, said he was sorry that the “black-coated” rebel was not burned in his own pulpit. The inhabitants were aroused by the light of the conflagration, but too late to save the edifice sacred both to freedom and to God, and it was burned to the ground.³⁸⁴

It is important to note that the churches were not spared at the hands of the enemy. They were seen as part and parcel of the revolution, crucial foundations of the calls for liberty. The British recognized in context the same organizational and logistical power that is the subject of this study. The church and its members paid dearly for their commitment to God, liberty, and country. Regardless, the destruction was a powerful event that served to be yet another story of the British atrocities against which the Americans were compelled to take a stand.

The Presbyterian Church in Elizabeth, which still stands in the center of the historic section of the city, was a regional leader in both religion and church governance. Its proximity to the original College of New Jersey site in Elizabeth Town ensured that many of the educated elite of New Jersey practiced their religion in the congregation. The site became a center of radicalism during the conflict. Its earlier political role discussed in Chapter 3 suggests that there was not an accidental incidence of revolutionary thought in the congregation. Individuals deliberately engaged in the discussion and practice of

³⁸⁴ Headley, 223-4

democratic principles. Of the 345 pew-holders of the Presbyterian Church in Elizabeth Town, “at least forty of its congregants became commissioned officers on the American side; and its pastor James Caldwell served as a Whig chaplain.”³⁸⁵ The difficulty with data such as this is that it begs the question of correlation versus causation. This information does not conclusively suggest that church membership was responsible for the participation of those particular members in the Revolutionary War. However, when analyzed within the context of the revolutionary leaders who prayed and preached at this church, it is clear that there was a culture of acceptance not only of revolutionary principles but also of the right to engage in armed conflict to cement the philosophy into practice.

Concluding Remarks on Presbyterian Structures

The Presbyterian structures in New Jersey were both unique and powerful throughout the course of the American Revolution. The tiered, representative government that ran the denomination served as an enduring exemplar for the establishment of republican governments. The synods, presbyteries, and governing bodies not only survived the war but were able to provide material support and a vehicle for unity. The Synod of Philadelphia hosted the “Unmarried Young Ladies of America,” a bona fide organization whose members promised to marry only Patriots.³⁸⁶ These structures recognized the need to involve all members in the cause for liberty, demonstrating a sense of egalitarianism that was alien to many of the colonies. The lexicons of the Presbyterian and revolutionary movements merged in their appreciation of natural rights,

³⁸⁵ Tiedemann, 311

³⁸⁶ Smylie, 421-2

liberty, and self-determination, which led to the organizations directing ministers to take a stand. The New Jersey authorities recognized the strength of the church as an organizational tool. The ecclesiastical governments fought and lobbied for the maintenance of religious liberty, which would only be sanctified in a republican government. The Presbyterians similarly used the war as an opportunity to deter members from sin. The American Revolution was of strategic importance to both religion and government.

The Quaker Structure as a Case Against Revolution, but for Religious Influence

New Jersey was home to one of the most prolific Quaker communities during the time of the revolution. While the religious structures and hierarchies of denominations like Presbyterianism helped to legitimize and spread the revolutionary cause, the strictly pacifist Quaker meetings were used to enforce adherence to the opposite philosophy. This demonstrates two trends that are important to the understanding of the concept of the impact of religious structures on the revolution. The Quaker experience reveals that structures were also successful in influencing the outcome of the revolution by depriving it of soldiers, supplies, and other assistance. Additionally, it offers significant proof that the impact of religious structures was significant. In the case of the Quakers, it is important to note that while most chose not to participate, this did not indicate that they were either pro-English or anti-revolution. In the chapter focusing on denominations, the individual interests of high-ranking Quakers were discussed with respect to comparative conservatism, but that was not representative of the rationale for the official doctrine. The minutes of the Quaker meetings in Salem and Burlington provide insight into the views

of the organized community structures, and of particular individuals, regarding participation in the revolution.

In the Quaker stronghold of Salem County, the minutes of the monthly Quaker meeting offer a story of denominational concern regarding its members participating in the conflict. In the Quaker community, members reported to the meeting their brethren whom they felt required the concern of the whole, or who had blatantly violated the social contract that existed. The realities of the revolution affected the Salem community as early as October 30, 1775, when one Jonathan Kinsey was “treated for neglecting of meeting, joining in military preparations, and bearing arms.”³⁸⁷ Kinsey was called and chastised before the group for these actions. The penalties increased as the threat to the community became more advanced once the hostilities increased. The records indicate that on Christmas Day in 1775, “Richard Hains, Jr. a young man, reported for enlisting in the military and going away in service, [was] disowned.”³⁸⁸ The Quaker authorities expelled Hains from the community for the act of military service. The penalty that the meeting imposed demonstrates adherence by the society to strict ecclesiastical rules against taking up arms. On June 24, 1776, Jonathan Kinsey was “disowned for neglecting meeting and being concerned with military ways.”³⁸⁹ The records do not provide a definition of such concern, but the penalty was the same as outward enlistment, which suggests an equal threat to the community. It was apparent that the treatment to which he had previously been subjected had not cured him of his desire to serve. On August 26,

³⁸⁷ Charlotte Meldrum, Ed., *Early Church Records of Salem County New Jersey* (Westminster, Maryland: Heritage Books, 2007), 122.

³⁸⁸ Meldrum, Ed., *Early Church Records of Salem County New Jersey*, 122

³⁸⁹ Meldrum, Ed., *Early Church Records of Salem County New Jersey*, 123

1776, Jonathan Hains, Joel Daniel, and Jacob Barber were all disowned for enlisting.³⁹⁰ The Quakers of Salem disowned an additional six men for this violation between 1776 and 1779.³⁹¹ While it might appear that being disowned was a drastic punishment, the Quaker meeting applied this option quite frequently for various violations. Such actions included fornication, owning a slave, marrying outside of the community, undefined misconduct, neglecting the meeting, unauthorized marriage, and marriage to a first cousin.³⁹² While the meeting did attempt to provide some counseling and warning, it is apparent that they found certain actions to be such egregious threats to the health and sanctity of the entire community that the only way for them to preserve the order would be to dismiss those who would not abide by the standards.

Meetings further north reflected the same Quaker values and deliberations as in the southern part of the state. Individuals were excommunicated in Upper Freehold, Upper Springfield, Bordentown, Stony Brook, and Trenton.³⁹³ Burlington County meetings reflected the standards that were enforced in Salem. Seven members were expelled from the meeting held in the Town of Burlington during the revolutionary period.³⁹⁴ Their violations originally ranged from enlisting to “learning the art of war.”³⁹⁵ Later, simply “mustering to learn the art of war” was considered to be equally as much a violation.³⁹⁶ The Burlington Meeting is different from its counterpart in Salem, as it also

³⁹⁰ Meldrum, Ed., *Early Church Records of Salem County New Jersey*, 123

³⁹¹ Meldrum, Ed., *Early Church Records of Salem County New Jersey*, 122-26

³⁹² Meldrum, Ed., *Early Church Records of Salem County New Jersey*, 122-26

³⁹³ Major E.M. Woodward and John F. Hageman, *History of Burlington and Mercer Counties, New Jersey, with Biographical Sketches of many of their Pioneers and Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: Everets & Peck, 1883), 30.

³⁹⁴ Charlotte Meldrum, Ed., *Early Church Records of Burlington County New Jersey*, Volume 1 (Westminster, Maryland: Heritage Books, 2007), 147-151.

³⁹⁵ Meldrum, Ed., *Early Church Records of Burlington County New Jersey*, Volume 1, 147

³⁹⁶ Meldrum, Ed., *Early Church Records of Burlington County New Jersey*, Volume 1, 148

disowned its members for the act of “paying a fine in lieu of personal service in the war.”³⁹⁷ In Evesham, most of the actions were taken against those who paid the fine.³⁹⁸ The only member disowned for military-related concerns in Little Egg Harbor was a fine-payer.³⁹⁹ The provincial authorities had regarded this as an alternative that allowed the Quakers to avoid the conscription that was repugnant to their beliefs. However, the Societies in Burlington viewed financial support as an equally belligerent act. The incidence of the sanction for the payment of the fine in lieu of service increased as the war advanced. The American government was urgently in need of soldiers, but also of financial support. The expulsion for following the provincial law put government and faith in competition, and the penalties for violating the standards of either one were severe, placing members in somewhat of an impossible situation.

In the Salem Meeting, John Jennings was reported for being jailed in lieu of paying the fine. However, someone who was not a Quaker paid the fine, which granted him clemency.⁴⁰⁰ This was still of great concern to the meeting and was a source of deliberation of the body. It appears that the more northern meetings had higher incidences of people paying fines, likely because they were most accessible to provincial authorities, and thus susceptible to enforcement. The Quakers did not keep records in the meeting of how many of their members were jailed because they failed to serve or pay the fine, as being detained for such an act was not a violation of the standard, but rather an expectation in line with the doctrine of the group. In 1781, Jacob Taylor was disowned

³⁹⁷ Meldrum, Ed., *Early Church Records of Burlington County New Jersey*, Volume 1, 149

³⁹⁸ Meldrum, Ed., *Early Church Records of Burlington County New Jersey*, Volume 2 (Westminster, Maryland: Heritage Books, 2007), 189-91.

³⁹⁹ Meldrum, Ed., *Early Church Records of Burlington County New Jersey*, Volume 2, 230

⁴⁰⁰ Meldrum, Ed., *Early Church Records of Salem County New Jersey*, 126

for paying a substitute to fight in his place.⁴⁰¹ This is the only South Jersey record which suggests that this was an option, but was met with the same disdain as enlisting or paying a fine. Other meetings seemed to suggest that those who engaged in military service were likely to have committed other vices. In Mount Holly, the meeting records indicated that of the several members who were disowned, many were also accused of unbecoming behavior like taking “too much strong drink” and neglecting meetings.⁴⁰² The members of the Meeting who participated in the revolution appear to have been of the more rebellious type. The Chesterfield Meeting records reveal repeated expulsions for similar accusations, in addition to sanctions for otherwise chaste gentlemen who supported the war effort.⁴⁰³ Notably, member Jason Lawrie not only participated in the conflict but also accepted a commission as Captain and was responsible for recruiting others into the armed forces.⁴⁰⁴ He was quickly and unceremoniously disowned after refusing to cease his actions.

Despite the lack of participation in the revolution, the Quaker tradition deserves the respect of Americans. They were clearly a minority that was subject to the abuses of those on both sides of the conflict. Despite being separated geographically, the Quakers were able to maintain a common set of expectations for their members and were successful in enforcing those values. Although members left or were removed, this demonstrates that common values can be held by those who were not in geographic proximity. While the Quakers did not participate in the war effort, their steadfast efforts to maintain the expectations of their society demonstrated the power of, and need for,

⁴⁰¹ Meldrum, Ed., *Early Church Records of Burlington County New Jersey*, Volume 2, 109

⁴⁰² Meldrum, Ed., *Early Church Records of Burlington County New Jersey*, Volume 1, 191-2

⁴⁰³ Meldrum, Ed., *Early Church Records of Burlington County New Jersey*, Volume 2, 96-114

⁴⁰⁴ Woodward and Hageman, 30

protection of religious liberty in the new country. The events of the war demonstrated that even what appears to be the righteous side of conflict could violate the rights of others.

The story of the Quakers is not simply one of the effect of religious structures on the revolution. The numbers of individuals who were willing to be expelled from their communities in order to participate in the conflict demonstrates that Americans were committed to the virtues of the revolution. While this might appear to be evidence that the religious influence was not as strong as perceived at the time, one must consider that the virtues of the revolution are very closely related to those of the Quaker faith. Both the philosophy of the Friends and the republicanism associated with the revolution believed in, though not identically in scope, increased egalitarianism, self-government, representative democracy, independence from outside forces, morality in personal conduct, civility in interpersonal relations, freedom for the individual, and the creation of specific standards and rules to promote the progress of these philosophies. The Quaker community had so powerfully instilled these values in their followers that several brethren appreciated them in the revolution and were willing to advocate for their universal application with arms. The basic tenets of the religious doctrine were still being espoused through the work of the revolutionaries.

Conclusion

Regardless of whether a denomination was in favor of liberty or non-resistance, its structures were vital to organizing members toward a common goal. The central and

regional authorities of the Presbyterians and Quakers served as standard-bearers for their philosophies and were highly successful in organizing their members. The looser structures of the Baptists and Anglicans that were discussed in the preceding chapters were responsible for establishing leaders and recruiting troops and supporters. However, the Presbyterians and Quakers were comparatively more successful in ensuring member fidelity to the common goals. Organization was a key to mobilization.

Chapter 6

Revolutionary Ministers and Religious Leaders

The Power of the Pulpit

While members of the clergy are most closely associated with religious leadership, their influence expanded to all aspects of colonial life. These men were typically among the most educated members of a community, and often held special privileges. Their education allowed them to not only preach and lead the church but also to participate in regional and intercolonial politics. Since many of the denominations had organized governance structures that resembled a federal system of government, the pastors were part of wide-reaching networks that facilitated communication and consensus among representatives of different colonies. Each denomination, while separate from others, was a unifying force for its followers. The clergy served as organizers and representatives of greater philosophies and causes. As radicalism spread, the ministers were able to deliberately connect religious doctrine to political freedom, facilitate churchwide and individual support for the revolution, serve in provincial leadership roles, and minister to the troops as chaplains. Their contributions are evident in individual documented stories. While all ministers were not political radicals, and some were completely against war, the contributions of the participating pastors were vital to the revolutionary cause.

The experience with respect to ministers in New Jersey during the years leading to the American Revolution shared similarities to those of other colonies. Ministers

sought to connect politics and religion in many of their churches. New Jersey distinguished itself in this area by creating a new cadre of ministers, particularly Presbyterians, who would become the political leaders of the colony.⁴⁰⁵ Larry Gerlach argues:

For the first time religious persuasion and radical politics became increasingly identified with protest. Presbyterians compromised two-thirds of the [Whig] provincial committee of correspondence and two-fifths of the congressional delegation. And although the religious affiliation of every county committeeman cannot be determined, the heavy incidence of Presbyterians is clear.⁴⁰⁶

The Presbyterian tradition was one of dissent and political involvement that can be traced to the politics of English monarchies. The term “Presbyterian” carried with it an understanding that the individual identifying with that title might be more predisposed to radical thought and actions. This was not always met positively by their contemporaries, however.⁴⁰⁷ Others categorized the Presbyterians as individuals who were more interested in creating problems than exploring and solving ones of the time. Regardless, the Tories made a clear connection between religion and radicalism. Lundin describes the potential consequences for the non-Anglican Protestants:

One more or less intellectual class was sharply divided in its sentiments by the Revolution. The Clergy in New Jersey, as elsewhere in America, generally took sides according to denominations. The Presbyterian ministers, who had not lost the Covenanter tradition, supported the American cause with but few exceptions, and some of them were among the most forceful advocates of independence. British observers tended to regard the Calvinists as the chief fomenters of trouble, and laid plans for curbing their influence when the struggle was over.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁵ Tiedemann, 326

⁴⁰⁶ Tiedemann, 326-327

⁴⁰⁷ Tiedemann, 329-330

⁴⁰⁸ Lundin, 99

The Loyalists regarded the radicals associated with organized religion as significant threats to the control that they wished to maintain, so much so that they planned to engage in measures to limit the influence of these individuals and groups. In many ways, the Presbyterians in New Jersey fulfilled the prophecy or expectation created by royalists and Anglican powers. They became the radicals that they were thought to be. It is important to note that the nexus between religious and revolutionary leadership was recognized at the time, rather than being solely discussed in retrospective analysis. In many ways, the overt British recognition of this at the time normalized the connection, which made it unnecessary for those engaged in these beliefs and practices to keep them secret.

Presbyterian Clergy

The Reverend Jedediah Chapman

Physical church buildings and their inherent interpersonal communities served as vehicles by which to communicate the virtue of rebellion. While the structural organization of the churches permitted members to mobilize for a common cause, the uninterrupted sermon was the most powerful tool of the preacher in order to transmit radical messages. Accounts of the revolutionary period include general and specific anecdotes of ministers employing this strategy. Earlier sermons espoused the common political and religious virtue of liberty, while homilies during the war were more specifically delivered with the purpose of gaining military and financial supporters for the Patriot cause. The respect granted to church leaders during this period ensured that their

words would be received by parishioners. The influence of ministers extended beyond church services and into the community. Pastors were invited into homes as honored guests. This gave them the social position needed in order to further share revolutionary thought. Stephen Wickes recounted the practices of the Reverend Jedediah Chapman of the First Presbyterian Church of the Oranges, New Jersey:

From the very beginning of Mr. Chapman's pastorate, he was an uncompromising defender of colonial rights. When war came, he espoused the patriot cause with his whole soul. He preached Rebellion in the pulpit, and taught it from house to house. No portion of his large parish was forgotten. Every fireside was quickened by his stirring words of "resistance to oppression."⁴⁰⁹

Chapman was an important organizer for the revolutionary cause. His practice of not only preaching but also visiting homes made the experience more personal for the parishioners whom he wished to radicalize. This was certainly appropriate, as his discussion of colonial rights related very clearly to the natural rights that were guaranteed to the individual at birth by God. The pastor was highly qualified to teach how political liberty was granted by God, and that one must fight virtuously to resist any threat against those divine protections. The Oranges, in what is now Essex County, were strategically positioned for trade, transportation, and communication across New Jersey. The powerful thoughts that Chapman expressed spread to other communities through normal interpersonal communication and approached becoming more normal than radical.

Pastors communicated the necessity of rebellion at significant risk to themselves.

In middle colonies like New Jersey, where there existed a balance of Whig and Tory

⁴⁰⁹ Wickes, Stephen, *History of the Oranges in Essex County, N.J. from 1666-1806* (Newark, New Jersey: Ward and Ticchenor, 1892), 198-199.

identification, Patriot ministers often created as many enemies as revolutionary brothers and sisters. When ministers preached Patriot messages during English occupation, they were subject to arrest and detention. Wickes argues that “the Whigs were at all times in danger of robbery or death. Chapman, himself, was a marked man. He was oftentimes compelled to flee from his home for safety.”⁴¹⁰ Modern military tradition has exempted religious institutions and officials from the seizure and scrutiny of occupying forces. However, the line of the extent of religious freedom became blurred when ministers preached rebellion as the righteous work of God. Often, however, the individual contributions of ministers like Chapman were overshadowed by some of the biggest names in New Jersey Presbyterianism.

The Rev. Dr. John Witherspoon

Religious leaders in New Jersey were credited with outwardly supporting from the pulpit revolutionary principles and armed interaction. However, this was not a natural experience for all ministers. The infamous interconnectedness between church and state in Britain had led ministers to purposefully avoid engaging in political sermons, debate, or commentary from the pulpit. However, the reality that a war for freedom was upon the colonies-turned-states facilitated a change in this attitude, especially for highly engaged individuals like the Rev. Dr. John Witherspoon, Presbyterian preacher and President of the College of New Jersey. Witherspoon first demonstrated his affinity toward rebellion at the age of 22 when he was serving as a minister in the parish of Beith in his birthplace

⁴¹⁰ Wickes, 199

of Scotland.⁴¹¹ Witherspoon empathized with the Highlanders to the point that he organized and led a group of militia on an advance toward Glasgow.⁴¹² He was later imprisoned, but released once Charles Edward Stuart was deposed.⁴¹³ The publicity that he received from both his military and ministerial service led to him being elected President of the College of New Jersey.⁴¹⁴ The sentiment at the time among the Presbyterian elite in New Jersey appears to have been in favor of a figure who was willing to be a change agent both politically and ecclesiastically. As unrest became more apparent in the colonies, Witherspoon's profile would become increasingly more significant, as he served in various leadership roles. He eventually rose to become arguably the chief leader of the revolutionary cause in the State. The nexus of his religious and educational roles raised his profile above those of many of his contemporaries.

Despite serving as a member of the Somerset Committee of Correspondence, New Jersey Provincial Congress, and the Continental Congress, Witherspoon reported that he refrained from preaching political issues from the pulpit.⁴¹⁵ The early writings of the pastor are remarkably secular in nature, focusing on political ideas like equality and the actions of Britain. His originally reserved commentary gradually evolved into outward radicalism. In the spring of 1776, Witherspoon penned an open letter that argued that there was no alternative to independence, as the action of Britain over the previous decade confirmed that there was no interest among conservatives and Parliament in

⁴¹¹ Headley, 280

⁴¹² Headley, 280

⁴¹³ Headley, 281

⁴¹⁴ Headley, 281

⁴¹⁵ Tiedemann, 307

engaging in a settlement.⁴¹⁶ Witherspoon made the observation that just as American Whigs were calling for liberty, Loyalist leaders like the Reverend Miles Cooper and the Reverend Thomas Chandler were engaging in campaigns to undermine the cause and to petition for greater royal control in the colony.⁴¹⁷ In this writing, he did not invoke the divine, or argue the moral virtue of the war; rather, he focused on the political arguments that were becoming much more recognized in New Jersey. Witherspoon had been both a religious and civil servant, and was able to maximize his reach through using both arenas to communicate the revolutionary message. Witherspoon did not necessarily operate with complete support, often acting on his own accord in matters that were considered too radical for his peers. Elias Boudinot reflected that he was surprised when Dr. Witherspoon chose not to attend a meeting of the trustees of the College of New Jersey in 1776 so that he could meet with the united committees of safety throughout the colony.⁴¹⁸ Boudinot reflected that the political arguments of Witherspoon were not immediately well received and were considered too radical for the time.⁴¹⁹ Witherspoon apparently soon recognized that he would have to incorporate religious imperatives into his civil arguments in order to achieve success.

The public philosophy of Witherspoon on political participation had certainly evolved when he attacked Governor Franklin in front of the Provincial Congress in 1776,

⁴¹⁶ John Witherspoon, "On the Controversy About Independence," April-May, 1776, in *New Jersey in the American Revolution: A Documentary History*, Ed. Larry Gerlach (Trenton, New Jersey: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1976), 198-200.

⁴¹⁷ John Witherspoon, "On the Controversy About Independence," April-May, 1776, in Gerlach, *New Jersey in the American Revolution: A Documentary History*, 200.

⁴¹⁸ Elias Boudinot, *The Journal of Historical Recollections of American Events during the Revolutionary War* (Philadelphia: Frederick Bourquin, 1894), 5. [No original date of publication]

⁴¹⁹ Elias Boudinot, *The Journal of Historical Recollections of American Events during the Revolutionary War*, 8

a few days after delivering a sermon that closely connected politics and faith.⁴²⁰ It was clear that he had very specific political desires that had been related not only to his Scottish heritage but also to the growing democratization of the Presbyterian faith. Witherspoon did not incorporate the political into his sermons immediately. However, this changed as the revolution began in earnest, requiring the engagement of the citizenry:

On May 17, 1776, a date the Continental Congress had set aside for prayer and fasting, Witherspoon preached at Princeton. After remarking that he had never discussed politics from the pulpit, he declared “that the cause in which America is now in arms, is the cause of justice, of liberty, and of human nature.” That person “is the best friend of American liberty, who is most sincere and active in promoting true and undefiled religion. . . . Whoever is an avowed enemy to God, I scruple not to call him an enemy to his country.” Indeed, “the cause is sacred, and the champions for it ought to be holy,” for “in times of . . . trial, it is in the man of piety and inward principle that we may expect to find the uncorrupted patriot, the useful citizen, and the invincible soldier.”⁴²¹

The sermon, entitled “The Dominion of Providence over the Passions of Men,” explored the most significant political issues of the time.⁴²² The sermon was well received in America, but caused him to be labeled as a traitor in his homeland.⁴²³ Witherspoon personified the growing rift between the American colonies and the British Empire. The pastor preached using the most recognizable stories from the Bible. He applied the story of David versus Goliath when he remarked early on that “it would be a criminal inattention not to observe the singular interposition of Providence . . . in behalf of the American colonies. . . . What surprising success has attended our encounters in almost

⁴²⁰ Headley, 281

⁴²¹ Tiedemann, 307

⁴²² Headley, 281

⁴²³ Headley, 281

every instance?”⁴²⁴ America had the David-like role in the conflict with Britain, with Witherspoon suggesting that there must be divine protection for the colonies since they had not yet been put down by a superior force. He argued that the virtuous nature of the war energized the populous to engage the British Goliath: “Has not the boasted discipline of regular and veteran soldiers been turned into confusion and dismay before the new and maiden courage of freedmen in defense of their property and right?”⁴²⁵ However, Witherspoon was not suggesting that this was purely a war fought by radicals who gained success only on the energy gained by thinking about potential freedom. He warned that without reverence to and support of God, the cause would be lost, when he reminded the audience of David’s response to Goliath: “Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear, and with a shield, but I come unto thee in the name of the Lord of hosts the God of the armies of Israel.”⁴²⁶ In the brilliant sermon that infused the greatest revolutionary and religious arguments, Witherspoon reminded the audience that piety toward God had to continue in the conflict, or the favor that they had gained would be discontinued.

The evolution of John Witherspoon into a preacher of revolutionary principles followed armed conflict with British forces and coincided with frank discussion and debate outside of the chambers of the Continental Congress that called for the thirteen colonies to formally declare their independence from Britain. In his attack on Governor Franklin, the illegitimate and comparatively uneducated son of Benjamin Franklin, the Reverend Dr. Witherspoon acted exclusively in the role of a revolutionary, as the sarcastic comment he made to the assembly about the governor’s speech would not have

⁴²⁴ James Byrd, *Sacred Scripture, Sacred War: The Bible and the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 102.

⁴²⁵ Byrd, 102

⁴²⁶ Byrd, 102

been regarded as consistent with Christian teachings. In reference to an unapologetic speech made by Governor Franklin, Witherspoon remarked to the assembly: “On the whole, Mr. President I think that Governor Franklin has made us a speech every way worthy of his exalted birth and refined education.”⁴²⁷ His words were clearly designed to insult the background of the governor in order to discredit the status of the man who represented the structures that led those gathered in the meeting to consider rebellious action against the sitting government. Recognition of the existence of armed conflict in the sermon by Witherspoon suggests that the timing of his words was carefully chosen, as the sermon was delivered two months before the Declaration of Independence was finalized.⁴²⁸

Equally telling is the acknowledgement by Witherspoon of human nature bearing an equal responsibility for the war with justice and liberty. The exploration of reason as part of human nature is representative of newly prevailing Enlightenment thought that suggested that individuals played roles in their own destinies. While justice had been an overarching theme of intellectual debate for centuries, the concept of liberty grew in importance since the philosophical revolution became more accepted as part of human existence. The sanctification of the war by this influential religious, educational, and political leader should be regarded as an action of leadership by design with the aim of addressing the question of the righteousness of the conflict. It is interesting to note that Witherspoon chose to not assign righteousness to people who had chosen to fight. He did not simply argue that those who were fighting were doing so in a holy fashion. He argued

⁴²⁷ Headley, 281

⁴²⁸ Byrd, 102

instead that the principled, devout individual would be the one who would strengthen the forces and cause of revolution. In a sentence, Witherspoon connected the idea of piety with patriotism, citizenship, and being a soldier. His assignment of the term “invincible” to modify “soldier” suggests that not only was God supporting the revolutionary cause but an American Patriot would have a place in heaven. There was no attempt on the part of Witherspoon to blur the lines between politics and religion at this point.

John Witherspoon continued to be an identifiable religious and revolutionary figure in New Jersey. Due to his stature, the opinions and imperatives that he expressed from the pulpit were designed both to have an impact on individuals and to set a precedent for other leaders. Tiedemann illustrates this point: “In May, 1776, John Witherspoon preached on ‘the impossibility of these great and growing states, being safe and happy when every part of their internal polity is dependent on Great Britain.’ He reminded his listeners ‘that your duty to God, to your country, to your family, and to yourself is the same.’”⁴²⁹ In the earlier sermon, Witherspoon connected piety and revolution, invoking the name of God as a central part of his speech. In this instance, the powerful pastor discussed the concept of liberty from Great Britain as a necessity. His matter-of-fact tone suggests that while he was attempting to convince his audience, these ideas were becoming much more common among New Jersey Presbyterians and politicians. The convergence of God and liberty was clear when he spoke of the common duty that individuals shared that was consistent in the various facets of their lives. The duty to God and country being the same suggests that the connection of religion to politics and war was deliberate. Witherspoon’s invoking the term “country” suggests that

⁴²⁹ Tiedemann, 315

as a religious leader, he was purposefully identifying that the colonies were in fact an autonomous entity.

The Reverend Witherspoon had several receptive audiences to whom to communicate the cause of liberty and the necessity of righteousness to achieve that significant objective. As the president of the College of New Jersey, Witherspoon exerted significant influence over the curricula and students of the institution. The College had been originally founded to espouse the virtues and fulfill the mission of the Presbyterian faith, and its president was recognized as a standard bearer of that cause. This extended naturally to the equally important cause of the Enlightenment. Witherspoon presided over discussions and debates that focused on reason and natural law.⁴³⁰ In the decade of political evolution leading to the revolution, Witherspoon included concepts like patriotism and liberty in his oratory, while attacking the English standards of hereditary power.⁴³¹ Witherspoon began to speak strongly on the “Rising Glory of America,” influencing the students to the point that they organized to don for commencement only cloth that was made in the American colonies.⁴³² Witherspoon clearly helped to define the nature of American radical intellectualism and forged a nexus among education, philosophy, religion, and politics. The Enlightenment thought at the College of New Jersey was evident when students, including future president James Madison, outwardly protested the decision in 1770 by New York merchants to abandon the non-importation efforts that were designed to counter the economic legislation that British authorities

⁴³⁰ Lundin, 89

⁴³¹ Lundin, 98

⁴³² Lundin, 98

were forcing on the Americans.⁴³³ The desire of the students to dress in “American Cloth” at graduation was a more widely known protest at the time.⁴³⁴ The protests, however, were not simple. James Madison wrote to his father on July 24, 1770 that:

Orders for Good contrary to their Non-Importation Agreement, at the tolling of the College Bell, went in Procession to a Place fronting the College, and burnt the Letter by the Hands of a Hangman, hired for the Purpose, with hearty Wishes, that the Names of all Promoters of such a daring Breach of Faith, may be blasted in the Eyes of every Lover of Liberty, and their Names handed down to Posterity, as Betrayers of their Country.⁴³⁵

Later, students in Princeton engaged in tea parties during which they protested the taxation through burning the product.⁴³⁶ It is apparent that the students were very interested in the Enlightenment and political ideals and were thus not confining their attention to scripture and doctrine. Many of the students whom Witherspoon had influenced were studying to be members of the clergy. The ability of Witherspoon to communicate made him valuable to the revolutionary cause in New Jersey. Lundin argues that “his keen mind, wide learning, remarkable oratorical gifts, and tireless energy made him one of the most useful and respected public figures of the time.”⁴³⁷ Witherspoon’s concurrent roles as a religious, political, and educational figure added credibility to his statements. He was the ideal spokesperson for the revolutionary cause.

Witherspoon served as a speaker to and leader of not only the greater citizenry and students but also his counterparts in governance and the new civil authorities. The

⁴³³ Larry Gerlach, *New Jersey in the American Revolution 1763-1783: A Documentary History* (Trenton, New Jersey: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1976), 52

⁴³⁴ Gerlach, *New Jersey in the American Revolution: A Documentary History*, 52

⁴³⁵ James Madison Jr. to James Madison Senior, July 24, 1770, in Gerlach, *New Jersey in the American Revolution: A Documentary History*, 53

⁴³⁶ Gerlach, *New Jersey in the American Revolution: A Documentary History*, 100

⁴³⁷ Lundin, 97-98

pastor-president-representative used the profile that he carried with him through all of his important roles to bring legitimacy and a clear mission to the actions before the new government. Once Witherspoon had established his leadership in New Jersey, he extended his simultaneously calming and rebellious influence to the Continental Congress. His presence was vital when the Declaration of Independence was read into the record of the committee of the whole. The act of approving this document brought with it a sense of permanence and fear of the unknown. Witherspoon shone when it came time to vote:

That august body felt the tremendous responsibility that rested upon it, and a deep and solemn silence reigned throughout the hall. In the midst of it Witherspoon arose and said, “Mr. President – That noble instrument on your table, which insures immortality to its author, should be subscribed this very morning by every pen in the House. He who will not respond to its accents, and strain every nerve to carry its provisions, is unworthy the name of freeman. Although these gray hairs must descend into the sepulcher, I would infinitely rather they should descend thither by the hand of the executioner than desert at this crisis the sacred cause of my country.”⁴³⁸

Witherspoon wielded his political and religious clout, speaking as one who had demonstrated rebellion against exerted political authority and paid the price. At the time of the proposed Declaration of Independence, Witherspoon had been a resident of America for eight years, and was thus a relative newcomer in comparison to the other representatives to Congress. His willingness to die for his newly adopted country added credibility and urgency to the cause and certainly communicated to men who had been born in the colonies or lived there for decades that they had a solemn responsibility to defend the land and political liberty. The nexus with religion is evident when

⁴³⁸ Headley, 283

Witherspoon refers to the cause as “sacred.” His sanctification of the American cause left no debate that they were to fight a righteous war. This was an important distinction at this time. The opinions of the educated, elite religious leaders carried significant influence and guided generations. People listened to ministers, a custom with which Witherspoon was intimately familiar and upon which he was unafraid to capitalize. This demonstrated the need for chaplains to serve with combat units to continue to preach the sanctity of the cause.

Witherspoon continued to exert his influence throughout the war. As a member of Congress, the pastor was able to directly participate in the policy-making process.⁴³⁹ When he was not on a particular committee, Witherspoon was able to provide insight during debate and discussion in open Congress. In an extension of his ministerial duties, Witherspoon was able to present information regarding the mistreatment of prisoners-of-war in New York who were captured by the British authorities.⁴⁴⁰ This was the impetus behind him leading a successful protest to bring attention to the war crimes that the enemy were committing on American soil.⁴⁴¹ Witherspoon’s congregation swelled from a moderate-sized church membership to the entire American confederation. He took it as his imperative to ensure that the new states were well treated and supplied during the trying time.⁴⁴² Witherspoon represented Christian principles of community and goodwill on a nationwide scale. The pastor-turned-congressman did not eschew his responsibilities as a member of the clergy while he was serving in political office.⁴⁴³ It was apparent that

⁴³⁹ Headley, 284

⁴⁴⁰ Headley, 284

⁴⁴¹ Headley, 284

⁴⁴² Headley, 284

⁴⁴³ Headley, 284

the two roles could be seamlessly juxtaposed in this environment. Witherspoon consistently wore his clerical robes while he was sitting as a member of Congress. When he was not offering brilliant speeches on economic and political philosophy, Witherspoon preached on Sundays with the same zeal and passion that led to his compatriots choosing him for the Congressional seat.⁴⁴⁴ Joel Headley observed:

With a presence like that of Washington that commanded respect and awe, whenever he arose to address Congress every eye was turned upon him. His sarcasm was withering, and the boldest winced under it, while he possessed a power in argument and a persuasive eloquence which nothing could withstand, and that made him the bulwark of liberty to the last. His duties as a clergyman and those of a legislator he performed with the same conscientiousness, and in them he felt he was equally doing God's service.⁴⁴⁵

Witherspoon not only served in the two very identifiable roles of minister and congressman but was also more subtly a strong, consistent influence who was able to guide Congress throughout the war. He very much became one of the deans of Congress, a member to whom others in the body looked for guidance. His role was very similar to that of the pastor of a small community who served as a spiritual and moral exemplar.

The Rev. Jacob Green

While the pulpit was a functional device for making the argument for liberty, ministers used letters, pamphlets, books, public speeches, and participation in political meetings in order to espouse the virtues of the American cause. The Rev. Jacob Green of the small hamlet of Hanover was a prolific writer, speaker, philosopher, and leader in the

⁴⁴⁴ Headley, 284

⁴⁴⁵ Headley, 286

community. Green deliberately sought to secure both political and religious liberty for his followers. Green “forcefully argued in *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great Britain and the Colonies* that British tyranny required that Americans seek independence.”⁴⁴⁶ It was natural for ministers to draft such arguments, as they benefited from better education than did the typical New Jersey citizen. The requirement that ministers complete seminary, combined with the augmentation of the higher education system in America, provided ministers not only with religious education but also with exposure to discussions of political and Enlightenment theory.

Green had not always played the role of the firebrand radical. During the Great Awakening, Green, previously a Massachusetts resident, had been converted by the famous Gilbert Tennent.⁴⁴⁷ His interest during the revival was to save souls through conversion. Green is reported to have “experienced ‘a strong, longing desire for the good of souls, and wished and prayed fervently for the conversion and salvation of others.’”⁴⁴⁸ He had been a relatively shy young pastor who stayed away from controversy, while preaching discipline and obedience to God.⁴⁴⁹ On the surface, this certainly contrasts with being a supporter of armed, bloody conflict. However, it is clear that the Reverend Green had a vested interest in protecting the people both on an individual basis and as a whole. Green was forced to reconcile the expansion of liberty with his Calvinist desire to ensure that individuals submitted themselves to the ultimate control of God.⁴⁵⁰ The question of the origin of free will became a significant issue. The liberal philosophy espoused that

⁴⁴⁶ Tiedemann, 316

⁴⁴⁷ Blauvet, 90

⁴⁴⁸ Blauvet, 90

⁴⁴⁹ Rohrer, 2

⁴⁵⁰ Rohrer, 8

individuals were in control of their own thoughts and actions and had ultimate free will. The ministers asserted that free will was a privilege that was reserved for God.⁴⁵¹

There were potential ramifications for religious control and conversion if individuals saw their liberty as absolute. The conversion that Green therefore pursued to save the population from moral demise and an unsatisfying afterlife parallels the desire for colonists to be free or safe from the encroachment of British officials into their lives. Conversion was certainly a product of choice, as was the decision to participate in the American Revolution. The skill of convincing laypeople to convert was clearly transferred to the difficult process of gaining support from the population for the war against Britain. In the same way that many individuals were uneducated on the finer points of organized religion, they were not necessarily intimately acquainted with the philosophy of or need for radical liberty. Green was especially skilled in creating written arguments that could be transmitted beyond his local congregation.⁴⁵² During this period, such written pieces were often spread from person to person, and thus had a scope of influence that was far greater than the original intended audiences. The work of Green thus became fundamentally important to the radical causes.

The sermon, therefore, does not account for the totality of the strategy used by radical ministers to influence others. Ministers were well educated and had significant experience in writing and speaking messages. Parson Green used his skills to create a pamphlet, published in New York and Philadelphia, that employed both political and religious arguments in support of liberty.⁴⁵³ While the works that he published became

⁴⁵¹ Rohrer, 55

⁴⁵² Rohrer, 2

⁴⁵³ Peter Tamburro, *Gateway to Morris* (Chester, NJ: CATS Publishers, 1992): 22.

scripture in support of liberty, Green did not necessarily style himself a radical. However, at the time, his views would have challenged the fundamental understandings of the English elites, and also of many of his countrymen.⁴⁵⁴

Green forayed into public intellectualism when he made a scholarly argument against those calling for reconciliation with the British crown.⁴⁵⁵ The pastor argued quite skillfully that the differences between the states and Britain were far too great.⁴⁵⁶ While he wrote under the pseudonym “Eumenes,” his well-reasoned arguments were helpful to individuals who were not receptive to the radical, firebrand works of individuals like Thomas Paine.⁴⁵⁷ The minister-philosopher was clear in his vision of American political liberty. Green was able to communicate a vision for America based on Christian and republican principles:

If we are independent, this land of liberty will be glorious on many accounts. Population will abundantly increase, agriculture will be promoted, trade will flourish, religion, unrestrained by human laws, will have free course to run and prevail and America will be an asylum for noble spirits and sons of liberty from all parts of the world. Hither they may retire from every land of oppression . . . here they may enjoy all the blessings which this terraqueous globe can offer fallen man.⁴⁵⁸

Parson Green demonstrated in his pamphlet the need for liberty of all orders. The words demonstrate the relationship of glory and a free republic that will live in perpetuity. This passage having been created by a minister demonstrates the emergence of Christian republicanism in America. The difficulty that had the potential to occur when religious leaders were promoting government structures was the treatment of religion after the war.

⁴⁵⁴ Rohrer, 2

⁴⁵⁵ Tamburro, 22

⁴⁵⁶ Tamburro, 23

⁴⁵⁷ Tamburro, 22

⁴⁵⁸ Tamburro, 23

The two values could not simply be disentangled, and as such presented a challenge for the framers of the American government. There would be expectations of a level of religious liberty within the new country parallel to the level of freedom that Americans would enjoy from England.

Parson Green did not confine his political interests and writings to the connection between political and religious liberty. The minister-statesman made significant statements about a number of the most significant and divisive issues of the period. As a Whig, Green, like many of his contemporaries, was concerned with taxation and representation.⁴⁵⁹ This demonstrates that Green used his influence and intellectual skills to transcend the arguments that would have been expected of him. Taxation and representation, however, do relate to the concepts of fundamental fairness and liberty. It would have been nearly impossible to discuss the more abstract concepts without providing specific examples to prove the struggle and abuses that the Americans had suffered at the hands of the British. Green saw it as his imperative to become engaged politically in order to help the colony achieve its liberty. He became frustrated with the regions that were not as supportive of the cause, and thus he felt that he needed to actively convince them of their moral responsibilities and of the obvious inequities and threats that existed within the colonial environment.⁴⁶⁰

Green espoused these ideas into his anonymously published, yet widely attributed *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great-Britain and the Colonies*.⁴⁶¹ In this work, Green provided counterpoints to the most refined arguments that had been made for

⁴⁵⁹ Rohrer, 2

⁴⁶⁰ Rohrer, 132

⁴⁶¹ Rohrer, 132

reconciliation, and then presented his own case for independence.⁴⁶² His views reflected those of famed revolutionary writer Thomas Paine but were tamer in approach.⁴⁶³ New Jersey historian Larry Gerlach observed that “The popularity of Green’s *Observations* was probably due to the manner of presentation and the fact that it appealed to all elements of the population. Forthright and plausible, the piece stands in stark contrast to the usual reckless and irrational productions of radical publicists.”⁴⁶⁴ The work that Green published was timely and served as a very important text as the people of New Jersey were determining whether or not to support revolution.⁴⁶⁵ Green was a minister-turned-revolutionary who was trained and experienced in communicating sacred and solemn messages to individuals who were seeking salvation. These skills likely allowed him to communicate in a more matter-of-fact manner than could be appreciated by a wide audience. Similarly, his exposure to the Enlightenment while training at Harvard provided him the revolutionary vernacular and reasoning that resonated with the people.⁴⁶⁶ Green’s position as a minister similarly added credibility to his writing, which could not simply be dismissed because it belonged to a fiery radical immigrant. Parson Green distinguished himself as being the major New Jersey writer who composed and allowed for distribution a reasoned and detailed argument in support of separation from Britain.⁴⁶⁷ This demonstrates that the Lockean words of Green played a particularly important role in the revolutionary cause. Despite his reverence for Locke, Green was careful to develop an argument that was consistent with the Calvinist ideas for which he

⁴⁶² Rohrer, 133

⁴⁶³ Rohrer, 134-5

⁴⁶⁴ As quoted in Rohrer, 135

⁴⁶⁵ Rohrer, 144

⁴⁶⁶ Rohrer, 135

⁴⁶⁷ Rohrer, 137

was the local standard-bearer.⁴⁶⁸ In the shadow of dominance of the Enlightenment, Green recognized that he had a responsibility to ensure that individuals would achieve fulfillment and salvation regardless of the events surrounding them. Despite being a prolific radical, Parson Green did not eschew his pastoral role.

In his *Observations*, Green was successful in connecting the ideas of religious and political liberty. He engaged in a deliberate juxtaposition in order to strengthen both causes. His words demonstrated that in many ways, Green was thrust into the role of radical minister.⁴⁶⁹ These writings cemented Green's role as the first New Jersey resident to make a public call for the separation of the colonies from Britain.⁴⁷⁰ This made Parson Green that much more of a target of enemy attention and retaliation. He was due to suffer the same consequences as Elizabeth Town competitors Thomas Chandler and James Caldwell.⁴⁷¹ In many ways, the words of Jacob Green became new scripture for the revolution, as they were spread and analyzed throughout the American provinces.

In an appropriate manner for a minister who valued human life, Green prefaced his statements in *Observations* with the statement of desire for a short and decisive conflict, presumably in the favor of the Americans: "It certainly must be agreeable to all rational people to have the war properly terminated."⁴⁷² While Green was comparatively a radical, for him the war was a means to a greater, more virtuous society. However, Green was quick to also argue that the importance of the issues in the conflict required a

⁴⁶⁸ Rohrer, 139

⁴⁶⁹ Larry Gerlach, Introduction to Jacob Green, *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great-Britain and the Colonies*, Reprint (Trenton, New Jersey: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1776), xxvii.

⁴⁷⁰ Gerlach, Introduction to Jacob Green, *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great-Britain and the Colonies*, xxvi

⁴⁷¹ Gerlach, Introduction to Jacob Green, *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great-Britain and the Colonies*, xxvii

⁴⁷² Jacob Green, *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great-Britain and the Colonies* (Philadelphia: Robert Bell, 1776), 1976 Reprint, 5.

deliberate approach that would take time.⁴⁷³ His quest for a greater America was largely based on support for the representatives whom the people had elected. In true Lockean form, Green believed that an elected government would be successful in meeting the needs of the country as a whole.⁴⁷⁴ Green saw democracy as the most effective vehicle for a virtuous government, which certainly aligned with the governance structure of the Presbyterian Church in America. Green recognized that this would be a challenging process: “The settlement of American government being as we hope for ages, or even to the end of time, we may well take time for it; use all proper means, and get all possible light.”⁴⁷⁵ While the phrase “get all possible light” is potentially used as a way to describe process by which to create a depth of understanding of a democratic government, the word “light” additionally suggests a connection to and approval by God. This term was often used in Great Awakening literature to describe the presence of the divine in one’s person or mind. Fundamentally, the question of independence was not solely a political one, as Green explores by answering his own equally philosophical and practical question:

Have we a right to be independent? We all believe an over-ruling providence, we have appealed and applied to God in our present struggle; we believe that the sovereign of the universe, the judge of all the earth, disposes of nations and kingdoms, and that sooner or later he will visit for iniquity. We have reason therefore to view the equity of our proceedings, and inquire whether we have the right to be independent.⁴⁷⁶

Although Green engaged in brilliant discussion on the concept of political liberty and government structures, he contextualized the entire American experiment by clarifying

⁴⁷³ Jacob Green, *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great-Britain and the Colonies*, 6

⁴⁷⁴ Jacob Green, *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great-Britain and the Colonies*, 7

⁴⁷⁵ Jacob Green, *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great-Britain and the Colonies*, 8

⁴⁷⁶ Jacob Green, *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great-Britain and the Colonies*, 8-9

that God had the ultimate control over the success and failure of nations, whether rebellious confederations or great empires. Green wished to ensure that his words on the revolution would not undermine the greater message that the Creator must be celebrated as one who can give and take all. Green specifically addressed the concept of iniquity, the absence of morality and religious values, in the lives of countries. He saw that political liberty could exist only when God allowed a virtuous people to engage in such an experiment. Failure to satisfy the will of God would result in the destruction of the republic. These words provide insight as to why Green was so committed to preaching morality during the war.

Green was afraid that without a common moral compass, all that masses of people were fighting for could either never be granted by God or be taken away swiftly through His retribution. Green purely and comparatively radically applied this standard when he made his case against slavery, a practice that not only denied rights to many but also had the potential to destroy the entire American experiment due to its heinous nature.

In *Observations*, Green engaged in skilled debate when he presented and negated the arguments against independence. In response to the apparent contemporary concern that American secession from Britain would in part lead to the demise of the imperial power, Green was unapologetic, arguing that “If Britain is ruined, it is by her own misconduct, and we cannot help it. If she is ruined, it is because she is ripe for ruin, and God’s judgments must come upon her; in which case we ought to be disunited, if we can, and not connected with her.”⁴⁷⁷ By suggesting that Britain deserved its fate because it had failed in virtue, Green expertly illustrated his point about the potential fate of a state that

⁴⁷⁷ Jacob Green, *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great-Britain and the Colonies*, 18

is not guided by virtue. While his contemporaries were both radical and unconvinced with respect to liberty, they might agree that a higher power was playing a role the fate of empire. God was evidently judging Britain for its failures, Green argued, validating the Puritan exodus and history. Green engaged in a masterful analysis at this point, as he potentially realized that Britain had some democratic portions of government that might be replicated in the new governments, since the Americans were familiar with such practices. This served as a reminder that the new governments could not simply replicate the British traditions and expect different results. Green further used the apparent failings of the British as evidence that the Americans must separate. It would be threatening to all colonists to continue allegiance to a power that had fallen out of favor with God. Green was equally confident in both the vengeance and support of God when he responded to fears that Britain would employ European powers like France and Spain to help to subdue the revolution.⁴⁷⁸ The comparative virtue of the American cause would help to ensure the success of the revolution, combined with what he expected to be military support from Holland and Prussia.⁴⁷⁹ Ironically, it was the less godly countries, predicted to be flawed supporters of Britain, who actually came to the support of the revolutionaries. Green did not fear the influence of outside powers when the revolution was aligned with Christian principles:

Against all such imaginary evil and danger as this argument supposes, or any that may possibly occur, we have this to support us, that our cause is good, and we have the Great Disposer of all things to confide in, and apply to. We have not run presumptuously into danger, nor are we proposing an independency that is unjust or unreasonable.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁸ Jacob Green, *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great-Britain and the Colonies*, 19

⁴⁷⁹ Jacob Green, *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great-Britain and the Colonies*, 19

⁴⁸⁰ Jacob Green, *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great-Britain and the Colonies*, 19

Green not only solidified the virtue of the revolutionary side of the conflict, but suggested that the support that would be granted by God meant that fears that the revolution was premature or without moral direction were not substantiated. In fact, Green argued that creating a better government through revolution, and established on the most sacred of values, was the most reasonable option for the time. He defined and reinforced the scope of the American experiment as justification for the support that he expected from God:

What we propose is the most equitable, rational, natural mode of civil government; most adapted to answer the ends of a government, according to the word of God. A government most favourable to religion as well as liberty, and the natural rights of mankind. In this way we have abundant reason to think that God will smile upon and bless us; will prosper our equitable proceedings, and prevent the evils that earth or hell may devise against us.⁴⁸¹

Green used these passages not only as justification for his argument that there would be divine approval and intervention for the revolution but also as an opportunity to establish objectives and propose central tenets for the new governments.

In order to be virtuous to the point that the revolution would enjoy the endorsement and protection of God, Green argued that it would need to be established upon a foundation of equality, adherence to natural laws, and respect for the teachings of a present God. The adherence to this foundation would ensure that the new American republic would not meet the same disastrous fate as British control in the land. Green regarded the British violations of natural rights as plainly evident: “. . . and but our oppressions, and the encroachments upon our natural rights by regal officers, are so well known to every man that has any acquaintance with our public affairs, that I need not enlarge.”⁴⁸² It was therefore important to ensure that such deprivations of liberty were not

⁴⁸¹ Jacob Green, *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great-Britain and the Colonies*, 19-20

⁴⁸² Jacob Green, *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great-Britain and the Colonies*, 24

permitted in the new republican structures. “What say scripture and reason,” asked Green. “If a kingdom or an house be divided against itself, it cannot stand. . . . This may be prevented by keeping clear of British Government; and a kind Providence seems now to open the door for it.”⁴⁸³ Green offered adherence to divine principles and desires as an inoculation against failed government. The pastor argued that God was providing the opportunity for American success, and that adherence to His expectations would ensure that the new country would be successful. As a result, religion and government would need to be codependent during the foundation of the new government.

Green argued that both religious liberty and practice were as necessary to the success of the country as was the political liberty that was the focus of the Enlightenment. The pastor contended that religion and politics were inseparable, not simply to maintain control but to guarantee survival and prosperity by the grace of God. At this time, however, the interpretation of natural rights was evolving from one that was largely religious, to the Enlightened secular view that birth guaranteed such protections. Regardless of how or why the country guaranteed natural rights, the people would benefit. As one such right is the ability to practice faith without interference, religion would benefit. While arguments varied with respect to the nature of liberty and revolution, the outcome was still the same: there would be effective government that would guarantee the preservation of both democratic and religious principles. This would only be possible with a newly created government that defied the rules and conventions that had corrupted the ones previous.

⁴⁸³ Jacob Green, *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great-Britain and the Colonies*, 24

Green responded in the affirmative to his question as to whether the Americans deserved to be independent and delved into a discussion on the nature of civil society. In order to accurately analyze the creation of such institutions, Green analyzed the concept of natural rights and how individuals ceded the most extreme application of these in order to participate as a member of a society of laws.⁴⁸⁴ While his message was not overtly religiously oriented, natural rights are derived from God. The obedience to a greater legal structure required in a civil society mirrors that required by God and organized religion. One must sacrifice the absolute extent of his individual liberties in order to enjoy representation and spiritual fulfilment. In the same vein, Green argued that the government, therefore, had the responsibility to serve the people in good faith as consideration in this contract.⁴⁸⁵ Green suggests that in government, officials should be bound by oath to engage in such deliberate representation.⁴⁸⁶ The oath is an important action, as a government official swearing it effectively adds a third party to the contract. In such circumstances, God served not only as a witness to the pledge, but also as a measure of accountability.

As the war progressed, Green expanded the communication of his revolutionary ideas to include more radical social philosophy. He had established himself as a leader and intellectual, which increased his visibility and legitimacy. As will be analyzed more thoroughly through his writings, Green found the practice of slavery to be inconsistent with revolutionary principles and wished for the rebels to dispense with the institution in America.⁴⁸⁷ This would have been aligned with the values that Jefferson referenced in the

⁴⁸⁴ Jacob Green, *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great-Britain and the Colonies*, 9

⁴⁸⁵ Jacob Green, *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great-Britain and the Colonies*, 10

⁴⁸⁶ Jacob Green, *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great-Britain and the Colonies*, 10

⁴⁸⁷ Rohrer, 2

early drafts of the Declaration of Independence that blamed slavery on the King, but that were removed upon the pressure of members of Congress. In addition to this highly radical opinion, Green discussed increasing the role of democracy and the level to which individuals could participate.⁴⁸⁸ In many ways, this belief ties not only to Whig philosophy but also to the self-government principles that were inherent in the Presbyterian governance structure. Green involved himself in issues that were not traditionally the purview of a minister, even a radical one.

Green capitalized on the revolutionary spirit by calling for major structural changes to the economic system that would allow for class mobility.⁴⁸⁹ A case did exist for assigning the responsibility for class struggle to the suffocating British traditions that prevented significant individual improvement in this area. In the same vein, Green called for changes to a system of currency that made it difficult for many individuals to pay debt and have liquid assets.⁴⁹⁰ It was clear that Green wished for the new American society to be based on collective Christian principles as opposed to the desire for property and individual economic enterprise that had corrupted many governments and individuals before.⁴⁹¹ While some of Green's ideas were radical on the surface, the derivation of them was even more so. Rohrer argues that "the particularly interesting fact about Green's reform drive . . . was its source: it stemmed not from Whig philosophy or Lockean principles—the famous 'contagion of liberty' that inspired many colonists to revolt—but from his religious beliefs, specifically his Calvinism and the tenets he derived from the

⁴⁸⁸ Rohrer, 2

⁴⁸⁹ Rohrer, 2

⁴⁹⁰ Rohrer, 2

⁴⁹¹ Rohrer, 2

complex thought of Jonathan Edwards.”⁴⁹² This distinguishes but does not separate Green from his contemporaries, as it demonstrates that political and religious objectives had converged during this period. Green was the living embodiment of the growing relationship and lack of distinction between these concepts. While he maintained some distance from the traditional government institutions, Green was able to make an impact on the revolution by both helping to clarify its scope and proving that those who were a part of it were free to develop and advocate for a variety of ideas.

Despite very particular and strong beliefs with respect to political and religious liberty, Green shied away from many of the organized methods by which to discuss and fulfill his goals. In May of 1776, Green was elected as a representative to the Provincial Congress.⁴⁹³ This would have presumably been the most effective venue through which Green could achieve his political objectives. However, Green resigned after six weeks, demonstrating his desire to continue to write and preach in order to fulfill the same goals.⁴⁹⁴ Green may also have recognized that he was in a somewhat homogenous group philosophically that did not require his persuasive efforts. Green would prove to be much more valuable staying at home. The Hanover community for which he served as parson lay adjacent to Morristown, which was home to two winter Continental encampments and served as a temporary headquarters to General George Washington. Despite many considering Morristown a cradle of revolutionary liberalism, many in the area either were opposed to liberty or were unconvinced.⁴⁹⁵ Many local clergymen were less involved with the cause, and thus Green added a great deal of legitimacy.

⁴⁹² Rohrer, 2

⁴⁹³ Rohrer, 2

⁴⁹⁴ Rohrer, 2

⁴⁹⁵ Rohrer, 2

Green further distinguished himself as one of the few ministers to support smallpox inoculation for the local community when the soldiers were encamped in the region in 1777.⁴⁹⁶ Green reportedly met directly with Washington and officers to discuss the looming threat of an epidemic of the deadly virus.⁴⁹⁷ In addition to his ministerial duties, Green practiced medicine in order to meet the needs of the church and region.⁴⁹⁸ He was able to apply his religious principles to the practice, but also demonstrated reverence for emerging science in the service of others.⁴⁹⁹ Pastors in other municipalities contiguous to Morristown, like the Village Bottle Hill in modern-day Madison, were resistant to and fearful of inoculation. The inoculation was a calculated risk, as those exposed to the vaccine could contract the disease if the dose was not mild.⁵⁰⁰ Parson Green's argument in favor of inoculation provides insight into his political philosophy. The concept of inoculation demonstrated an awareness and trust of science and reason, hallmarks of the growing Enlightenment movement. This same movement promoted political liberty, self-government, and religious liberty, ideals that were of great import to the American revolutionaries. He regarded slavery as inconsistent with the goals of the revolution and determined that it should be the objective of the American rebels to abolish the practice. He used his speaking and writing platforms to thoroughly explore this topic.⁵⁰¹

The devastating encampments were not only disastrous for the military but also served to undermine the war effort in the local area. Residents saw firsthand the

⁴⁹⁶ Tamburro, 29

⁴⁹⁷ Tamburro, 29

⁴⁹⁸ Rohrer, 95

⁴⁹⁹ Rohrer, 95

⁵⁰⁰ Tamburro, 29-30

⁵⁰¹ Rohrer, 2

destruction that had befallen the Continental Army, which caused the public to question whether the Continental Army, and by extension the United States, could be successful. It was vital to remind the public of the importance of the effort, and that the projected benefits outweighed the tangible and intangible costs. Green made a deliberate effort to remind both his local community and the wider community to consider the value of the short-term sacrifice:

“We are now engaged in a cruel war; several years have passed since we have been led, time after time, to view the awful scene of towns burning, numbers slaughtered in battle, neighbors and friends and friends starving and dying in prisons with other hardships too many to recount. Is it not proper to consider what all this is for? . . . Why do we continue to struggle with so many difficulties? It is for Liberty, that we may be a free people; that we may enjoy the natural rights of mankind; that we may not be reduced to a state of mean and abject slavery . . . If we properly view the importance of Liberty, we shall not think we risk too much for it.”⁵⁰²

Green provided an excellent explanation that resonated with the community deeply affected not only by the fighting and encampments of war but also by the constriction of trade routes that were vital to the economic health of the region. Green chose to include in this explanation references to natural rights, which are those that emanate from God and are thus supreme to all other concerns. Green was able to tie the inherently political with the religious in order to meet the needs of his argument.

The privilege of respect that Green enjoyed provided him with the opportunity and audience to communicate without interference with his parishioners and the greater public. Green’s words in his *Observations* were as widespread as some of the messages that he offered to his congregation. Many of his sermons were published and distributed, or had their messages spread by word and amplified throughout the region. He seized

⁵⁰² Tamburro, 23-4

upon opportunities to deliberately connect God and the American struggle for liberty. Green engineered such a connection in a sermon in April of 1778, which was published in the next year to reach a wider audience: “A ‘great and glorious God . . . has seen from the first how our American troubles came on, and how they have proceeded. He permits the British court to oppress us, and has excited our resentment; excites us to stand for our liberties civil and religious.’”⁵⁰³ In this solemn oratory that was conducted as part of a day of public fasting, humiliation, and prayer called by the Continental Congress, Green ensured that the Americans understood that the greater public were to blame for a lack of success in the war. Larry Gerlach suggests that “It was vintage Jacob Green—a systematic application of evangelical Calvinism to secular affairs.”⁵⁰⁴ In his sermon, he remarked that “God is angry and is contrary with us. . . . Infidelity, profane cursing and swearing, neglect and contempt of religion; selfishness, avarice, and extortion; supporting and encouraging slavery; criminal languor and negligence in defence of our sacred rights.”⁵⁰⁵ In an editorial preface to the print edition, Green was unapologetic in his chastisement of the parishioners, in an effort to provide the difficult truth with a sense of hope for improvement:

My aim in the following discourse has been to speak plainly, without fear, without partiality, without will-will to any; with hearty benevolence to the public, not as a pleasing man, but God who tries the heart. If some things

⁵⁰³ As qtd. In Rohrer, 140

⁵⁰⁴ Gerlach, Introduction to Jacob Green, *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great-Britain and the Colonies*, xxix

⁵⁰⁵ Gerlach, Introduction to Jacob Green, *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great-Britain and the Colonies*, xxix

in the sermon should offend a number, I shall not be disappointed, and if the publication shall be useful to any, may God have the Glory.⁵⁰⁶

Green specifically cited “neglect and contempt of religion” as reasons for the people having fallen out of the favor of God. This became a common narrative among ministers of the time, and was potentially designed not just to result in victory in the war but to make better Christians. Green was direct in his approach to political liberty, understanding that it was dependent on not only religious practice but the freedom to practice religion. The religion-politics connection was a bi-directional relationship for Green. In his mind, the two were mutually influential and dependent. Green observed: “We have reason to bless God that those who go foremost in affairs of state will call upon us to apply to God, yea will lead us to the throne of grace for divine aid.”⁵⁰⁷ He reinforced the need for virtuous leaders to lead with fidelity to the high standards of natural law and republican government. Green supported his contentions with scripture from the Book of Deuteronomy, chapter 30, verse 9: “The Lord will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers, if thou shalt hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and statutes, and if thou turn into the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with thy soul.”⁵⁰⁸ Green was unwavering in his view that the country would fail without leaders who both practiced religion and guaranteed the freedom of others to do the same.

⁵⁰⁶ Jacob Green, “A Sermon Delivered at Hanover, (in New-Jersey) April 22d, 1778. Being the Day of Public Fasting and Prayer Throughout the United States of America.” Chatham, NJ: Shepard Kollock, 1779, ii.

⁵⁰⁷ Jacob Green, “A Sermon Delivered at Hanover, (in New-Jersey) April 22d, 1778. Being the Day of Public Fasting and Prayer Throughout the United States of America.” Chatham, NJ: Shepard Kollock, 1779, 3.

⁵⁰⁸ Jacob Green, “A Sermon Delivered at Hanover, (in New-Jersey) April 22d, 1778. Being the Day of Public Fasting and Prayer Throughout the United States of America.” Chatham, NJ: Shepard Kollock, 1779, 4.

Green's connection of political and religious liberty evolved to include the concept of duty and responsibility to participate in such an opportunity for radical self-improvement. Green went further on this mission when, in his second letter on liberty, he argued that Americans might be losing the war because they were being sanctioned by God for their closely held vices.⁵⁰⁹ With respect to how liberty was lost,

“The answer,” he wrote, “is that vice is the general, radical cause of this loss.” For Green, vice posed a grave threat to liberty on at least two levels. The first danger was that “it provokes God to . . . punish a sinning people by permitting usurpers and tyrants to seize on their natural rights.” As evidence, Green cited the accounts of Israel in the Book of Judges and the “histories of vicious nations.” The second threat came on the individual level: “Vice has a *natural* tendency to the loss of Freedom. Idleness and prodigality will reduce men, and make them dependent upon those that are rich, which will endanger freedom.”⁵¹⁰

The piece regarding the punishment of sinners demonstrates the continuation of Green's closely held Calvinism, which guided his arguments throughout the war. Green was successful in reconciling his religious convictions with those of the movement for liberty, making this a conflict of virtue as well as political independence. Green similarly saw the sin of the people as a potential cause for the breakdown of the very republican government for which the Americans were fighting. The reliance upon the wealthy significantly decreases the practical liberty of individuals. In addition to being a way for the elite to control the public, the fear that particular individuals could be dominated by the wealthy was one of the reasons many colonies and states required individuals to be free of debt, or at least to have assets that were substantial enough to allow one to vote without being heavily influenced by an employer, landlord, or debt-holder. Green evidentially believed that “the Revolution would not simply be a political contest waged

⁵⁰⁹ Rohrer, 140

⁵¹⁰ Rohrer, 140

to determine who would rule the American people. It would be a moral revolution as well. It would be a chance to tend the corruption—both political and spiritual—of the times.”⁵¹¹ It is apparent, however, that Green continued to regard these as complementary causes. He did not hold one of the intended results over the other, respecting that they were intimately connected. The parson saw his role as working to achieve both, facilitating the convergence of these ideas of liberty. He continued to use his influence in order to call for reforms against what he considered to be great sins and failures of both the people and existing government structures.

Green made sure to demonstrate that the war was a consequence of the actions of others, particularly the denial of the God-given natural rights. The minister reminded his flock that the war was a result of the actions of the British and the inability to win relied-on adherence to religious principles:

... When we view our contest with Britain we appeal to the justice of God with courage and confidence. By Britain we are abused, oppressed, most cruelly treated: We have been forced into this war. Liberty and other common rights of mankind we desired. These were denied. The most abject submission to unreasonable terms has been urged upon us. We cannot so meanly, so basely submit. We are contending for liberty. Our cause is just – it is glorious; more glorious than to contend for a kingdom. A cause on which we may hope for a divine blessing.⁵¹²

Green argued that the Americans could not submit to the British, but indicated that in order to receive the blessing of God, the country would need to be deliberately obedient to Him. Green was an impassioned supporter of liberty who ensured that there would be a clear direction for the country after the revolution. The war was an excellent opportunity

⁵¹¹ Rohrer, 140

⁵¹² Jacob Green, “A Sermon Delivered at Hanover, (in New-Jersey) April 22d, 1778. Being the Day of Public Fasting and Prayer Throughout the United States of America.” Chatham, NJ: Shepard Kollock, 1779, 4-5

to clarify the mandate for the country to act in a virtuous manner in perpetuity. “Tis common for God to correct his people when working deliverance for them,” Green reminded his congregation.⁵¹³ “There are sins, great and aggravated sins among us. God is angry and contending with us. We are this day called upon by our rulers to fast and pray – to confess and forsake our sins. Tis my duty to point out the sins that abound, that are most provoking to God, for which he maintains a controversy with us . . . which we should sincerely bewail and speedily forsake.”⁵¹⁴ Green offered this sermon during the middle of the conflict, at a time when an American victory was not advancing as predicted in the years leading up to the war. While the religious nature of the words is evident, Green recognized that it would require the actions of both people and the government to remedy the situation. He deliberately reminded the parishioners that the government had called for the day of fasting and prayer in an attempt to both organize Americans and curry favor with God. In this circumstance, the civil structures had called upon the religious ones for assistance. However, the representative bodies determined the direction of the country in accordance with legal traditions and Enlightenment philosophy.

Green argued that some sins were so grievous that they needed to be addressed and remedied by action of the democratically elected governments. His reference to slavery as an issue in America was a continuation of the commitment of Green to an unwavering and unpopular attack on the practice that denied liberty to a great number of

⁵¹³ Jacob Green, “A Sermon Delivered at Hanover, (in New-Jersey) April 22d, 1778. Being the Day of Public Fasting and Prayer Throughout the United States of America.” Chatham, NJ: Shepard Kollock, 1779, 5.

⁵¹⁴ Jacob Green, “A Sermon Delivered at Hanover, (in New-Jersey) April 22d, 1778. Being the Day of Public Fasting and Prayer Throughout the United States of America.” Chatham, NJ: Shepard Kollock, 1779, 5-6.

people, including those in his home state and county. Green eliminated any ambiguity about the political and religious connection when he sanctified the rights of the people. These rights were both natural and sacred, having been bestowed upon the individual by God at the time of birth. Green made the important distinction that one had to fight to preserve these rights. The subtext of this was that the British government was unapologetically denying and eliminating the rights of the people. The minister expressed the great concern that the Americans were not fighting to their full capabilities, and thus bore responsibility for the failures that the new country had suffered. It is evident that Green professed that God was more supportive of the virtuous revolutionary cause than of the flawed individuals who were effecting the change.

Despite his harsh criticism, Green's message was one of hope through high expectation for more virtuous behavior among the populace. Green saw the war as an opportunity to achieve liberty through force and for individuals to improve themselves in order to correct the sins that they had been committing.⁵¹⁵ In his quest for the expansion of self-improvement by individuals, Green attempted to mitigate what he believed to be the growing incidence of unholy and unproductive qualities, especially among those in the military. He wanted to temper what he believed to be increasing occurrences of sin that were the consequence of the war. He addressed not only the neglect and contempt of religion but also personal sin like infidelity, profanity, selfishness, avarice, and extortion.⁵¹⁶ These items were successfully extending the war by causing the Patriots to fail to achieve divine approval, and the continuation of these sins was thus delaying the

⁵¹⁵ Rohrer, 140

⁵¹⁶ Jacob Green, "A Sermon Delivered at Hanover, (in New-Jersey) April 22d, 1778. Being the Day of Public Fasting and Prayer Throughout the United States of America." Chatham, NJ: Shepard Kollock, 1779, 7-9.

universal existence of freedom. In his closing, Green observed in a hopeful manner “. . . that God who is infinite in goodness, waits long to be gracious, and may yet try us with mercy as a means to lead us to repentance.”⁵¹⁷ However, the continuation of the inappropriate behavior that created the rift with God would

be truly lamentable, and a very dark sign, that would much damp our hopes. God forbid it to be so. But in that case, I should expect that God would yet try us with a mixture of mercies and corrections. That we should be delivered from British tyranny, and have plenty in our land, with internal commotions, divisions, and convulsions, oppressions, and other difficulties, while God gave us a space to repent and reform, which if after all we should refuse to do, we should be ripening for heavy judgments in some future time.⁵¹⁸

Green was optimistic in his belief that Americans could deliberately monitor and curtail their own destructive behaviors. However, the pastor was understanding of the imperfections of man and called upon a merciful God to guide Americans through their political independence. Green recognized that there was great potential for internal disagreement and fighting following the breaking of ties with Britain and suggested that with long-term virtue in mind, God would allow for the colonies to experiment, grow, and self-correct. The new country would have to be as aware of their sins as they needed to be during the time of the conflict. Further, they had to make room for the appreciation and worship of God in order to be successful in the experiment. Green reminded the congregation and readers that divine authority helped to lead to the downfall of the British and could be equally as traumatic to a morally bankrupt American republic.

⁵¹⁷ Jacob Green, “A Sermon Delivered at Hanover, (in New-Jersey) April 22d, 1778. Being the Day of Public Fasting and Prayer Throughout the United States of America.” Chatham, NJ: Shepard Kollock, 1779, 20.

⁵¹⁸ Jacob Green, “A Sermon Delivered at Hanover, (in New-Jersey) April 22d, 1778. Being the Day of Public Fasting and Prayer Throughout the United States of America.” Chatham, NJ: Shepard Kollock, 1779, 20-21.

Green believed that adherence to divine principles would be the most decisive factor in potential success. Anything less constituted a provocation to God.⁵¹⁹ He argued that “if God be against us, who can eventually be for us? All our exertions will be to no purpose if God does not favor us.”⁵²⁰ There was simply no greater force or higher power than the deity that the congregation worshipped. Green related the ease with which God could destroy the revolutionary cause by illness, famine, division, and granting favor to the enemies.⁵²¹ This was a swift, severe, and frightful prospect for all those who had invested lives, time, and resources in the war. A change in the relative righteousness of the conflict would result in guaranteed ruin. If people were good in their actions and intentions, then God would be on their side: “If God be for us, we need not fear any that are, or can be against us. What a happy land this will be if ‘tis a land of true religion! It will then be a land of liberty, of peace, and plenty. We shall then live in love and peace among ourselves: And many from other nations will flock to us as the most happy people on the face of the earth.”⁵²²

In his famous sermon on the day of fasting and prayer, Green remarked that Americans should not exist in the state of de facto slavery that would be guaranteed by British occupation and rule. In effect, he regarded the lack of political and religious

⁵¹⁹ Jacob Green, “A Sermon Delivered at Hanover, (in New-Jersey) April 22d, 1778. Being the Day of Public Fasting and Prayer Throughout the United States of America.” Chatham, NJ: Shepard Kollock, 1779, 21.

⁵²⁰ Jacob Green, “A Sermon Delivered at Hanover, (in New-Jersey) April 22d, 1778. Being the Day of Public Fasting and Prayer Throughout the United States of America.” Chatham, NJ: Shepard Kollock, 1779, 21.

⁵²¹ Jacob Green, “A Sermon Delivered at Hanover, (in New-Jersey) April 22d, 1778. Being the Day of Public Fasting and Prayer Throughout the United States of America.” Chatham, NJ: Shepard Kollock, 1779, 22.

⁵²² Jacob Green, “A Sermon Delivered at Hanover, (in New-Jersey) April 22d, 1778. Being the Day of Public Fasting and Prayer Throughout the United States of America.” Chatham, NJ: Shepard Kollock, 1779, 22.

freedoms as tantamount to a state of forced bondage. While this was a literary device in this passage, it could quite literally describe the feelings that Green held regarding the peculiar institution that existed throughout the states at this time. Green, “unlike many zealots for a cause who overlook grievous flaws in their movements, was disturbed by an unresolved problem. As a man of God, he felt words as liberty and equality applied to all of God’s children.”⁵²³ These feelings led Green to become one of the preeminent public abolitionists of the period.⁵²⁴

Christian ministers had struggled with reconciling this contradiction for decades leading up to the revolutionary era. In southern states, pastors argued that at minimum, Christians could not enslave other converted individuals. This created conflict, as conversion had been a common attempt to minister to, and “civilize” the slave population. Once such arguments became more common, colonies like Virginia outlawed the practice of religion by slaves. This was designed to dispose of that particular moral issue, but did nothing to address the fundamental moral dilemma of enslaving other persons. While some ministers, especially those in the North, were against slavery, Green made an advanced argument during the revolution when he observed that “Slaveholders are . . . enemies to liberty . . . , enemies to our present struggle for liberty..., enemies to the United States.”⁵²⁵ Like his earlier calls against reconciliation, this escalation both distinguished Green and alienated him from many of his mainstream contemporaries who saw slavery as being of great social and economic benefit to the land. Green was joined in philosophy by the Quaker faith, which was not the best regarded of the New Jersey

⁵²³ Tamburro, 24

⁵²⁴ Tamburro, 24

⁵²⁵ Tamburro, 24

denominations during the revolution due to their pacifist tradition and the sanctions that they imposed against their brethren for participating in the conflict either as a soldier or as one who paid a fine to not serve. Green's corroboration with the Quakers did little to help his cause. His remarks became much fierier and somewhat prophetic when he communicated his thoughts on the future of America were this vile practice to continue:

He correctly foresaw slaveholders causing "our land to be swept by violence" if we did not abolish slavery. If we did not immediately rid ourselves of this "unnatural, cruel and inconsistent" curse . . . "Then will the shrieks and cries of murdered children and the lamentation of assassinated friends...force conviction upon us of the evils we might have foreseen, and learn us to regret, with deep remorse, the calamity we might have prevented."⁵²⁶

Green regarded this period as one which could prove to address the major defining American issues. Green continued to write about slavery as the war progressed, arguing that "supporting and encouraging slavery is one of the greatest and crying evils among us. Can it be believed that a people contending for liberty should at the same time be supporting slavery?"⁵²⁷ When Green closed his address with a repudiation of slavery, it was reinforced as one of the most prominent ideas of the sermon. Green had previously remarked that the perpetuation of sin would potentially result in severe retribution.

Involuntary servitude was not an exception:

I cannot but hope, yet believe that after the war is over we shall set ourselves to reform many things that are amiss among us, slavery not excepted. I must believe this great event, this important struggle for liberty, will, in the end, be a means of putting an end to negro slavery in this land, and to many other oppressions and impositions, which a state of liberty is adapted to throw off and resist. Our struggle for liberty is attended to through the world. All eyes are upon us; and all that are not self-interested, or grievously imposed on by misrepresentations, this our cause is just, and wish us success. Should we obtain our end, this land of liberty could not be so inconsistent, could not with any face continue and

⁵²⁶ Tamburro, 24

⁵²⁷ Tamburro, 60

support slavery, and other oppressions contrary to the state of freedom. On the whole, my friends, we have the greatest reason to reform our lives trust in God, and exert ourselves in our country's cause with full confidence of success.⁵²⁸

While Green desired and called for immediate emancipation in many of his published works, it appears that the pragmatic part of him did not realistically expect it during wartime, as it might destabilize the revolutionary cause by causing significant internal divisions. However, Green saw the republican government as the mechanism by which to end the practice in totality. In a postscript that was included in the published version of his sermon on the day of fasting and prayer, Green offered a specific plan to phase out slavery gradually.⁵²⁹ He called for the immediate freedom of those under five years of age, and then incremental timelines for emancipation based on an inverse relationship with the age of the slave.⁵³⁰ He also hoped and desired that the newly free American owners, in the spirit of liberty and in their desire to further the republican movements afoot in America and Europe, would give freedom to their enslaved persons.⁵³¹ Like many adherents to Enlightenment principles, Green saw gains of freedom and self-government to be matters of interest to greater society, as they could set precedents for future reforms and revolutions. The perpetuation of slavery, Green believed, would

⁵²⁸ Jacob Green, "A Sermon Delivered at Hanover, (in New-Jersey) April 22d, 1778. Being the Day of Public Fasting and Prayer Throughout the United States of America." Chatham, NJ: Shepard Kollock, 1779, 21.

⁵²⁹ Jacob Green, "A Sermon Delivered at Hanover, (in New-Jersey) April 22d, 1778. Being the Day of Public Fasting and Prayer Throughout the United States of America." Chatham, NJ: Shepard Kollock, 1779, 23.

⁵³⁰ Jacob Green, "A Sermon Delivered at Hanover, (in New-Jersey) April 22d, 1778. Being the Day of Public Fasting and Prayer Throughout the United States of America." Chatham, NJ: Shepard Kollock, 1779, 23.

⁵³¹ Jacob Green, "A Sermon Delivered at Hanover, (in New-Jersey) April 22d, 1778. Being the Day of Public Fasting and Prayer Throughout the United States of America." Chatham, NJ: Shepard Kollock, 1779, 23.

undermine the proliferation of political liberty abroad. It was, therefore, imperative that the vile practice be discontinued.

While Green wished for government-directed abolition, he was aware that other representatives and elites within political and economic spheres would block that change. New Jersey had one of the highest rates of slavery in the northern colonies and states. When he was unable to achieve these objectives through secular government, he turned to sectarian structures for relief. Green created a proposal for a new Presbyterian governance structure that would not admit slaveholders to its membership.⁵³² Green's lack of satisfaction with the response to his proposal resulted in his solidifying and justifying an exit from the New York Synod. This was an unusual but measured response to Green, who felt as if the denomination were not exhibiting completely the virtues that it preached. Connecting one's actions to slavery was both risky and brave at this time, and Green's forthright statements denouncing slavery demonstrated the lengths of Green's closely held appreciation for liberty. His actions unfortunately did not engender wide support from his contemporaries. The rise of the abolitionist movement in America was not widely spread until the 1830s; however, those reformers employed many of the same arguments. Green's contemporary support, though, was so scarce that local slaveholders "tried to intimidate him by visiting the old parsonage, but Rev. Green invited them in, offered them a drink and attempted to persuade them to mend their ways."⁵³³ Green was able to use his respectable position and comparative authority as a minister to not only avoid a physical confrontation but also implore the unexpected

⁵³² Gerlach, Introduction to Jacob Green, *Observations on the Reconciliation of Great-Britain and the Colonies*, xxx

⁵³³ Tamburro, 25

guests and political adversaries to listen to the important arguments which he championed. While he did not convince the slaveholders to free their involuntary servants, this episode demonstrates the high level of esteem with which the local population regarded the minister. Such respect is what allowed individuals to so effectively receive the arguments for liberty and military support for the revolutionary cause that Green espoused throughout the conflict.

Green served in both sectarian and secular roles during the revolution, which included assisting with logistics while the Continental Army was in Morristown. Green was educated and persuasive. Green's talents and influence were recognized when he was appointed to the Board of Trustees of the College of New Jersey, the institution that was responsible for advancing intellectualism and liberal philosophy in both government and religion.⁵³⁴ Following the revolution, Green continued in local politics, and he later returned to state government. Leonard Lundin went as far as crediting the Reverend Green with being a "probable author of the State constitution."⁵³⁵ Green served as chairman of a committee of ten representatives assigned the daunting task of writing a new constitution for New Jersey, as the previous royal charters and laws no longer applied.⁵³⁶ By 1779, Green determined that the democratic Synod of New York and Philadelphia was no longer meeting the needs of individuals and the local church bodies.⁵³⁷ Green saw a trend of centralization that was incongruent with the revolutionary and democratic principles of self-government and local control that were the prevailing political philosophy of the time. His strong discontent eventually caused him to secede

⁵³⁴ Rohrer, 8

⁵³⁵ Lundin, 100

⁵³⁶ Tamburro, 57

⁵³⁷ Rohrer, 10

from established Presbyterian Church in order to form a more democratic confederation of congregations.⁵³⁸ Green was able to insert his political philosophy into the New Jersey Constitution. While John Dickinson Sergeant is often assigned credit for the writing of the document, it was Green who presided over the committee that created the constitution.⁵³⁹ There are ideas in the New Jersey Constitution that reflect the philosophies that Green held very closely. These include religious toleration and suffrage for individuals who had a particular net worth.⁵⁴⁰ It is important to note that there were no specific voting restrictions that applied to women or minorities. While this was changed to exclude women and most minorities when the legislature made revisions to suffrage in 1807, the original right of all to vote was closely aligned to Green's political beliefs.⁵⁴¹ The influence of Parson Green would expand nationally, as the New Jersey Constitution and United States Constitution have distinct similarities in structure; the Federal document drew both from prevailing political theory of the time and the state constitutions that had been drafted prior to the national framework.

The Reverend Andrew Hunter, Sr.

In addition to being prolific writers and speakers, many ministers engaged in revolutionary behavior alongside their congregants. The Reverend Andrew Hunter, Sr., was pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Greenwich, New Jersey.⁵⁴² The Cumberland

⁵³⁸ Rohrer, 10

⁵³⁹ Tamburro, 57

⁵⁴⁰ Tamburro, 58

⁵⁴¹ Tamburro, 58

⁵⁴² F.R. Brace, "New Jersey Chaplains in the Army of the Revolution," *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society* VI, no. 1. (Third Series, 1908): 1-2.

County town was the site of the November 22, 1774, burning of tea that had been intended for shipment to the port of Philadelphia, across the river from the southern municipality.⁵⁴³ Hunter, Sr. was a significant tea-burning figure and a proponent of American political liberty.⁵⁴⁴ The tea-burning was a major protest in southern New Jersey. The event was unplanned until a shipment of tea was stranded in Cumberland County. The actions of the tea burning party suggested a pre-existing revolutionary impulse which was acted upon somewhat extemporaneously in this circumstance. The leadership of the local pastor lent validity to the actions and rhetoric of local political libertarians.

The Reverend Charles McKnight

The Reverend Charles McKnight, like Andrew Hunter, Sr., was a senior member of the New Jersey Presbyterian Clergy at the inception of the revolution. He was of a different generation than those more recently educated at the College of New Jersey, but as fierce in his republican convictions.⁵⁴⁵ During the revolution, McKnight was the pastor of the Mount Pleasant Church in Matawan.⁵⁴⁶ He preached the cause of independence to his congregation and was noted to have stated during one such address: “God will take care of your liberty if you will take care of the redcoats.”⁵⁴⁷ This clear imperative that he

⁵⁴³ Greenwich Tea Burners

⁵⁴⁴ Brace, 2

⁵⁴⁵ Jack Crowder, *Chaplains of the Revolutionary War: Black Robed American Warriors* (Jefferson, North Carolina, McFarland and Company, 2017), 101.

⁵⁴⁶ Crowder, 101

⁵⁴⁷ Crowder, 101

offered his congregation suggested that he saw military intervention as the only mechanism with which to secure freedom.

McKnight chose to demonstrate his commitment to the cause of arms by joining the military forces as the war entered New Jersey. At sixty-seven years old, the pastor traveled from Matawan to Princeton to act a chaplain at the Battle of Princeton, which was not far from his home.⁵⁴⁸ During the battle, he was struck with the sabre of a British officer, suffering severe, but not mortal, wounds which prevented him from engaging in future military service.⁵⁴⁹

The British became acutely aware of the political radicalism and military participation of the Reverend McKnight, and thus he became a target for retribution. The British chose to act on this threat when they engaged in a deliberate, multi-directional attack of Matawan for the deliberate purposes of capturing McKnight and burning the Mount Pleasant Church.⁵⁵⁰ After a skirmish which resulted in deaths on both sides, the pastor was captured and imprisoned on the vessel *New Jersey*.⁵⁵¹ The conditions on the ship were not conducive to the health of a sixty-seven-year-old man. As a result, he eventually developed pneumonia which was the cause of his death immediately after the British released him from captivity.⁵⁵² McKnight joined the honor roll of chaplains who gave the ultimate sacrifice for freedom after championing the cause.

⁵⁴⁸ Crowder, 101

⁵⁴⁹ Crowder, 101

⁵⁵⁰ Crowder, 101

⁵⁵¹ Crowder, 101

⁵⁵² Crowder, 101

The Reverend John Brainerd

The religious diversity of New Jersey extended to the Native Americans who inhabited the region. This became a concern of regional denominations who wished to spread Christianity to the Natives.⁵⁵³ Before the onset of the revolution, the Reverend David Brainerd served as a Presbyterian missionary to the Natives.⁵⁵⁴ When the war began, Brainerd quickly aligned himself with the great majority of the Presbyterian clergy who were in support of revolution. He began to zealously preach in favor of the Patriot cause.⁵⁵⁵ He based his sermon on Psalm 144, which read “Blessed be the Lord my strength which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.”⁵⁵⁶ While Brainerd served as a Chaplain in the French and Indian War, his efforts during the revolution were confined to parish ministry, likely due to his advanced age. Brainerd helped to mobilize the people of the western side of the state, from Mount Holly to Deerfield.⁵⁵⁷ This was important because the settlers in the region were concerned that their land would be subject to battles and troop movements as a result of location.⁵⁵⁸ Additionally, the war would allow the Natives to become less susceptible to missionary influence and control, which might lead them to fight for the British.

⁵⁵³ Thomas Brainerd, *The Life of John Brainerd, the Brother of David Brainerd, and his Successor as Missionary to the Indians of New Jersey* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Publication Committee, 1865), 409.

⁵⁵⁴ Brainerd, 409

⁵⁵⁵ Brainerd, 409

⁵⁵⁶ As qtd. In Brainerd, 409-410

⁵⁵⁷ Brainerd, 410

⁵⁵⁸ Brainerd, 410

Dutch Reformed Clergy

While the early presence of the Dutch in the region helped to establish the Reformed tradition, the denomination gradually became a minority as Presbyterian and Anglican churches became more numerous and popular. Few Dutch Reformed Clergy were wartime radicals; however, those who espoused republican virtues became as notorious as their Presbyterian counterparts in the eyes of the British. The Reverend William Jackson, who served as the minister of congregations in both Staten Island and Bergen (now Jersey City), was an ardent and public Patriot.⁵⁵⁹ Jackson reportedly used his sermons to criticize the actions of both the monarch and Parliament.⁵⁶⁰ This was particularly dangerous for Jackson, as he preached in areas that were not necessarily accepting of such rhetoric. Such threat did not dissuade Jackson from preaching in support of the Patriot cause. He even preached these philosophies to known Tories in defiance of British authorities.⁵⁶¹

The Reverend Hoffman was arrested and brought in front of Lord Howe for adjudication.⁵⁶² Hoffman used the opportunity to assert his natural right to speak in furtherance of his conscientious beliefs.⁵⁶³ Following his release from custody, Jackson continued his republican rhetoric. When a congregant challenged his words against the British, Jackson replied: “Lord Howe has forgiven me, why not you.”⁵⁶⁴ He was permitted to continue his attacks without interference.⁵⁶⁵ The story of Hoffman

⁵⁵⁹ Robert V. Hoffman, *The Revolutionary Scene in New Jersey* (New York: The American Historical Company, 1942), 80.

⁵⁶⁰ Hoffman, 80

⁵⁶¹ Hoffman, 80

⁵⁶² Hoffman, 80

⁵⁶³ Hoffman, 80-81

⁵⁶⁴ As qtd. In Hoffman, 81

⁵⁶⁵ Hoffman, 81

demonstrates that even ministers in the minority were able to use their statuses to engage in political rhetoric. He enjoyed a significant level of influence in his community, which resulted in the unabridged communication of his philosophy. While Jackson chose to participate in wartime rhetoric, many of his counterparts in other denominations were forced into the conflict.

Anglican Clergy

As revolution became a more present reality, the priests of the Anglican Church in New Jersey were forced into the conflict. While their more Protestant counterparts were able to make determinations based on need of individual congregations often with the benefit of relative seclusion, the people of New Jersey were watching the Anglican churches. Most expected the leaders to support the Crown, as they were the representatives in America of the state religion. Radicals ensured that they were paying the proper attention to the Anglican priests, in order to curb the influence of those who were outwardly Loyalist. While the Protestant ministers were able to make the decision on whether to participate, there was significant public pressure on these ministers as individuals. This was amplified by internal expectations of their congregations, which were often split ideologically.⁵⁶⁶ As a result, the majority were required to change their political affairs in order to meet the needs of their constituents.⁵⁶⁷ Across the colonies and in New Jersey, Anglican clergy were faced with the decision of whether to continue with

⁵⁶⁶ Nancy Rhoden, *The Revolutionary Anglicanism: The Colonial Church of England Clergy during the American Revolution* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 88.

⁵⁶⁷ Rhoden, 88

their ministries, alter practice, or cease the services whose liturgies called for obedience and blessings to the Crown.⁵⁶⁸ Anglican pastors who chose to support either the Patriot or Loyalist side were often forced to withdraw from their roles in public out of fear of retaliation by the opposing side.⁵⁶⁹

While most Anglican clergy in the South identified with the Patriot camp, those in New Jersey were typically Loyalist.⁵⁷⁰ The southern colonies had much higher proportions of the population affiliating with the Anglican Church, as the colonies had been established as extensions of the state or by proprietors who were part of the Anglican ruling class. These Anglican concentrations were responsible for the first representative governments in the colonies but did not practice the levels of tolerance that were found in the middle states. Naturally, therefore, the southern Patriots would be Anglican-affiliated. The pluralistic religious environment in New Jersey ensured that there was not one controlling religious authority. As such, people who were aligned the most closely to the principles of freedom found in the Great Awakening would be members of the collection of Protestant denominations. Of the eleven Anglican clergy in New Jersey during the revolutionary period, seven were Loyalist, one aligned himself with the Patriot cause, and three attempted neutrality.⁵⁷¹ Practicing neutrality could often be as perilous as identifying with one particular side. Four of the eleven practicing Anglican clergy were forced into exile outside of the colonies, while others placed themselves into a de facto state of the same by altering the liturgy and their practices, while quietly and often confidentially supporting a particular side. Upon the conclusion

⁵⁶⁸ Rhoden, 88

⁵⁶⁹ Rhoden, 88

⁵⁷⁰ Rhoden, 88

⁵⁷¹ Rhoden, 89

of the war, the churches of Abraham Beach, Samuel Cooke, Uzal Ogden, and William Frazer opened their doors after a period of closure, omitting pieces of the liturgy in a bid for survival of the denomination.⁵⁷² The Anglican clergy were forced during the revolution to make decisions regarding their actions which would have permanent effects on the status of them as individuals and on their churches.

The Reverend Uzal Ogden

The story of Sussex County clergyman Uzal Ogden is representative of the stories of many of his contemporaries who were forced to alter their practice in order to meet the demands of the revolutionary period. During the earlier analysis in chapters four and five of actions of Anglican clergy during the revolutionary period, it became clear that several of these men dissented from the expectations and precedents set for them. This created difficulties with the church authorities and in their places of residence. As republican ideas spread throughout the northern part of the colony, Ogden continued to engage in his religious mission. He observed:

Besides officiating at the several places above mentioned I have had and compiled with diverse invitations to read prayers and a sermon of week days in some of the meeting houses and dwellings of the Dissenters; who, of every denomination attend Church in great numbers on Sunday, and behave very decently [as] many of them had never seen our public worship performed until I came into the county and were not a little prejudiced against the Church of England; conceiving we were but little different from the Papists, but prejudice wears off remarkably, and several of the most bigotted [sic] of them are not only become constant attendants

⁵⁷² Rhoden, 113-4

of our public worship but subscribe something toward or public buildings and to my salary.⁵⁷³

Ogden's observations suggest the importance of religion for the republicans. Since Sussex County was not very populated, there were few established churches. Thus, they embraced an Anglican clergyman to meet their spiritual needs. The tense nature of the revolutionary period, however, made this arrangement less possible.

Ogden first left New Jersey in order to find a more comfortable environment in New York.⁵⁷⁴ During the revolutionary period, the religious doctrine and liturgy were determined and distributed by ecclesiastical authorities of the Anglican Communion in England. The Anglican clergy were obligated to follow and present the liturgy as it was written, which was part of building the common experience and community of the increasingly global denomination. This liturgy included "prayers for the King, the Royal Family, and the High Court of Parliament."⁵⁷⁵ When the divisive revolution became a significant influence on New Jersey, some Anglican ministers simply closed their churches in order to avoid leading a liturgy that would have alienated a portion of their followers.⁵⁷⁶ The Reverend Jonathan Odell observed that

" . . . I find that many of the Clergy in Pennsylvania and every one in New Jersey (Mr. Blackwell only excepted) have thought it their indispensable duty in this perplexing situation to suspend our public Ministrations rather than make any alteration in the established Liturgy. At the same time, we

⁵⁷³ Uzal Ogden, "Letter from Rev. Uzal Ogden, missionary to Sussex County, NJ, to Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel," July 8, 1771.

⁵⁷⁴ Lundin, 103

⁵⁷⁵ Lundin, 103

⁵⁷⁶ Lundin, 103

were persuaded that in every other respect to pursue a conduct inoffensive if possible even in the eye of our Enemies. . . .”⁵⁷⁷

The act of altering the liturgy would be seen not only as a major problem within the church government but also a strike against state, as the two were intimately connected. Each minister was forced to make a potentially life-altering judgment about his role in the church and community.

Upon his return to New Jersey near the end of the revolution, Ogden chose to focus on preaching and tending to his responsibilities as a minister to his parish. In doing so, he determined that he would not preside over the liturgy.⁵⁷⁸ Changing the contents of this sacred ritual would have been seen as more of an issue. The contemporaries of the good reverend continued to consider him to be a “strictly loyal” Anglican and Englishman.⁵⁷⁹ It is apparent, therefore, that fellow ministers and political leaders were unaware of his correspondence to George Washington in 1779 that was composed in in “respectful and admiring” tone, and offered the general his best wishes for American victory.⁵⁸⁰ Ogden was not an example of an outspoken minister who loudly and noticeably preached the cause of liberty from the pulpit. While his beliefs were quite private, his actions demonstrate the democratization of religion and politics that were so evident at this time. He quietly protested by choosing not to preside over the liturgy of the established authorities. This action prevented parishioners from reciting prayers for the monarch and other government structures that had been oppressing the Americans.

⁵⁷⁷ As qtd. In George Hills, *History of the Church in Burlington* (Trenton, New Jersey: William S. Sharp, 1876), 317.

⁵⁷⁸ Lundin, 103

⁵⁷⁹ Lundin, 103

⁵⁸⁰ Lundin, 103

The link between those churchgoers and the government was broken, despite the fact that most would not notice or appreciate that change. His more overt action of writing to Washington demonstrates a clear political motive for his actions and his desire for an independent America. Like some of his Presbyterian counterparts, the actions of Ogden were somewhat (at times mercifully) eclipsed by influential Anglicans like Thomas Chandler.

The Reverend Thomas Chandler

While some of the Anglican pastors chose to either modify the liturgy or show some support for the revolution, they were certainly in the minority. The Church of England was the established, official religious authority in not only England but also the colonies. Anglican leaders in New Jersey most often took no position in order to decrease the risk of alienating a group of parishioners which subscribed to one of the competing schools of thought. Others, like The Reverend Thomas Chandler, rector of Saint John's Episcopal Church, located down the street from the more radical Presbyterian Church in Elizabeth Town, used his pulpit to show and build support for the King. He vehemently spoke against the revolution, which certainly created an awkward situation with his church neighbor.⁵⁸¹ The rift between Chandler and Caldwell was manifested in the tense relationship between their parishioners in town.⁵⁸² Chandler expanded his efforts to the written word so that his work would have a wider influence. He published *The Friendly Address to All Reasonable Americans* in order to make the case against separation from

⁵⁸¹ Brydon, 26

⁵⁸² Brydon, 26

Britain.⁵⁸³ He went so far as to refer to revolutionaries as “ignorant and diluted Americans” and to the leadership of the Continental Congress as the “madmen of New-England.”⁵⁸⁴ Chandler warned that Americans were advocating for an unwinnable war that would only result in devastation to the colonies.

The evident separation between those following Chandler and the audiences of Caldwell became representative of the greater political issues of the time; however, Elizabeth Town became a predominantly revolutionary environment.⁵⁸⁵ While Caldwell is revered in American revolutionary history, his clergy counterpart was not nearly as enamored of him. However, Chandler provided an important description of him:

“The Dissenting Teacher of this place is a man of some parts and of a popular address and has the appearance of great Zeal and Piety. He preaches frequently thrice on Sundays, besides praying and exhorting from house to house. He gives an evening lecture every Thursday in the Meeting-house; many of my people of course fall in with his Evening lectures, and it is natural to suppose that some of them are captivated with the appearance of so much Zeal and Piety. At the same time the Dissenters almost to a man are watching every opportunity to promote the cause . . .”⁵⁸⁶

This description provides great insight into the period. It signifies that Chandler and others were opposed to the methods of organization that Caldwell used to build support in this congregation, and thus they would not use the same one-on-one techniques in order to build support for the king. It is apparent that the Episcopalians assumed and demanded that Americans would sustain allegiance to the king; thus, such efforts were unnecessary, as they were the established authority. The burden was on the revolutionaries to change

⁵⁸³ Rohrer, 132

⁵⁸⁴ Rohrer, 132

⁵⁸⁵ Brydon, 26

⁵⁸⁶ Brydon, 26

the political leanings of the people. The observations also suggest that Chandler was aware of the efficacy of such methods. Chandler resented Caldwell but seemed to have some respect for the power of his efforts. The Anglican noted that many of his parishioners attended lectures by Caldwell, which one can infer were replete with references to natural laws and revolution. The fact that Anglican members visited the Presbyterian Church shows that the minds of the public could be changed. The people were looking for leadership and a philosophy to which they could subscribe that would meet their spiritual, political, and individual needs. The Reverend Chandler was as much an influence on the revolution by not meeting the needs of an increasingly engaged population as Caldwell was by engaging the people. Chandler maintained his Loyalism during the conflict, demonstrating the importance of state religion in attempting to maintain order and consistency during times of difficulty for the government and conservatism.

Protestant clergy in America claimed the revolution was a righteous war that was designed to grant freedom to individuals. In their minds, the revolution required and would secure the morality of the nation with a common language and collection of values. Chandler similarly addressed the connection between religion and the effectiveness of government; however, he concluded that Anglicanism and the monarchy were mutually dependent establishments that required support. In his *Appeal to the Public*, Chandler argued that Anglican Church would be unable to maintain a presence in America if it were to become a republic.⁵⁸⁷ Chandler observed:

⁵⁸⁷ Rohrer, 147

“Episcopacy and Monarchy are, in their Frame and Constitution, best suited to each other. Episcopacy can never thrive in a Republican Government, nor Republican Principles in an Episcopal Church. King and church are mutually adapted to each other so that they are mutually introductive of each other. He that prefers Monarchy in the State, is more likely to approve of Episcopacy in the Church, than a rigid Republican. . . . It is not then to be wondered, if our Civil Rulers have always considered Episcopacy as the surest Friend of Monarchy; and it may reasonably be expected from those in Authority, that they will support and assist the Church in America, if from no other Motives, yet from a Regard to the State, with which it has so friendly and close an Alliance.”⁵⁸⁸

Chandler was certainly proven wrong, as the Episcopal Church maintained its strength in America under the new republic. However, one must consider the writings of Chandler to be just as much a defense of the monarchy as they are of the Anglican Church.

Chandler’s contempt for republicanism was evident during his period and must be considered as context for his writing. He was similarly adept at using the defense of the monarchy as a way to manipulate the fear experienced by individuals in power to gain support for the continued existence of his church in America. Chandler recognized the power of the connection of religion and politics. Chandler was driven by both tradition and circumstance to write pieces that explored control of religious functions, state, and the people. Each time Chandler published such an argument, it helped to fuel the rationalizations of republicans who saw the state church as another instrument that was conducive only to the abuse of power. In the decade before the revolution, this helped to fulfill the prophecy made by Whigs that the British authorities would use all tools of power to exercise additional control in the coming years.⁵⁸⁹ The subsequent words of the

⁵⁸⁸ As qtd. In Rohrer, 147

⁵⁸⁹ Rohrer, 137

radicals in response to these attempts served as evidence to Chandler that he needed to strengthen and solidify the power of the church.

The Reverend Chandler appreciated the need for the expansion of structure and authority in the colonies, and he worked to organize the American Anglican Church in a manner that would ensure its preservation in an increasingly religiously pluralistic society. Chandler recognized that the lack of a bishop of the Church of England in the mid-Atlantic created problems for the stability and expansion of the denomination in the New World.⁵⁹⁰ He advocated for the creation of a local diocese that could control and unite the region.⁵⁹¹ In the mind of Mr. Chandler, the lack of such an accommodation ensured that “the Clergy are independent of each other, and have not Ecclesiastical Superiors to unite or control them.”⁵⁹² The priest in Elizabeth Town recognized not only the issues internally to his denomination but also the consequences of pluralism. The decentralization of religious authority was both a deliberate trend and a consequence of the variety of denominations that existed in the colony. Chandler was not only recognizing the lack of control internally but also appreciated that the faithful would have choice with respect to their church. This threatened the membership base of the church, as well as the political power, influence, and authority of the state-connected religion in the colony. Chandler further attempted to engineer the stability of the Anglican Church in America by ensuring that Anglican priests could be ordained in America rather than having to travel to the seat of the Church of England overseas.⁵⁹³ This would potentially be accomplished by the establishment of a diocese and appointment of a bishop to

⁵⁹⁰ Rohrer, 126

⁵⁹¹ Rohrer, 126

⁵⁹² Rohrer, 126

⁵⁹³ Rohrer, 126

administer it. His arguments were based on concerning observations that there existed a severe shortage of Anglican clergy in New Jersey. There were five priests for twenty-one congregations.⁵⁹⁴ This resulted in no official attention to, and control of, individual congregations, which placed a great deal of authority in the hands of laymen. This permitted the common philosophy to be less universally applied, as individual clergy and lay personnel to adjust the liturgy as they saw fit without facing consequences that would have been imposed by a central authority. This strong and consistent desire for the expansion of religious authority in America was interpreted as a component of the growing threat of the expansion of British authority in the colonies.

While Chandler had grand structural plans, he also worked to address individual members directly. He offered clear warnings that allowing radicalism to continue was a direct threat to the church that they held in such reverence.

The stakes were especially high for American members of the Church of England, according to Chandler. Those who backed the “fanatics” from New England were putting “power into the hands of those who will use it against you. . . . Their inveterate enmity to the Church of England, has polluted the annals of British history. Their intolerance in England, towards the members of the Church, when the sovereign power was usurped by them, is recorded in characters of blood; and the same spirit was dreadfully triumphant in New England.” The descendants of New England’s founders “are the very persons that will govern you, if the projected revolution should take place. As they have now broke loose from the authority of Parliament, which for some time past restrained them from mischief, they begin to appear in their natural colours. They have already resumed the old work of persecuting the Church of England, by every method in their power.”⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹⁴ Rohrer, 126

⁵⁹⁵ Rohrer, 148-9

Chandler expertly invoked the fear of a resurgence of Puritan control and oppression of the state church. He did his best to concern readers with the resurrection of Cromwell-like rule in America. Despite the significant decrease in traditional Puritan or Congregational power in New England, any threat against one's denomination and free exercise thereof was a significant concern, regardless of the tangibility of it. It is very interesting that Chandler employed an argument for religious liberty when he made his case for resistance to republicanism. He saw liberty as best preserved by the king: "Of all the subjects of Great-Britain, those who reside in the American Colonies have been . . . by far the happiest: surrounded with the blessings of peace, health, and never-failing plenty—enjoying the benefits of an equitable and free constitution—secured by the protection and patronage of the greatest maritime power in the world."⁵⁹⁶ Despite a clear difference in worldview, Chandler was effectively mirroring the strategies of radical ministers in favor of independence in order to gain the attention of his audience. This demonstrates that regardless of one's side in the conflict, individuals recognized that religion and morality were at stake. While pluralism empowered the fight for religious and political liberty for revolutionaries, the lack of one controlling religion threatened the power and survival of the Anglican Church.

Chandler presented well-reasoned arguments that effectively communicated the opinions and concerns of the Loyalist minority in America. However, while it is generally estimated that 20% of Americans were confirmed Tories, about 40% of the adult population had not aligned themselves with a side on the eve of the revolution. The persuasive power that Chandler demonstrated made him a threat to the cause of liberty.

⁵⁹⁶ As qtd. In Rohrer, 149

Upon the establishment of the Continental Congress, a body that Chandler considered to be illegal and treasonous, the pastor did not confine himself to the purely philosophical argument. He outwardly challenged the body, arguing that they

have altogether neglected the work they were sent upon; that the powers delegated to them by their constituents, for the good of the colonies, were prostituted to the purposes of private ambition; and that all their proceedings as far as we can judge, were instigated and directed by New-England republicans, to the utmost confusion of the Colonies, the disgrace of their constituents, and their own infamy.⁵⁹⁷

Chandler addressed the points that were popular with the Crown in his attempts to convince New Jersey residents and the greater colonial population that the revolution was an extremist plot for self-advancement. He expertly used the term “New England republicans,” in his mind the Puritans and Congregationalists who had already struck against the government and church, to alienate the leaders from the remainder of the colonial population. His reference to such individuals exposes this as not a purely political statement but one based on religious undertones. These words were in addition to claims that Congress was tyrannical, disorganized, and destructive.⁵⁹⁸ Ultimately, Chandler argued, the Continental Congress would constrict the liberty of the people.⁵⁹⁹ These arguments made Chandler a threat to the independence movement and a target for radicals. The revolutionaries recognized that he had enough power and authority to make him dangerous. He employed some of the same communication genius that the revolutionaries used to expand their cause.

⁵⁹⁷ Rohrer, 168

⁵⁹⁸ Rohrer, 168

⁵⁹⁹ Rohrer, 168

Elizabeth Town became a microcosm of the greater American separation, as it was home to an unwavering traditionalist and was populated by some of the great American radicals like his rival James Caldwell. In “1774, when the Elizabeth Town Association authorized the burning of Chandler’s *Friendly Address to all Reasonable Americans*, declaring that the tract was a threat to American liberties,” the identification of Chandler as an enemy to liberty became public and official.⁶⁰⁰ The act of burning the text by Chandler was more than symbolic when it was executed in the very municipality in which he lived. As the prospects of revolution became greater, the pastor faced more significant threats, potentially to his life.⁶⁰¹

Organizations like the Sons of Liberty regarded Chandler’s efforts as repugnant to the republican movement. The threats and reaction to Chandler reveal that he was regarded as having power and influence over the population in Elizabeth Town and on an intercolonial scale. Chandler’s desire to maintain the structures that were, in his mind, so important to Episcopal presence in America resulted in backlash. He was able to influence other Episcopalians, and he gave reasoned arguments for resistance to rebellion. His statements regarding Anglicanism could have been very influential in predominantly Episcopal colonies like Virginia. Chandler was exercising a freedom of speech that he did not regard as absolute and was being restrained in this effort by radicals who preached it as a virtue. Eventually, Chandler lost influence when he was forced to flee to New York City and later London.⁶⁰² He recorded in his diary that “Having been often threatened by the *Sons of Liberty*, for having been supposed to have

⁶⁰⁰ Rohrer, 169

⁶⁰¹ Rohrer, 169

⁶⁰² Rohrer, 169-70

written on the Side of Government and having received Intimations from my Friends that I was in much personal Danger, I went to New-York.”⁶⁰³ Chandler left in May of 1775, well before New Jersey was formally engaged in the war; however, he noted that the danger would only increase. Chandler noted that he “found every Thing in the utmost Confusion, and the Friends of Government under the severest Persecution.”⁶⁰⁴ The tactics that the radicals employed in New Jersey proved to be successful in intimidating and removing some of the leaders of the opposition. However, one would reasonably argue that some of the virtue of the revolutionaries was lost when they engaged in intimidation strategies that reflected those which the British had employed. This concern did not prevent the radicals from targeting the most influential enemies.

The Reverend Dr. Jonathan Odell

Thomas Chandler was regarded as the standard-bearer for the Loyalist cause in New Jersey and was thus perceived as a significant threat to the Patriot cause. However, he was joined in his efforts by Anglican priests who regarded it as their duty to serve God, King, and Country by maintaining the status quo. The ministers regarded and communicated these efforts as maintaining peace rather than specifically putting down rebellion.⁶⁰⁵ The Reverend Dr. Jonathan Odell of St. Mary’s Episcopal Church in Burlington joined the Anglican Tory effort.⁶⁰⁶ Upon learning of the combat at Lexington

⁶⁰³ Thomas Bradbury Chandler, “Flight into Exile,” May 15, 1775, in Gerlach, *New Jersey in the American Revolution: A Documentary History*, 237.

⁶⁰⁴ Thomas Bradbury Chandler, “Flight into Exile,” May 15, 1775, in Gerlach, *New Jersey in the American Revolution: A Documentary History*, 237.

⁶⁰⁵ Hills, 307

⁶⁰⁶ Hills, 307

and Concord, Odell wrote to the Secretary of the Anglican Communion that “The Society will doubtless, expect from their Missionaries at this important & melancholy crisis every effort of prudent zeal in the discharge of their duty, as Ministers of the Church, always bound to promote as far as in them lies, a spirit of peace and good order among the Members of their Communion.”⁶⁰⁷ Odell represented the feeling of most Anglican clergy in America that they must continue promoting the Church of England despite the rebellion.

The duty of which Odell wrote was to support both the denomination and the government. Odell referenced the concept of peace, which was certainly a universal desire. Despite their belligerent actions, the revolutionaries were seeking a new peace that would be created by self-government. Odell wished to *maintain* peace, which he regarded as the continuation of the status quo. This is supported by his desire for “good order,” a reference to the continuation of colonial policies and control by British authorities. The writings by Odell suggest that he was not convinced that his counterparts in England were aware of the extent of the rebellion and unrest in America that was threatening the Anglican hegemony in the colonies.⁶⁰⁸ He strenuously requested that the hierarchy in London support the embattled clergy in America.⁶⁰⁹ Before that would happen, however, the leadership would have to believe that the rebellion was growing to be more extensive, rather than the small-scale annoyance that was publicized in many places in Britain. While many Whig ministers wrote to or participated in the new provincial governments in order to ensure the execution of the political ends that would be most righteous, Odell

⁶⁰⁷ As qtd. In Hills 307-8

⁶⁰⁸ Hills, 308

⁶⁰⁹ Hills, 308

requested such support for the health and continued existence of the Empire, when he wrote on behalf of the Anglican clergy in the middle colonies:

“We think it of the utmost importance to the general good of the British Empire, that these matters should be thus truly stated and we most ardently pray than in these perplexing & alarming troubles, we may by prudence & integrity of conduct contribute our mite towards obtaining a recovery and securing the future permanency of that harmony & peace upon just and practicable grounds, which is essential to the happiness & glory of the whole Empire.”⁶¹⁰

On the surface, it appears that Odell was advocating for the health of his mother country. However, his objectives may have been more personal. As a Loyalist minister of the state religion, there was potential that Odell would lose land and power in the event that the Americans were successful. He would potentially be a target during the war for revolutionaries who wished to strike against any representatives of state authorities.

The fears that Odell had reason to possess were validated when revolutionary bodies began to monitor his activities. Odell, who graduated from what evolved into the radical bastion of the College of New Jersey, quickly became a target of revolutionary forces due to their fear of his power and influence.⁶¹¹ Odell had served as missionary for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in West Jersey and was recognized as a prominent physician.⁶¹² He thus had a great deal of influence spread over a large geographic area, which was a threat to the revolutionary cause. Shortly after he penned his letter to the Secretary of the Anglican Communion, other pieces of his correspondence were seized by the Committee of Inspection and Observation when they

⁶¹⁰ As qtd. In Hills, 308

⁶¹¹ Gerlach, *New Jersey in the American Revolution: A Documentary History*, 243

⁶¹² Gerlach, *New Jersey in the American Revolution: A Documentary History*, 243

arrested a gentleman who was attempting to leave England with the documents.⁶¹³ One letter was addressed to Thomas Chandler, the Elizabeth Town minister who was forced to flee the state for England, and the other to a private recipient.⁶¹⁴ Odell's communication with Chandler resulted in him being regarded as more of an enemy to the cause of liberty. Odell was ordered arrested, and his case was brought before the New Jersey Provincial Congress for adjudication.⁶¹⁵ The goal of the Committee and Congress was to mitigate any threats against what they referred to as "measures of defence" which were engaged in through their authority.⁶¹⁶

Despite the ill will that its members felt for the Reverend Dr. Odell, Congress granted him the right and courtesy of parole while they determined how to proceed with his case.⁶¹⁷ This reflected due process, one of the concepts for which the revolutionaries fought. Public record indicates that Congress eventually determined that while Odell advocated against the Patriot cause, the letters that he had written expressed only private, individual sentiment. The body determined that since the words were not constructed or distributed in such a manner that organized others against the cause of liberty, Odell did not need to be sanctioned by the body.⁶¹⁸ The New Jersey Congress granted Odell a certain level of free speech. While the right was afforded to Odell in a very cautious manner, it suggested that the new American republic would attempt to be fair in its approach and would allow nonviolent political dissent from the public.

⁶¹³ Hills, 308

⁶¹⁴ Hills, 308

⁶¹⁵ Hills, 308-9

⁶¹⁶ Hills, 309

⁶¹⁷ Hills, 309

⁶¹⁸ Hills, 309

Odell continued to modestly exercise his right to speak in defense of the crown. Loyalists followed his commentary in favor of peace and the Crown. In a song that the Reverend Odell composed in celebration of the birthday of King George III, his sentiment about the Loyalist side as the virtuous side of the conflict was apparent, when he describe the mission and honors of the Loyalist, who in this stanza identified with the term “Protestants.”⁶¹⁹

. . . A truce then to all whig and tory debate;
True lovers of Freedom, contention we hate;
For the Demon of discord in vain tries his art
To inflame or possess a true *Protestant* heart.

True Protestant friends to fair Liberty’s cause,
To decorum, good order, religion, and laws,
From avarice, jealousy, perfidy, free. . . .
We wish all the world were as happy as we. . . .⁶²⁰

Odell characterized the Anglican Tories as the individuals who would best provide and protect the freedoms of all inhabiting the country. Despite the lack of penalty in the letter seizure case, Odell was still treated to an inquisition at the hands of the provincial government, and he would therefore consider it to be less respectful of his rights than the established British government in the colonies. Odell synthesized the concepts of decorum, good order, religion, and laws, further demonstrating the common understanding of the connection among these areas at the time. Odell argued that the revolution was the worst approach to trying to achieve the British political goals of pre-war America. He characterized the rebels as jealous, presumably of the power that the royal governors and Crown authorities had possessed and of the virtuous and fulfilled

⁶¹⁹ Hills, 310

⁶²⁰ Hills, 310

lives that the Anglicans experienced. In the closing of the song that he distributed to Loyalist officers and leaders, Odell expressed his confidence that the British Empire would easily survive this interruption.⁶²¹

Like Thomas Chandler, Odell ensured that there existed Loyalist propaganda in order to counteract the influences of prolific Patriot writings. Odell recognized that as an Anglican minister, he was an agent of the church and, by extension, of the government. It was incumbent upon him to defend the monarchy and British traditions. Shortly after Odell published the commemorative song, the Americans rescinded the parole that they had granted him, as they viewed him as a more significant threat due to the wider audience of the most recent writing.⁶²² The County Committee restricted his movements to a specific area around Burlington, effectively placing him on house arrest.⁶²³ Odell would have regarded this as a major threat to his life and liberty, as any attempt to escape the provincial authority would have made him more of a criminal in their eyes. Eventually, the Reverend made an arrangement with the authorities to cease all communication regarding the war in exchange for his movements not being restricted.⁶²⁴ This would have allowed him more options if the war did not occur in the manner that he had anticipated. It is evident that the committee had both suspicion of and respect for Odell, as they were willing to demonstrate comparative leniency in his case. He certainly was not hunted like his revolutionary counterparts were by Loyalist forces. The

⁶²¹ Hills, 312

⁶²² Hills, 312

⁶²³ Hills, 312

⁶²⁴ Hills, 312

Americans may have calculated their interactions with Odell as a demonstration that they could practice fairness and moderation as they asserted their ability to govern themselves.

Odell later wrote to the Secretary of the Anglican Society that while he was not attempting to interfere with the war, he was unwilling to sacrifice his “principles or duty.”⁶²⁵ He argued that his conduct “in our situation was not only necessary but at the same time becoming the characters of Clergymen and especially of Missionaries and therefore would be approved by the society.”⁶²⁶ His dedication to this mission appeared to be an overt act of dissent to the local revolutionary leaders. Odell acted in a manner that was congruent with the more radical clergy. This caused him to remain a leader in Burlington during the war.⁶²⁷ He was instrumental in working with Hessian troops to protect the town from destruction due to combat.⁶²⁸ When the Hessian defenses were inadequate, the Reverend Odell attempted to use his ecclesiastical connections in order to garner more regular army troops to protect Burlington.⁶²⁹ He continued his mission to serve the people despite the odds that he faced, and he demonstrated the willingness of Tory ministers to subject themselves to scrutiny of the revolutionaries in order to do so. Eventually, Odell served a short stint as an army deputy chaplain when he was unable to otherwise preach.⁶³⁰ While asking for permanent funding from the Anglican Committee, Odell observed that the vestry of Burlington Church expressed their desire to pay him despite the fact that he was not able to perform his duties as minister due to his

⁶²⁵ Hills, 314

⁶²⁶ As qtd. In Hills, 314

⁶²⁷ Hills, 315

⁶²⁸ Hills, 315

⁶²⁹ Hills, 315

⁶³⁰ Hills, 318

absence.⁶³¹ The organized Anglican governance structures demonstrated a level of commitment comparable to that of their more radical counterparts.

Final Analysis of Ministers in the Revolutionary Period

While ministers were often prolific in their support for the Patriot cause, it must be understood that they were not successful in shepherding all of their congregants in this direction. In many cases, less than half of many Presbyterian congregations could have been classified as radical, despite this denomination being the most libertarian of the period.⁶³² Despite what would appear to be a low rate of success, the impact of the Patriot ministers is clear. They were able to communicate virtue, establish common values, educate the public on political affairs, advocate for stronger governments, provide logistical support, and maintain stability in a difficult environment. The ministers were highly successful in espousing the shared values of the religion and politics. They embodied the convergence of the Enlightenment and Great Awakening by furthering the common goals. They were the educated leaders of government and men. It is impossible to know how many fewer New Jersey residents would have joined the revolutionary cause without the influence of the clergy in the state. Certainly, some individuals had a predisposition to radicalism without the necessity of clergy support. However, pastors provided the framework for the revolution being a righteous cause that was deserving of individual sacrifice. In a war such as this, the polarity in the country was significant. While they did preach the Gospel, one could not expect pastors at the time to work actual

⁶³¹ Hills, 318

⁶³² Tiedemann, 316-317

miracles. The Patriot ministers began to develop common narratives with respect to the need for curtailing sin and appeasing God through efforts of humiliation, fasting, and prayer. Once this narrative developed, a common culture of revolutionaries emerged.

The Anglican ministers enjoyed some success, but were not as transformative as their Calvinist counterparts. Thomas Bradbury Chandler and Jonathan Odell were as committed to the maintenance of Crown authority in the colonies as the revolutionaries were to independence. The most significant difference was that while they argued that the Crown would provide liberty and peace, their religious and political ideals were not aligned to the changing landscape of political and religious revivals. The ability of the Anglican clergy to mobilize some of their members and provide limited logistical support to the Loyalist forces underscores the importance of clergy and religious structures during the period. Their efforts help to illustrate why the republican forces were so successful. In the wartime environment, the efforts of the clergy were not confined to organization and logistical support. Ministers from both sides of the conflict traded robes for uniforms in their new roles as chaplains.

Chapter 7

Rebels in Robes: Chaplaincy in the American Revolution

The wartime chaplaincy was a tradition that was well established in English military custom. Chaplains were important not only as mechanisms by which to help soldiers and sailors to maintain the morality and religious faith during times of crisis but also for validating the virtue of the war; comforting the sick, injured, and dying; maintaining discipline; and serving as representatives of the powerful state religion.⁶³³ The appointment of chaplains became standard practice and was deemed necessary in order to have a complete unit.⁶³⁴ The American revolutionaries mimicked many of the traditions of the English government, as most people called not for a radical rejection of English customs but for a separation on the grounds of a desire for equality and self-government. The chaplaincy became a significant component of the organization of the Continental Army and militias. At the beginning of the conflict, chaplains simply volunteered to join militia and regular army on an ad-hoc basis, and they were not being compensated or officially assigned into the greater military scheme.⁶³⁵ These officers would have to pay for their own supplies and food.⁶³⁶ Originally, a regimental commander would appoint chaplains as he saw fit, with the advice and consent of his officers.⁶³⁷ The government later established the chaplain position through legislation.⁶³⁸

⁶³³ Headley, 57

⁶³⁴ Headley, 57

⁶³⁵ Headley, 60

⁶³⁶ Jamison, 107

⁶³⁷ Jamison, 107

⁶³⁸ Headley, 61

The government recognized the need for chaplains not only in combat units but also in hospitals.⁶³⁹ Washington wrote to Congress on December 31, 1775, in an effort to recruit and retain talented and educated members for this purpose:

I have long had it in my mind to mention it to Congress, that frequent applications have been made to me respecting the chaplains' pay, which is too small to encourage men of abilities. Some of them who have left their flocks are obliged to pay the parson acting for them more than they receive. I need not point out the great utility of gentlemen, whose lives and conversation and unexceptionable, being employed in that service in this army. There are two ways of making it worthy the attention of such. One is an advancement of their pay; the other, that one chaplain be appointed to two regiments. This last, I think can be done without inconvenience. I beg leave to recommend this matter to Congress, whose sentiments heron I shall impatiently expect.⁶⁴⁰

Washington demonstrated in his communication to Congress his belief that the chaplains would play significant roles in the regiments. He believed this so much so that he sought the most skillful ministers for his Army. It is apparent that chaplains held not ancillary or honorary positions but roles that were fundamental to the effective operation of the military units. It is telling that Washington specifically incorporated the word “gentlemen” into this correspondence. The colonies were quite consistently based on class structures. The educated gentlemen were seen as positive influences on the lower classes, and as religious leaders, they helped to instill morality, discipline, and social control. This was apparently the case to such an extent that chaplains who served would have to find and compensate their own replacements so as to not deprive their parishioners of religious guidance and leadership during their absences. Washington

⁶³⁹ Jamison, 107

⁶⁴⁰ Headley, 62-3

added a calculated sense of urgency to his request with his last sentence, solidifying his beliefs with respect to the importance of chaplains in the armed forces.

The men who served in the chaplaincy made the independent decision to join the conflict and were often, but not always, political liberals in addition to religious leaders. The official number of chaplains who served New Jersey is difficult to establish, as some aided the militia, some were appointed to hospitals, a few ministered only for one or two battles near their homes, and others were officers in New Jersey regiments that fought only outside of the state. Laypersons filled the void when trained clergy were not available to be the chaplain of a unit. The military would not have kept records of these efforts. Wallace Jamison argues that there were forty-seven chaplains who served New Jersey, but there is not an exhaustive individual listing to support this assertion.⁶⁴¹ As such, the following constitutes a discussion of the identified chaplains for whom there exist records and accounts of service.

Pastors throughout New Jersey struggled with the decision of whether to support a growing revolutionary cause from the pulpit. Some ministers elected to more directly participate in the revolutionary cause through serving as chaplains in the New Jersey Militia and Continental Army. Some, either by choice or in self-defense, became de facto combat troops. These religious leaders recognized the necessity of ministering to their parishioners who had taken up arms and found themselves separated from the communities from which they learned their identities as Christians, “New Jerseyans,” and Americans. The individuals who chose the chaplaincy were different from the typical

⁶⁴¹ Jamison, 107

American at the time. They were well educated, often graduates of New Jersey institutions like the College of New Jersey. Their education included more direct exposure to Enlightenment thought, which had to be, and was, successfully reconciled with religious doctrine. The chaplaincy deliberately connected religion and the revolutionary cause. The presence of these men provided a higher level of righteousness to the conflict. This does not mean that the American Revolution was necessarily a war mandated by religion, as extension would then allow any modern conflict with chaplain-officers serving in the military to be assigned the same quality. In the case of the American Revolution, the chaplaincy is distinct, as it is an extension of the work in which the pastors had already engaged in support of American liberty. In the following profiles and analysis of the chaplains, it is vital to identify their personal background, denominational persuasion, reasons for participating in the conflict, and connection to revolutionary politics.

Presbyterian Clergy

The Reverend Philip Vickers Fithian

The Reverend Philip Vickers Fithian was as accustomed to radicalism as Andrew Hunter, having been born and raised near Greenwich.⁶⁴² His evangelism, marriage, and pastoral responsibilities failed to restrain his political radicalism. His College of New Jersey education in the 1770s introduced him to the relationship between political and religious liberty.⁶⁴³ Fithian is credited with being one of the key instigators of the

⁶⁴² Brace, 3

⁶⁴³ Crowder, 69

Greenwich Tea Burning.⁶⁴⁴ While he was a theological student at the time of the Burning, he became a leader in the chaplaincy and later traveled with the New Jersey militia to New York.⁶⁴⁵ Ministers earned credibility through the accreditation to preach by the governing bodies of the regional presbyteries. As a minister who had such accreditation, Fithian would have had greater influence than other figures. His presence at the Tea Burning validated the cause of protest and eventual liberty. Fithian was keenly aware at the time of how untraditional, uncomfortable, and thus radical the destruction of the tea was:

Last night the Tea was, by a number of persons in disguise taken out of the House and consumed with fire. Violent, & different are the words about this uncommon Maneuver, among the Inhabitants – some rave, some curse & condemn, some try to reason, many are glad the Tea is destroyed, but almost all disapprove of the manner of the destruction.⁶⁴⁶

The political situation at the time was not one of uniform agreement, and thus required the intervention and influence of the most educated, skilled communicators and leaders. His awareness of the tension confirmed that Fithian was a deliberate radical who wished to make change in less traditional manners. He was at the forefront of the political movement in the important South Jersey region, which was in strategic proximity to the revolutionary city of Philadelphia, a certain target of British invasion. On November 13, 1775, Fithian, with a tone of exuberant support, described the scene in southern New Jersey:

We leave New-Jersey in a melancholy State! Battalions of Militia & Minute-Men embodying—Drums & Fife rattling—Military Language in every Mouth—Numbers who a few Days ago were plain Countrymen

⁶⁴⁴ Brace, 3

⁶⁴⁵ Thompson, 87

⁶⁴⁶ Thompson, 87

have now clothed themselves in marital Forms—Powdered Hair [&] Sharp pinched Beavers—Uniform in Dress with their Battalion—Swords on their Thighs—& stern in the Art of War—Resolved, in steady manly Firmness to support & establish American Liberty, or die in Battle!⁶⁴⁷

Fithian recorded the immediate excitement that was often lost in other regions. His presence there, however, demonstrates that an area with his leadership and those of other radicalized clergy had success in recruitment for the common cause. The respect that Fithian's contemporaries afforded him made him a human commodity in other states.

Fithian similarly distinguished himself from other New Jersey ministers by being a devoted evangelist. His civil government and synod-approved mission sent him throughout South Jersey and to colonies with geographic proximity like Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, as well as other areas of New Jersey.⁶⁴⁸ These interstate experiences increased Fithian's communication and organizing capability by creating a network of evangelists who were aligned with the Patriot cause. The commitment of groups to the revolutionary cause became a timely topic of discussion during the sessions. In his journals, Fithian recorded that there were varied responses to the call for radical assistance. He described the attitude in Newcastle County, Pennsylvania, in May of 1775 as receptive to his calls and recorded that the locals were repeating "To Arms! To Arms!" in the streets, having determined that they would levy a tax on estates in order to obtain "Arms & Ammunition for Public Use."⁶⁴⁹ The next day, he reported that he preached a sermon that focused on Chapter 3, verse 40 of the book of Lamentations: "Let us search

⁶⁴⁷ "Journals of Philip Vickers Fithian," November 13, 1775, in Gerlach, *New Jersey in the American Revolution: A Documentary History*, 163

⁶⁴⁸ Brace, 3

⁶⁴⁹ Philip Fithian, *The Journal of Philip Vickers Fithian*, Volume III, 1775-1776, Edited by Robert Greenhalgh Albion and Leonidas Dodson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1934), 3.

& try our ways & turn again to the Lord. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the Heavens.”⁶⁵⁰ Fithian preached that a connection between the American people and God would be necessary in the struggle for independence.

Fithian continued the narrative of joining with God throughout his travels. On June 29, 1775, Congress called for the first of many days of public humiliation, fasting, and prayer.⁶⁵¹ On that day, Fithian prayed:

That we may, with united Hearts & Voices unfeignedly confess & dispense our many Sins, & offer up our joint Supplication's to the all-wise, omnipotent, & merciful Dispose of all Events, humbly beseeching him to forgive our Iniquities, to remove our Calamities, to avert those desolating Judgements with which we are threatened, & to bless our rightful Sovereign King George the Third, & inspire him with Wisdom to discern the true Interest of all his Subjects, that a speedy End may be put to the “civil Discord” between great Britain & the American Colonies, without further Effusion of Blood, & that the British Nation may be influenced to regard the things that belong to her Peace, before the be hid from her Eyes that these Colonies may be ever under the Care & Protection of a Kind Providence & be prospered in all their interests . . . ⁶⁵²

During 1775, the public sentiment was often one of reconciliation rather than independence, and thus Fithian presented a prayer beseeching God to guide the King in the correct path. However, Fithian also called for God to watch over the colonies regardless of the outcome with respect to King George III. Fithian clearly appreciated the events that would likely be unfolding. Like many of his counterparts, he reminded Americans to curtail their sinning in order to gain favor during the coming months. While the time dictated that he would show deference to the king, Fithian strategically requested that

⁶⁵⁰ Philip Fithian, *The Journal of Philip Vickers Fithian*, Volume III, 4

⁶⁵¹ Philip Fithian, *The Journal of Philip Vickers Fithian*, Volume III, 41

⁶⁵² Philip Fithian, *The Journal of Philip Vickers Fithian*, Volume III, 41

. . . the divine Blessing may descend & rest upon all our civil Rulers, & upon the Representatives of the People in their several Assemblies & Conventions, that they may be directed to wise & effectual Measures for preserving the union, & securing just Rights & Privileges of the colonies; that Virtue & true Religion may revive & flourish throughout our Land & that America may soon behold a gracious Interposition of Heaven for the Redress of her many Grievances, the Restoration of her invaded Rights . . .
653

Fithian reminded his audience that the British had violated the civil rights and liberties of the colonists, and he called for them to be restored. He recognized that there were legitimate and profound grievances in this area that required the intercession of God for ultimate resolution. In the same discussion, the evangelical preacher called for the preservation and success of religious principles in the colonies. Fithian deliberately interconnected the two potentially competing forces.

The words of Fithian were both enduring and well received. Fithian recorded in his journal that he continued to perfect his sermons through days of fasting in order to ensure that they reached the audience most effectively.⁶⁵⁴ As the radical sentiment increased in intensity, Fithian was able to adapt his message to both reluctant and war-ready audiences. He was aware of the role that he could play in defending military action and recruiting individuals for the armed forces. Fithian did not simply create a show to convince the public. He was deeply affected by the war and personally sought the assistance of a higher power. This search for assistance is evident in a personal journal entry composed Virginia on February 1, 1776, when he reflected and prayed:

We received the Public Papers. Pages are filled with Threatenings of War & Blood! Weeping America! As the leaves of the Book of Fate are turning over, we find black Lines still opening to our Sight—! Every returning Packet heightens our foreboding Alarms. The Magnitude of our Calamity

⁶⁵³ Philip Fithian, *The Journal of Philip Vickers Fithian*, Volume III, 41

⁶⁵⁴ Philip Fithian, *The Journal of Philip Vickers Fithian*, Volume III, 61

is yet rapidly accumulating! Righteous heaven! We appeal to thee. Are we not an injured, oppressed People? Is our Claim unjust? If it be, by some original & visible Token make it known. We want only to be convinced we are acting unjust. And such a Conviction will lead us to Repentance.⁶⁵⁵

Fithian fully subscribed to the message that he was offering his audiences. It is evident that the minister was convinced of the righteousness of the American position, to the point that he was concerned that they were not as successful and protected by God as he wished. Fithian appreciated the increasing severity of the conflict and treated it with a growing sense of urgency and passion. His call for a sign from God is indicative that he was fully invested in preaching the cause for liberty. The pastor would not stop until God provided him with a reason to end his support of the American cause for liberty. Fithian included the possibility for repentance in his personal thoughts, which aligns with ministers like Jacob Green and John Witherspoon who believed that if the citizenry were to practice better Christianity, then the revolutionary forces would have greater attention and fortune from God, the consequence of which would be more success in the war. The private words of Fithian reflect a growing understanding of the convergence of religion and politics in the war. Ministers and political leaders were both purposefully and organically developing a common narrative.

Once the revolution was a practical reality, Fithian transitioned from his role as an evangelist of political and religious ideas to that of a regular army officer, fulfilling a new but equally vital mission. On June 20, 1776, the Reverend Fithian was commissioned as a chaplain in a New Jersey Battalion comprised of members mainly from Middlesex and Monmouth counties.⁶⁵⁶ Placing the Cumberland radical in a battalion of individuals from

⁶⁵⁵ Philip Fithian, *The Journal of Philip Vickers Fithian*, Volume III, 178

⁶⁵⁶ Brace, 3-4

some of the most Loyalist sections of New Jersey increased communication in what was a state separated by regional considerations. During the war, Fithian fulfilled the many roles of an army chaplain. He offered services to the men, being responsible for the spiritual fulfilment of three battalions, and engaged in communication and articulation with other chaplains.⁶⁵⁷ He ministered to the sick and wounded who were in the hospitals, often spending time with soldiers when death was imminent.⁶⁵⁸ Despite suffering demoralization from seeing the state of the sick and injured troops, Fithian continued with his sense of mission when he observed: “But I am not discouraged nor dispirited; I am willing to hazard and suffer equally with my Countrymen since I have a firm conviction that I am doing my duty.”⁶⁵⁹ Fithian fulfilled this duty with great honor.

When the New Jersey militia battalions were ordered to deploy to Long Island, there was fear and concern among the members of the unit.⁶⁶⁰ The likely engagement with well-supplied and trained British regular army troops was difficult for the less-trained militia volunteers to process. Fithian stepped up as a leader, marching and praying with the men in order to inspire confidence for an expected attack.⁶⁶¹ Like many of his chaplain counterparts, Fithian acted as more than a religious operative, fighting alongside the men. In his journals, Fithian observed that “I equipt myself for Action. With my Gun, Canteen, Knapsack, Blanket. . . .”⁶⁶² Chaplain Fithian was reported to have eschewed the safety of the rear echelon in order to find the more intense battles that required his

⁶⁵⁷ Thompson, 140

⁶⁵⁸ Thompson, 140

⁶⁵⁹ As qtd. In Crowder, 69

⁶⁶⁰ Thompson, 140

⁶⁶¹ Thompson 140

⁶⁶² As qtd. In Thompson, 140-141

services.⁶⁶³ Despite the miserable conditions at Fort Washington, Fithian engaged in a purposeful campaign to normalize the experience for the soldiers by offering worship.⁶⁶⁴ Fithian neither enjoyed nor philosophically accepted the nature of the war, but continued to regard it as vital to meet a greater objective. In a manner similar to that of the Reverend Jacob Green, he preached that the failures of the American forces were the consequences of their own acts that were inconsistent with the expectations set by God.⁶⁶⁵ This was a firsthand observation and his extension of the similar thought that he recorded while traveling. He memorialized his observation in writing: “We are a sinful Nation, O Lord. But is it written in thy Book concerning us that we must always fly before the Enemies? . . . We pray, good Lord for thy interposing Mercy; O spare us, & spare our Land.”⁶⁶⁶ Fithian attempted to create a narrative regarding the losses that could be reconciled with good works and adherence to religious principles.

If God were sanctioning the Americans for their sins, then the individuals and groups had the power to reverse their fate by foregoing sin. Fithian further observed an identifiable cause of the lack of victory for the Americans. The New Jersey volunteers, like those from the other states, might only serve for short periods like a month, before fleeing the theater after devastating losses.⁶⁶⁷ This demonstrated that the role of the chaplain was not only to recruit and radicalize congregations at home, as Fithian and his compatriot Andrew Hunter had, but to ensure work on retention of members of the

⁶⁶³ Thompson, 141

⁶⁶⁴ Thompson, 141

⁶⁶⁵ Thompson, 141

⁶⁶⁶ As qtd. In Thompson, 141

⁶⁶⁷ Thompson, 141-2

service. The chaplains were able to help to create environments during the fighting that did their best, though largely unsuccessfully, to replicate the conventions at home.

Fithian made the ultimate sacrifice at Fort Washington on October 9, 1776.^{668 669} He contracted dysentery, which rotted his body for a month before his death.⁶⁷⁰ The regrettable death of Fithian communicated to his comrades-in-arms that the chaplaincy was not a philosophical role, insulated from the realities of war. His long-time friend, a fellow missionary and chaplain, Andrew Hunter attended to him before his death and presided over a funeral that was attended by officers and men of the regiment.⁶⁷¹ While Fithian did not enjoy the longevity of Hunter, he made an impact on the New Jersey forces.

The Reverend Andrew Hunter

The Reverend Andrew Hunter distinguished himself as a chaplain who originated from the southern region of New Jersey. He was the son of David Hunter, a British officer.⁶⁷² The Reverend Hunter exhibited more of the qualities of his uncle and namesake, the Reverend Andrew Hunter, Sr., pastor and leader of the Greenwich Tea Burning. Future Chaplain Hunter has also been credited with being a minor leader at the Burning while he and Philip Fithian were theological students.⁶⁷³ This connection

⁶⁶⁸ Thompson, 142;

⁶⁶⁹ Note: Brace identified the date of death as November 16, 1776, and Crowder identified the date as October 8. October 9 is used in this paper, as the date was recorded Andrew Hunter, noted friend of Fithian.

⁶⁷⁰ Thompson, 142

⁶⁷¹ Thompson, 142

⁶⁷² Brace, 1

⁶⁷³ Thompson, 87

between Hunter and his radical uncle occurred as a result of the close relationship that the two developed when the junior pastor continued his studies in theology under the tutelage of the senior.⁶⁷⁴ “The young man imbibed the patriotic spirit of his uncle and soon connected himself with the army” when on June 28, 1776, he received an appointment by the New Jersey Provincial Congress to be a chaplain of three battalions.⁶⁷⁵ He served in the militia under the commands of Colonels Van Cortland, Martin, and Hunt. Hunter later received a regular commission into the Continental Army when he was appointed chaplain of the Third Battalion, Second Establishment, Continental Army on June 1, 1777, and two weeks later to General Maxwell’s Brigade. The Brigade was dispatched to the Wyoming Valley to defend the states against assaults by the Native Americans.⁶⁷⁶ In isolation, the commission does not demonstrate the dedication of Hunter to the cause of political liberty. However, Hunter cemented this connection by writing and delivering sermons to the soldiers of the battalions with the intended purpose of reminding the fighting men of their objective, and acknowledging them for their efforts. One of the most famous of these addresses was delivered on July 4, 1779.⁶⁷⁷ In his diaries, Hunter observed the horrors of war from his perspective, which included the burning of towns, plundering of resources, deaths of civilians and soldiers, attacks by Native Americans, capture of American forces, disease, and injuries.⁶⁷⁸ He recorded that he offered sermons immediately after the army and civilians suffered the greatest tragedies.⁶⁷⁹ In addition to sermons offered on sabbath and by his own initiative, Hunter reflected that he was asked

⁶⁷⁴ Brace, 2

⁶⁷⁵ Brace, 2

⁶⁷⁶ Brace, 2

⁶⁷⁷ Brace, 2

⁶⁷⁸ Crowder, 82-92

⁶⁷⁹ Crowder, 87

by commanders including General Sullivan to preach to the troops, including the Jersey Brigade.⁶⁸⁰ The deliberate use of the pulpit as a source for energizing the fighting forces suggests that there was not any internal conflict that prevented the pastor from intertwining religion, war, and politics. Both Hunter and the army commanders saw the value of his ongoing presence in the Battalion. Hunter extended his commission through the siege of Yorktown in 1781, despite having to escape after being taken prisoner.⁶⁸¹ Hunter was reportedly personally commended by Washington at the Battle of Monmouth.

After the war, Hunter became widely accepted and involved in both religious and secular spheres in the new country. He married his second wife, Mary Stockton, daughter of Richard Stockton, a New Jersey signatory of the Declaration of Independence.⁶⁸² Hunter became heavily involved in educational pursuits, serving as a director or trustee of several academic institutions, including the College of New Jersey and an academy that was founded by Major Joseph Bloomfield.⁶⁸³ In a manner unique from his counterparts, Hunter found a genuine home and role in the military service. He was selected to be one of the chief architects of the academic program at Annapolis when the Naval Academy was founded.⁶⁸⁴ On the eve of the War of 1812, he was appointed Chaplain of the Navy and stationed in the Capital.⁶⁸⁵ It is apparent that Hunter enjoyed the respect of both political and military leaders. The appreciation of current and former commanders suggests that Hunter played a pivotal role in the common cause for which all of the men fought. Had his presence not provided a benefit to the military, his commission would

⁶⁸⁰ Crowder, 87

⁶⁸¹ Brace, 2

⁶⁸² Crowder, 81

⁶⁸³ Brace, 3

⁶⁸⁴ Thompson, 143

⁶⁸⁵ Brace, 3

have been allowed to expire. Hunter is an example of a chaplain who saw military service as the extension of his pastoral mission.

The Reverend Samuel Eakin

During the revolutionary period, there was not one specific model for chaplains to follow. In many cases, the role was an extension of pastoral duties. In others, it was the natural extension of the revolutionary rhetoric which they had spread in order to gain additional support for the cause. This was certainly the case for the Reverend Samuel Eakin, a 1773 transplant from the Third Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia to Penn's Neck in Salem County. Brace suggests that "When the time came for men to declare their sentiments about the right to throw off the yoke of the British government, he was outspoken, and helped greatly to arouse the patriotic spirit of the men in Salem County."⁶⁸⁶ Like Fithian, Eakin was able to add credence to the cause of reform and revolution through his expansion of such rhetoric. He deliberately participated in training sessions and ensured that he was available to provide support during marches and deployments.⁶⁸⁷ The Reverend eventually served as an official chaplain in the New Jersey Salem County Militia.⁶⁸⁸

Eakin had the reputation of being able to "encourage the men and inspire them with his eloquent, impassioned words."⁶⁸⁹ His words, however, went beyond a traditional clerical inspiration. Brace illuminates this point: "It is related of him that he never failed

⁶⁸⁶ Brace, 4

⁶⁸⁷ Brace, 4

⁶⁸⁸ Crowder, 154

⁶⁸⁹ Brace, 4

in his public prayer to implore the Lord ‘to teach our people to fight and give them courage and perseverance to overcome their enemies.’”⁶⁹⁰ This type of request for intercession differs from the typical prayer for protection and health. The request to God that the soldiers be granted practical military skill clearly connects religion, the military, and political ends. Considering the more radical background of Eakin, these prayers were not merely offered as consequences of the situation in which the men found themselves. The prayers were natural and palpable expansions of radicalism. While there is no specific evidence that prayer had a measurable impact on specific soldiers by causing them to fight more effectively or attentively, such messages were components of an overall campaign for morale in an understaffed and undersupplied military force. A prayer like that offered by Eakin brought with it community among the men through common experience, a context for the fighting, and a sense of purpose. Prayer brought clarity to the mission at that specific time. The men were blessed in their fighting. The outward and unconditional radicalism exhibited by Eakin resulted in the necessity that he flee from potential harm targeted for him by Tory sympathizers in Salem County, which suggests just how effective he was in completing his sacred task.⁶⁹¹ His efforts caused him to gain notoriety with the enemy, which for some would constitute a badge of honor. The Tory hatred for him may be the best evidence of the importance and impact of Samuel Eakin. It was clear that he had distinguished himself from his peers and the typical New Jersey militiaman.

⁶⁹⁰ Brace, 4

⁶⁹¹ Brace, 4

The Reverend Elihu Spencer

While the first three chaplains discussed were comparatively young, youth was not necessarily a requirement for service as a military chaplain. The Reverend Elihu Spencer was fifty-five years old at the time of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.⁶⁹² This afforded him a greater level of experience than the younger pastors. Spencer had the opportunity to serve as a chaplain to the New York militia who were being deployed west for the French and Indian War.⁶⁹³ Spencer did not fulfill a traditional pastoral role when he was transferred to New Jersey. He served as an interim or supply pastor to various congregations as required. However, this flexibility did free him to return to military chaplaincy early in the conflict.⁶⁹⁴ He eventually became the pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Trenton.⁶⁹⁵ Spencer was additionally elected to serve on the Presbytery, which helped to bring his radical ideas to the mainstream church government.⁶⁹⁶ His contemporaries recognized the value of sending ordained clergy to preach in other colonies about the necessity of action in support of the cause of liberty. With the Reverend Alexander MacWhorter of the Presbyterian Church of Newark, Spencer was sent to North Carolina in order to impress upon citizens and churchgoers there the importance of concerted resistance.⁶⁹⁷ It is important to note that the pastors traveled to North Carolina in response to an invitation from the delegates of that colony to the Continental Congress.⁶⁹⁸ This distinction is vital to understanding the role of clergy

⁶⁹² Brace, 4

⁶⁹³ Brace, 5

⁶⁹⁴ Brace, 5

⁶⁹⁵ Hall, 160

⁶⁹⁶ Hall, 171

⁶⁹⁷ Brace, 5

⁶⁹⁸ Brace, 5

in mobilizing the populations in support of the revolution. The request by the North Carolina delegates for ministers to travel to their province for this purpose suggests that the leaders appreciated the impact or influence that members of the clergy could have on the citizenry. The men were dispatched to use their religious leadership for outwardly political purposes. This is evident in the resolution of the Continental Congress to fund the travel. The Journal of the Continental Congress includes this entry from December, 15, 1775: "Resolved, That orders be drawn on the Treasurer in favor of the Rev. Elihu Spencer and the Rev. Mr. Alexander McWhorter, who have undertaken to go to North Carolina, for the sum of one hundred and twenty dollars each, being three months' advance they to be accountable."⁶⁹⁹ Regardless of the efficacy of the organizing attempts, it was clear that government leaders recognized the utility of assigning pastors to such duties. While accepting the assignment was voluntary, the makings of the new American government remunerated the ministers for their particular missions. There was deliberate connection of religion and politics. The philosophical convergence was solidified with specific intent to marry the two. The Tories were as aware of the efforts of Spencer and MacWhorter, and made efforts to force the two from the South.⁷⁰⁰ Eventually, the threat became acute enough to justify the return of the ministers to New Jersey.⁷⁰¹ The Tory actions demonstrated that Spencer and MacWhorter were making progress in their efforts to organize the South for the Patriot cause.

After he returned to New Jersey, the Reverend Spencer continued in service to the Patriot cause. He was appointed hospital chaplain for the middle district and ministered to

⁶⁹⁹ Brace, 5-6

⁷⁰⁰ Crowder, 102

⁷⁰¹ Crowder, 102

the sick throughout New Jersey.^{702 703} The remuneration for this mission included rations for his horse, so that he could travel to various sites.⁷⁰⁴ The return of Spencer to New Jersey did not shield him from the deliberate actions of the British and their associates. During their occupation of Trenton, the Hessian mercenaries burned his house in retaliation for the support that they gave Patriot forces.⁷⁰⁵ As the war progressed, the chaplains experienced the losses that the troops and civilians suffered, becoming models for the individual sacrifice that would be required to have a functioning republic.

The Reverend James Francis Armstrong

In the case of Elihu Spencer, the civil government employed specific actions in order to expand the scope of religious support for the revolution. In other cases, the church governments made arrangements to expedite licensure of preachers in order to best serve the needs of the growing movement. The Reverend James Francis Armstrong was another young minister who was called to the military chaplaincy. He had been a student at the College of New Jersey, where he lived with the Witherspoon family, and thus had access to the radical college president.⁷⁰⁶ On June 6, 1776, Armstrong was officially recognized as a “candidate for the Christian ministry” by the Presbytery of New Brunswick.⁷⁰⁷ Revolutionary pastors Elihu Spencer and John Witherspoon were present

⁷⁰² Crowder, 131

⁷⁰³ Thompson, 262

⁷⁰⁴ Crowder, 131

⁷⁰⁵ Crowder, 131

⁷⁰⁶ Crowder, 15

⁷⁰⁷ Marian McLeod, *Light to My Path: Sermons by the Rev. James F. Armstrong, Revolutionary Chaplain* (Trenton, New Jersey: First Presbyterian Church, 1976), 2.

to conduct the ceremonies.⁷⁰⁸ Armstrong originally left the College of New Jersey to join the New Jersey militia forces as a private in defense of the state.⁷⁰⁹ Peter Gordon, the Quartermaster in Trenton, provided the following record to the family:

“I do certify that Mr. James Francis Armstrong bore arms in the year 1776, in an expedition formed for the defense of Staten Island against the British troops, and served as a volunteer private in my company of Militia wholly at his own expense, without drawing any of the subsistence due to a Volunteer, from the time the troops were raised until they were regularly discharged.”⁷¹⁰

Armstrong later determined that his education and talents would be best used by his joining the chaplain ranks, and he briefly returned to the College of New Jersey to complete coursework so that he could be ordained.⁷¹¹

In 1777, Armstrong was ordained by the New Castle Presbytery with the intent that he would immediately serve as a chaplain to the armed forces.⁷¹² The active war in New Jersey made an in-state ordination too dangerous, so he was sent to the more stable Pennsylvania for the purpose.⁷¹³ Since it was the practice that pastors were to be licensed to serve in the state for which they were a militia member, Armstrong was required to become registered by the Presbytery of New Brunswick in order to support the First Regiment of Hunterdon County where he had previously volunteered. He was originally unable to appear in New Brunswick due to the heavy British presence around the important colonial city.⁷¹⁴ Armstrong made the conscious decision to become commissioned as a chaplain, because he believed that his impact would be greater in that

⁷⁰⁸ McLeod, 2

⁷⁰⁹ Crowder, 15

⁷¹⁰ As qtd. In Hall, 339

⁷¹¹ Crowder, 15

⁷¹² Brace, 6

⁷¹³ McLeod, 2

⁷¹⁴ Brace, 6

role.⁷¹⁵ It was clear that the governing bodies of both the military and Presbyterian Church shared this assessment. While at the request of Congress Armstrong left New Jersey to serve in the Maryland forces, his connection to New Jersey remained strong.⁷¹⁶ In 1779, the Reverend returned to New Jersey while on leave.⁷¹⁷

While in his home state, Armstrong was invited to preach at the Presbyterian Church in Trenton, in the place of Elihu Spencer.⁷¹⁸ It was at this church that he delivered the sermon entitled “Righteousness Exalteth a Nation.”⁷¹⁹ In this speech, he posed the question: “Why, then, are we so soon called forth to change our beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness? Why are we again called upon to bow down our heads as bulrushes, and to pour forth the tears of penitence and humility?”⁷²⁰ Armstrong poses the same point that the great orator-philosopher ministers like Jacob Green brought to their congregations. Simply, why have the Patriots not won decisively despite the virtue of their cause and its validation by the support of God? Simply answered, God is doing his part, but the people are not:

Praise and thanksgiving were then the tribute justly due to the Great Governor of the World for the remarkable and almost unexpected assistance which he vouchsafed to afford by putting it into the heart of one of his most powerful servants to enter into an alliance with us, upon the most generous principles, for the defense and protection of long-injured rights and privileges, for the various successes we have obtained over our

⁷¹⁵ Brace, 6

⁷¹⁶ McLeod, 3

⁷¹⁷ McLeod, 3

⁷¹⁸ McLeod, 3

⁷¹⁹ McLeod, 3

⁷²⁰ James F. Armstrong, “Righteousness Exalteth a Nation,” 1779, in McLeod, *Light to my Path: Sermons by the Rev. James F. Armstrong, Revolutionary Chaplain*, 1976, 10.

enemies, and for the innumerable blessings which we enjoyed—even amidst the ravages of war.⁷²¹

Armstrong argued that God offered to the Patriots the much needed, though unlikely assistance of the French army and navy for the purposes of securing the liberties that the British had abused.

Armstrong appears to have realized that it required divine intervention for the French monarchy to support such libertarian causes. He reminded the people of the necessity to be thankful for the smaller victories and the safety that they enjoyed from potential destruction. This would have certainly been meaningful to the Trenton residents who had been liberated by American forces two years prior. Armstrong reminded his audience that they might not have control over the war, but they did of their own actions and could thus show reverence to God:

That the melancholy change is at this time necessary, is the collected voice of the continent. Be ours, then the task to expose the causes which call for such universal lamentation and mourning. With the utmost diffidence I enter upon a subject which so neatly concerns the most important interests of everyone who hears me. Everything which can tenderly affect the heartstrings of man—our safety as individuals, our glory as an empire; nay, our eternal salvation—appears to depend in a great measure upon the necessary exercises of humiliation, fasting, and prayer.⁷²²

Armstrong reminded his audience that they must work, pray, and suffer together as one people, and one country. He urged them to take responsibility for the lack of a decisive victory. In this section, Armstrong also deliberately connected the spiritual salvation of man with the political existence of the newly founded nation, suggesting that they would

⁷²¹ James F. Armstrong, “Righteousness Exalteth a Nation,” 1779, in McLeod, *Light to my Path: Sermons by the Rev. James F. Armstrong, Revolutionary Chaplain*, 1976, 10

⁷²² James F. Armstrong, “Righteousness Exalteth a Nation,” 1779, in McLeod, *Light to my Path: Sermons by the Rev. James F. Armstrong, Revolutionary Chaplain*, 1976, 10

be achieved through the same practices. He referenced Proverbs, Chapter 34, verse 34: “Righteousness exalted a nation but sin is a reproach to any people.”⁷²³ Armstrong made his point about the connection between religion and state success clearer when he declared that “It is sufficient to say that in proportion to the prevalence of virtue and religion, or their baleful opposite, a nation of people have ever been known to flourish or decay.”⁷²⁴ The Reverend provided for no misinterpretation of his conclusion that the health of the state was contingent on the spiritual health of its people. When Americans are better Christians, they will have a stable and successful government.

Armstrong continued his sermon by providing observations about the nature of government and society and by offering remedies for the issues that the new confederation was facing. The preacher argued that the situation “. . . calls upon all who wish well to our cause to point out those accursed things which have hitherto prevented the establishment of our wishes—liberty and peace.”⁷²⁵ Armstrong demonstrated his understanding that the political and the religious were profoundly connected. Liberty was a natural right guaranteed by God at birth, but could be infringed when individuals broke their contracts with the Creator by acting in manners outside the acceptable standards of conduct and piety expected of Christians. Armstrong argued that the leaders must be the exemplars in these areas, showing true faith, while ensuring that they did not simply use religion for the purpose of exciting others to participate in the conflict.⁷²⁶

⁷²³ James F. Armstrong, “Righteousness Exalteth a Nation,” 1779, in McLeod, *Light to my Path: Sermons by the Rev. James F. Armstrong, Revolutionary Chaplain*, 1976, 10

⁷²⁴ James F. Armstrong, “Righteousness Exalteth a Nation,” 1779, in McLeod, *Light to my Path: Sermons by the Rev. James F. Armstrong, Revolutionary Chaplain*, 1976, 10

⁷²⁵ James F. Armstrong, “Righteousness Exalteth a Nation,” 1779, in McLeod, *Light to my Path: Sermons by the Rev. James F. Armstrong, Revolutionary Chaplain*, 1976, 11

⁷²⁶ James F. Armstrong, “Righteousness Exalteth a Nation,” 1779, in McLeod, *Light to my Path: Sermons by the Rev. James F. Armstrong, Revolutionary Chaplain*, 1976, 11

The ministers and leaders at the time apparently recognized the need for religious influence as an organizing tool but also treated the practice of religion with fidelity. Congress and state governments called for days of fasting and prayer, in a deliberate attempt to curry favor with the Creator. Armstrong wished this to be more authentic, when he complimented the leaders, and then offered a warning for them: “But he only will be accounted worthy the name of a patriot by a virtuous posterity who crowns his other virtues by a steady, uniform opposition to those vices and immoralities whose approaches spread desolation, and whose prevalence, political and eternal destruction.”⁷²⁷ He further warned the Americans to avoid grasping the same immoral behavior that was symptomatic of the “degenerate politics of Britain.”⁷²⁸ Armstrong argued that a deliberate paradigm shift was required to separate the Americans from the course of ungodliness that had become the norm with Britain:

We have been so long nurtured in the degenerate school of Britain that to change her manners for those necessary to a people who would wish long to breathe the uncontaminated spirit of liberty will be like cutting off a right hand or plucking out a right eye. And if we do not mean idly to beat the air, if we have sentiment of soul sufficiently redefined to enjoy the luxury of being free, our manners must be changed as well as our constitutions of government. What is personal liberty to one deprived of the use of his limbs? And what is the uncontroverted claim of every civil privilege to a person deprived of moral liberty by the influence of vice? A dreadful prospect when so malignant a disease become epidemic.⁷²⁹

Armstrong offered an insightful commentary on the nature of liberty and political power. In many ways, his contemporaries believed that religious piety was necessary for the

⁷²⁷ James F. Armstrong, “Righteousness Exalteth a Nation,” 1779, in McLeod, *Light to my Path: Sermons by the Rev. James F. Armstrong, Revolutionary Chaplain*, 1976, 11

⁷²⁸ James F. Armstrong, “Righteousness Exalteth a Nation,” 1779, in McLeod, *Light to my Path: Sermons by the Rev. James F. Armstrong, Revolutionary Chaplain*, 1976, 11

⁷²⁹ James F. Armstrong, “Righteousness Exalteth a Nation,” 1779, in McLeod, *Light to my Path: Sermons by the Rev. James F. Armstrong, Revolutionary Chaplain*, 1976, 12

moral direction of a free state. He argued that sufficient liberty was necessary to allow such virtue to exist.

The Reverend Armstrong did not confine his commentary to the philosophy of religion and liberty. He made it clear that not enough Americans demonstrated the patriotism and sacrifice necessary to repel Britain.⁷³⁰ While he excused individuals who had participated in battle and supported the conflict, he castigated many of those present and absent for their lack of commitment.⁷³¹ Armstrong understood that faith in God would not simply win the battles. He preached that the armies, navies, and logistical supporters were the tools of God, and that their numbers required augmentation to be successful in their virtuous work. Armstrong similarly reproached those who used the war for “private emolument,” without considering the greater needs of “humanity, virtue, and patriotism.”⁷³² He warned that “Patriotism degenerates into low ambition when the contest is only for rank and preferment,” and reminded people that they are all part of a greater cause that should take precedence.⁷³³ Armstrong continued to educate his audience on the necessity of relating freedom to virtue and was unapologetic in his direct approach to his case. Calling out individuals and their deeds was a powerful tactic for ministers, as their audiences wished for individual salvation and were progressively doing the same for that of the entire country.

⁷³⁰ James F. Armstrong, “Righteousness Exalteth a Nation,” 1779, in McLeod, *Light to my Path: Sermons by the Rev. James F. Armstrong, Revolutionary Chaplain*, 1976, 12

⁷³¹ James F. Armstrong, “Righteousness Exalteth a Nation,” 1779, in McLeod, *Light to my Path: Sermons by the Rev. James F. Armstrong, Revolutionary Chaplain*, 1976, 13

⁷³² James F. Armstrong, “Righteousness Exalteth a Nation,” 1779, in McLeod, *Light to my Path: Sermons by the Rev. James F. Armstrong, Revolutionary Chaplain*, 1976, 13

⁷³³ James F. Armstrong, “Righteousness Exalteth a Nation,” 1779, in McLeod, *Light to my Path: Sermons by the Rev. James F. Armstrong, Revolutionary Chaplain*, 1976, 13-4

The notes on the manuscript of the sermon left by Armstrong indicate that he “Delivered [the same address] in the spring of the year 1779 to his Excellency George Washington and the Guards at Middle Brook.”⁷³⁴ The relevance of the sermon to both military and civilian audiences suggests that there existed common philosophical and practical goals by 1779. It is difficult to obtain manuscripts of battlefield and encampment sermons, as the records often did not survive the journeys. Therefore, this oration is vital to understanding the roles of both the parish minister and army chaplain during the war. Following the conflict, Armstrong expertly continued with his preaching on this topic by offering the sermon “The Lord Was on Our Side,” which sought to remind individuals that the sacrifices of the war that led to the victory must be sustained in order to provide for the survival of the new nation.⁷³⁵ His words in 1779 were clearly not an attempt in vain to guilt people to join the war, but rather an authentic and eloquent expression of his beliefs.

At the conclusion of the war, Armstrong fittingly returned to New Jersey to serve as a pastor at the comparatively radical Presbyterian Church of Elizabeth and married Savannah Livingston, daughter of Robert Livingston.⁷³⁶ After five years in Elizabeth, he transferred to the Presbyterian Church of Trenton and served as pastor of this influential congregation for 29 years.⁷³⁷ His contributions to New Jersey were later recognized when he was invested as a trustee of the College of New Jersey, the institution that was responsible for the training of a generation of religious and political leaders. The case of

⁷³⁴ As qtd. In McLeod, 3

⁷³⁵ James F. Armstrong, “Righteousness Exalteth a Nation,” 1779, in McLeod, *Light to my Path: Sermons by the Rev. James F. Armstrong, Revolutionary Chaplain*, 1976, 20-21

⁷³⁶ Brace, 7

⁷³⁷ Crowder, 16

Armstrong demonstrates that chaplains were not serving in the periphery of the military, but rather were central components of the structure. The chaplaincy assignment allowed a young and inexperienced minister to gain significant exposure to the political and military spectra, which facilitated his placement in positions of leadership and trust in the new state. The men who served in the role of chaplain were treated with lasting respect.

The Reverend James Caldwell

The Presbyterian ministers and chaplains for the most part served in vital, but supportive roles. While many enjoyed the high regard of their contemporaries, few were as universally famous as the Reverend James Caldwell. The man who became known as the “fighting parson,” and who became immortalized in stories of the revolution, and whose name is lent to several New Jersey municipalities, was a well-established pastor at the time of the revolution. Caldwell graduated from the College of New Jersey in 1759 and was ordained the following year.⁷³⁸ He was selected to be pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Elizabeth[town].⁷³⁹ As a young man, he ministered to one of the most active and influential Presbyterian churches in the colony, which existed at a significant port in the county seat of Union.⁷⁴⁰ Under the leadership of the Reverend Caldwell, the Elizabeth Town Church grew significantly in membership.⁷⁴¹ As a result, Caldwell was able to garner support and allegiance from a diverse group of parishioners. The church rolls included individuals who were or became influential in the revolutionary cause. Such

⁷³⁸ Headley, 217

⁷³⁹ Headley, 217

⁷⁴⁰ Brydon, 15

⁷⁴¹ Brydon, 17

members included "...William Livingston, Elias Boudinot, Herbert Ogden, Stephen Crane, Elias and Jonathan Dayton, Oliver Spencer, and Francis Barber . . ." ⁷⁴² Caldwell was able to effectively work with these men in order to pursue success for the American forces.

Caldwell had a history that ensured that he would be predisposed to revolutionary thought. He descended from Huguenots who had been displaced several times after being driven out of France by Catholic persecutors. ⁷⁴³ Headley suggests that "he thus inherited a spirit of independence and of resistance to tyranny which made him from the outset of our troubles enlist heart and soul in the cause of American independence." ⁷⁴⁴ The actual separation of the colonies from the imperial power was not the cause of Caldwell's first becoming involved in revolutionary politics. The Synod appointed Caldwell to be a "member of a special committee appointed to obtain a record of all instances of Episcopalian oppression in the four southern colonies." ⁷⁴⁵ Episcopalian oppression and dominance are representative of England's imposing its will upon the colonists and not allowing for complete freedom to practice a denomination other than the one sponsored and supported by the government. The decision of the governing body of the denomination to conduct such an investigation revealed the deliberate desires of the organization to advocate for the increased presence of democratic principles in society. The members of Caldwell's congregation reflected the politics and desires of the Synod. ⁷⁴⁶ His comfort with discussing the nature of political liberty and the relationship

⁷⁴² Brydon, 17

⁷⁴³ Headley, 217

⁷⁴⁴ Headley, 217

⁷⁴⁵ Brydon, 23

⁷⁴⁶ Brydon, 24

between colonies and mother country provided him with a receptive audience that he could further radicalize.

Caldwell did not have any reservations about using his pastoral influence and authority to preach the virtues of political liberty and revolution. He deliberately preached the cause of liberty as tensions were increasing between the colonists and British authorities in New Jersey. Brydon suggests that “many of his sermons and prayers referred to the unjust acts of the king and his ministers. He emphasized the point that each person, no matter how humble, had dignity before God and that oppression from earthly powers was contrary to God’s laws.”⁷⁴⁷ Caldwell included this concept of natural laws in his sermons, as the widely held beliefs constituted a significant piece of the foundation of the Enlightenment principles that precipitated revolution. He ensured that individuals recognized that they were accountable to a power higher than the British government, and that they needed to be protected from the same.

It was under the leadership of Caldwell that the Elizabeth congregation became a bastion of liberty and revolutionary thought. The minister effectively politically radicalized his congregation and was credited with being a major recruitment force for the Patriot cause. He reportedly preached on more than one occasion that “there are times when it is righteous to fight as well as to pray.”⁷⁴⁸ Eighty-three men in the church followed him to service in the armed forces, distinguishing Elizabeth Town as one of the most prolific volunteer congregations.⁷⁴⁹ Crowder argues that “his devotion to the cause of liberty, and his speeches, sermons and influence, gave so much strength and

⁷⁴⁷ Brydon, 25

⁷⁴⁸ Crowder, 35

⁷⁴⁹ Crowder, 35

enthusiasm to the patriots, that he was an object of the greatest hatred by the Tory element.”⁷⁵⁰ Like the patriotic Americans, the Loyalists recognized the power of Caldwell as a revolutionary political and religious leader. The British offered a bounty for the capture of the man who filled roles as a minister, chaplain, and logistics officer.⁷⁵¹ After a Tory set fire to the church in Elizabeth Town, the culprit remarked that he was “. . . sorry that the black coated rebel was not burned in his own pulpit.”⁷⁵² The attention that this element directed toward the parson only served to increase his profile and mandate as a leader of the revolution.

Caldwell had acquired significant seniority and influence among New Jersey clergy by 1776. He was still the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Elizabeth[town] at the time of his appointment to Chaplain.⁷⁵³ He was the original pastor to be elected for this role by the brigade that was formed as a result of the first New Jersey call for troops.⁷⁵⁴ The parson did not confine his participation to religious purposes. His sermons included references to secular ideas of liberty and government, and in some of his public statements, he avoided references to God. Upon learning of independence, Caldwell offered a toast to the men of his regiment: “Harmony, honor, and all prosperity to the free and independent United States of America; wise legislators, brave and victorious armies, both by sea and land to the United States of America.”⁷⁵⁵ The secular statement advocated for putting faith and hope in the success of the

⁷⁵⁰ Brace, 7

⁷⁵¹ Crowder, 35

⁷⁵² Crowder, 36

⁷⁵³ Brace, 7

⁷⁵⁴ Crowder, 35

⁷⁵⁵ as qtd in Crowder, 35

republican government, an institution that Caldwell believed would be able to secure and maintain liberty for the inhabitants of America.

Caldwell quickly expanded his responsibilities as the war effort required.⁷⁵⁶ While originally appointed as a chaplain, Caldwell distinguished himself by serving in a variety of capacities, including as deputy quartermaster and assistant commissary general.⁷⁵⁷ He answered the call to service in a manner that aligned with the needs of the country. These roles placed Caldwell in conversation with the generals of the service.⁷⁵⁸ His ministry was often evident in his work with the military, in that he was tasked with securing and distributing food and supplies to soldiers who were facing deadly conditions in the encampment at Morristown.⁷⁵⁹ ⁷⁶⁰ In addition to his service as an Army regimental staff officer and regimental chaplain, Caldwell continued to meet his duties as local church pastor.⁷⁶¹ He conducted church services on Sunday and served in an intelligence or resource-gathering capacity during the rest of the week.⁷⁶² Fulfilling this dual role was a powerful statement for a member of the clergy to make. He was able to successfully serve two masters which might have before been conflicting in nature: religion and politics, congregation and country. Caldwell was an example to both parishioners and soldiers. His leadership by example resulted in significant recruitment from his congregation for the militia and Continental Army. Thirty-one officers and fifty-two enlisted men from his

⁷⁵⁶ Headley 219

⁷⁵⁷ Brace, 7

⁷⁵⁸ Brydon, 33

⁷⁵⁹ Brydon, 31-32

⁷⁶⁰ While the encampment at Valley Forge sometimes receives historical treatment as the most brutal due to lack of food, conditions during the encampments at Morristown were more severe and deadly. [Lundin, 233]

⁷⁶¹ Headley, 219

⁷⁶² Headley, 219

congregation responded to the original call to arms.⁷⁶³ This influence was cemented by Colonel Dayton, who was one of Caldwell's parishioners, serving as the founding colonel of the New Jersey regiment.⁷⁶⁴ Caldwell's contemporaries regarded him as a central figure of the revolutionary cause.

Chaplain Caldwell became a leader in the Third New Jersey Brigade under Dayton, who was promoted to general in the Continental Army.⁷⁶⁵ In addition to ministering to the troops, Caldwell often served as pastor to individuals who lived in areas inhabited by the military.⁷⁶⁶ This expanded the influence of the parson by endearing him, and thus the revolutionary cause, to more Americans, many of whom had been relatively disengaged from or undecided about the war for independence. Caldwell continued to preach multiple services on Sundays, making worship opportunities accessible to all troops.⁷⁶⁷ This served as a reminder of the relationship between strategic and moral missions in which they were engaged.

The British also recognized the influence of the pastor from Elizabeth, regarding James Caldwell as a significant threat to their efforts to contain the revolutionary sentiment in New Jersey. Headley argues that "his immense popularity gave him an influence that filled the Tories with rage, and made his name common as a household word among the British troops."⁷⁶⁸ Brydon adds that Caldwell was known as "'The Rebel Priest' and 'The High Priest of the Rebellion.'"⁷⁶⁹ This recognition made Caldwell a

⁷⁶³ Brydon, 28

⁷⁶⁴ Headley, 218

⁷⁶⁵ Brydon, 28

⁷⁶⁶ Brydon, 28-9

⁷⁶⁷ Brydon, 29

⁷⁶⁸ Headley, 219

⁷⁶⁹ Brydon, 31

target for the anger and actions of the British forces. The British authorities advertised a bounty for his capture.⁷⁷⁰ This reportedly increased to the astonishing amount of 100 pounds.⁷⁷¹ Key British strongholds like Perth Amboy and New Brunswick were in dangerously close proximity to Elizabeth Town, which increased the threat. Like Newark, these areas had been important founding trade cities in young East Jersey. The British were unreserved in acting to mitigate the threat of the pastor. In 1779, the British engaged in surprise assault on Elizabeth Town with the expressed goal to arrest the reverend.⁷⁷² Caldwell witnessed the purposeful destruction of his church by the occupying forces in 1780.⁷⁷³ Caldwell had allowed and encouraged the use of the building as a military hospital, which served to increase its target profile.⁷⁷⁴ It is apparent that the British recognized the relationship between the revolutionary and religious causes of the American Revolution. The destruction of the church was designed to serve not only as a strike to Patriot morale in the state but also to interrupt the organizing and logistical role the institution assumed during the conflict. The thought of burning a church would presumably be considered an illegal action by the highly organized and regimented British forces. The choice to destroy the edifice was therefore a deliberate escalation that was designed to make a statement that any individual or group that supported the revolutionary cause would face strict, certain, and severe repercussions at the hands of the British. Upon learning of the destruction of the church, Caldwell preached a sermon in response, which included the following thoughts:

⁷⁷⁰ Brydon, 31

⁷⁷¹ Brydon, 39

⁷⁷² Brydon, 39

⁷⁷³ Brace, 8

⁷⁷⁴ Headley, 223

“With flames they threaten to destroy
 The Children in their nest.
 Come, let us burn at once, they cry,
 The temple and the priest.
 And shall the sons of earth and dust
 That sacred power blaspheme?
 Will not the hand that form’d them first,
 Avenge their injured name?
 Think on the covenant thou has made,
 And all thy words of love;
 Nor let the birds of prey invade,
 And vex the mourning dove.
 Our foes would triumph in our blood,
 And make our hopes their jest.
 Plead thy own cause, almighty God
 And give Thy children rest.”⁷⁷⁵

Caldwell used the opportunity to invoke God in order to defend the righteous revolutionaries against the abuses of the British forces. He prayed for protection, using the sermon as an opportunity to educate and remind the public that such abuses were representative of the overall actions and tactics in which the British had been engaging for a decade. His sermon called not only called for peace but also for triumph in war to create that glorious state. This call for both action and resolution served as a reminder to all that it was incumbent upon them to aggressively and unwaveringly defend themselves, their ideals, and their country. The Elizabeth Town parson later braved the threat against himself in order to return to the community.⁷⁷⁶ It became clear that while the British had been successful in destroying the edifice, they had not eliminated the church, which was built from people rather than bricks. The congregation quickly found a temporary

⁷⁷⁵ Brydon, 43-44

⁷⁷⁶ Brydon, 43

meeting place in a storehouse, and services continued.⁷⁷⁷ The return of Caldwell was highly symbolic:

“When the Reverend Caldwell returned to Elizabeth Town to preach, a crowd soon gathered. Arrangements had been made for services to be held at the red storehouse and the parson was escorted there by an honor guard. He took his place in the pulpit, touched by the devotion that his congregation demonstrated for him. He removed his outer cloak, took two army pistols from the pockets and placed them on either side of the Bible. Then with deliberation, he asked for a moment of silent prayer.”⁷⁷⁸

The community continued its support of Caldwell and the revolutionary cause despite the calculated retribution that they had just faced. His influence was lasting and profound, even when he had been physically absent from his congregation. The times had certainly changed, but the devotion remained. Caldwell was under constant threat, as evidenced by his need to carry pistols for his own defense. This is representative of the dual roles of soldier and pastor that the chaplains occupied in order help the cause achieve success. This commitment to the cause, combined with the ability of chaplains, as represented by Caldwell, to stabilize a community with prayer and services made these men particularly valuable to the cause.

Caldwell was fortunately away from Elizabeth Town at the time of the vicious attack on his church home of twenty years. He had moved west to Connecticut Farms, in what later became Union Township, once the British had established dominance over New York and Staten Island, positions from which an invasion of New Jersey would be likely and successful.⁷⁷⁹ Caldwell was very aware of the threat against him, and he feared

⁷⁷⁷ Brydon, 43

⁷⁷⁸ Brydon, 43

⁷⁷⁹ Headley, 219

that the British would attack his residence in an effort to detain him. When he was preaching at Connecticut Farms, Caldwell is reported to have arrived at church well armed for the purposes of self-defense, and would at times put his weapons on display to the congregation.⁷⁸⁰ Out of context, this would be considered wholly incongruous with the role of minister. However, Caldwell was a parson-soldier who had a place of importance in the war effort. His efforts at self-preservation could be considered deliberate ways to protect and sustain the Patriot cause in New Jersey.

Caldwell had used his considerable influence and connections in New Jersey to develop a wide-reaching intelligence ring.⁷⁸¹ This was particularly important when Lord General Cornwallis pursued Washington in 1776 as he retreated from New York and into New Jersey with what remained of his Continental forces. The Americans lost their defenses at Forts Lee and Washington, which spread fear in the minds of the state population.⁷⁸² Caldwell responded to the troop movements with resolve rather than fear and continued to use his intelligence network to furnish the American army with accurate information regarding the locations of the British Army.⁷⁸³ The network maintained by Caldwell was not limited to Union County, and he was able to provide intelligence to generals throughout New Jersey.⁷⁸⁴ His efforts were strengthened by the pre-existing Presbyterian Church network and hierarchical structure that existed in the colonies. While

⁷⁸⁰ Headley, 220

⁷⁸¹ Headley, 220

⁷⁸² Headley, 220

⁷⁸³ Headley, 221

⁷⁸⁴ Brydon, 31

Washington was away from Union County, he reciprocated by sending Caldwell similar information that had been gathered by other means.⁷⁸⁵

The Reverend Caldwell saw firsthand the price of liberty: he faced losses in both his church and his family. On June 25, 1780, in the same year as the destruction of his church building, Mrs. Caldwell, the brave first lady of the congregation, was brutally and deliberately slaughtered by a regular British soldier at her temporary home and refuge at Connecticut Farms.⁷⁸⁶ Despite the pleas by the pastor for the family to join him before danger was evident, Mrs. Caldwell stayed in the home with the children.⁷⁸⁷ She expressed concern that a move could have been more of a threat to the family than staying in the local parsonage.⁷⁸⁸ American forces believed at the time that she had been shot at close range by a soldier who had been dispatched to assassinate her specifically.⁷⁸⁹ There is a debate on whether this was the actual account of the event. While it is clear that British were sent to capture her, the bullet may have been a long-range mistake from an American musket. The home of Mrs. Caldwell, the Presbyterian parsonage, was later torched by the enemy when its forces occupied Connecticut Farms.⁷⁹⁰ Mrs. Caldwell had died a martyr who had refused to renounce her closely held faiths in God, her husband, and liberty.

Despite the murder of his wife at the hands of the British the same year as the destruction of the church in Elizabeth Town, Caldwell continued to fight in earnest as the

⁷⁸⁵ Headley, 221

⁷⁸⁶ Headley, 225

⁷⁸⁷ Headley, 224-5

⁷⁸⁸ Brydon, 46

⁷⁸⁹ Headley, 225

⁷⁹⁰ Headley, 225-6

enemy planned to replicate its attack on Connecticut Farms in the town of Springfield.⁷⁹¹ The famous pastor became known as the “fighting parson” due to his ongoing and unwavering support of the American army during the conflict. His actions became legendary among the American people, symbolizing the undying nature of the American spirit. One such story occurred at what became the Battle of Springfield. Reports are that when the men ran out of wadding for their muskets, Caldwell responded by relieving the Springfield Presbyterian Church of its hymnals. He distributed the armfuls of songbooks to the soldiers, ordering “Give them Watts boys, give them Watts.”⁷⁹² Another account contains the same drama but the slightly different command, “Now put Watts into them, boys.”⁷⁹³ The “Watts” in his exclamation referred to the publisher of the hymnals. There is a particular irony in the American forces using for their assault against the British the works of Isaac Watts, who was an English theologian and hymnologist. In this somewhat fabled action, Caldwell demonstrated that at that moment in time, the needs of the country and revolutionary cause transcended the material possession rights of the church. It was not, however, an act of thievery, but rather one of patriotism. Caldwell demonstrated that the two forces were one and the same, with the greatest of shared objectives.

When Caldwell was killed in 1781, supposedly as a mistake, the American soldier, James Morgan, who bore responsibility was hanged for his actions.⁷⁹⁴ At the time, however, there was some controversy during the trial over whether Morgan had been compensated or directed by British officials to deliberately assassinate Caldwell.

⁷⁹¹ Headley, 226

⁷⁹² Brace, 8

⁷⁹³ Headley, 227

⁷⁹⁴ Brace, 7-8

Witnesses testified that despite being known as a poorly functioning alcoholic, Morgan had been seen in New York two weeks earlier, presumably meeting with British authorities.⁷⁹⁵ Despite his claims that it was an accident, “it is evident that the majority of the citizenry believed Morgan’s act was one of willful murder and that in some way not fully disclosed he had been influenced by the British to commit the atrocity.”⁷⁹⁶ Further evidence suggests that the account of an accident proffered by Morgan might have been true, as it was unlikely that he would have known far enough in advance to premeditate the killing that Caldwell would be in New Providence, New Jersey.⁷⁹⁷ Despite the deep sense of justice that Caldwell held and preached throughout his life, it is doubtful that Morgan would have received a sanction other than the death penalty. When he killed Caldwell, the community lost a piece of itself. He had been an individual who was central to the spirit and defense of the region. People wanted vengeance, an act which Caldwell might have preached could only be effected by the Lord.

Like the trial of James Morgan, Caldwell’s funeral was a very public and sad affair that demonstrated that the community had suffered a significant loss. One Dr. Murry described the events:

“The funeral was one of the most solemn this town has ever witnessed. The concourse assembled on the occasion was immense. The Rev. Dr. McWhorter, of Newark, Preached from Ecclesiasts, viii. 8, and after the service was ended, the corpse was placed on a large stone before the door of the house of Mrs. Noel, where all could take a view of the remains of their beloved pastor.”⁷⁹⁸

⁷⁹⁵ Brydon, 72-3

⁷⁹⁶ Brydon, 73

⁷⁹⁷ Brydon, 73

⁷⁹⁸ Headley, 229-30

This account, along with the others of the period, demonstrates that the community was highly supportive of the efforts of this revolutionary pastor. They did not merely tolerate the radial qualities of Caldwell but supported them wholeheartedly. The Reverend James Caldwell was regarded as a bona fide hero of the American Revolution. Like the Reverend Fithian, Caldwell made a recognizable and measurable sacrifice for the cause of liberty that was intensified by his high-profile role as a chaplain and revolutionary minister. The funeral for James Caldwell was that of a hero taken too soon, attended by hundreds who recognized the impact that he had made on the revolutionary cause in New Jersey.⁷⁹⁹ In his death, Caldwell became part of revolutionary lore in America, taking the place of a great hero—a role that desperately needed to be filled in the new country.

The Reverend Alexander MacWhorter

It is apparent that the patriotic spirit was a common thread among the Presbyterian ministers. In addition to his travel to North Carolina with Elihu Spencer for the purpose of recruitment, the Reverend Alexander MacWhorter⁸⁰⁰ was active in the New Jersey revolutionary scene as pastor of the First Church, Newark, which was known to be a conduit to other congregations in and out of the town.⁸⁰¹ Brace argues that “Like all the Presbyterian ministers, he was an active Patriot, and stirred and stimulated the members of his church to heroic efforts in behalf of the struggle for independence.”⁸⁰²

⁷⁹⁹ John T. Murray, *Notes Historical and Biographical Concerning Elizabeth-Town its Eminent Men, Churches, and Ministers*, Reprint of 1844 edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), 75.

⁸⁰⁰ The last name of this minister has been listed as “McWhorter,” “Macwhorter,” “Mac Whorter,” and “MacWhorter.” Recent scholarship based on recruitment records lists the final version, and thus we will use it for the purposes of this study.

⁸⁰¹ Brace, 8

⁸⁰² Brace, 8

The government noted the interest demonstrated by MacWhorter, which resulted in his receiving a direct commission as chaplain of a Continental Army division. This path is somewhat different than those of his counterparts, as most started or exclusively served in the New Jersey militia. The reverend was assigned to serve under General Henry Knox, the chief artillery strategist to General George Washington. MacWhorter also served a stint as the personal chaplain to General Washington, which demonstrated the positive feelings regarding religion and the chaplaincy that the commander-in-chief held.⁸⁰³ These assignments sent MacWhorter on the devastating retreat through New Jersey to Pennsylvania.⁸⁰⁴ He also saw battle in White Plains and in Penn Shore, the land from which the Battle of Trenton was planned. Due to his valuable familiarity with central New Jersey, MacWhorter participated in the meeting during which the strategy was developed for the attack on Trenton.⁸⁰⁵ MacWhorter was able to triumphantly march through Trenton following the Christmas victory, reentering his home state.⁸⁰⁶

MacWhorter, like Caldwell and others, demonstrated that chaplains would often serve multiple roles due to their status as educated gentlemen and their proven abilities of communication and critical thought. The pastor was included in the deliberations regarding the defense of New Jersey.⁸⁰⁷ As an educated man who lived in Newark for ministry and Princeton for his education, the pastor had knowledge of the geography of the state. He continued his service as chaplain to the artillery brigade of the Continental Army.⁸⁰⁸ The inclusion of MacWhorter in command staff deliberations not only

⁸⁰³ Crowder, 102

⁸⁰⁴ Headley, 328

⁸⁰⁵ Thompson, 147

⁸⁰⁶ Headley, 328

⁸⁰⁷ Brace, 8

⁸⁰⁸ Brace, 8

demonstrates the respect that Washington and significant generals had for the clergy but also suggests the utility that the chaplains provided to the forces. Thompson suggests that “Washington, realizing that in their civilian capacities chaplains knew the geography of their locations extremely well from making pastoral visits, was not averse to using chaplains as scouts and guides for his army’s maneuverings.”⁸⁰⁹ This solidified the importance of recruiting local chaplains for the cause, and not simply relying on those who had traveled with the regiments and battalions across state lines. This direct involvement in the strategy and planning of battle diminishes the notion that chaplains were clergy who simply transplanted themselves from one ministry assignment to another with responsibilities limited to purely religious affairs. This is a deviation from the concept of the modern military chaplain, who in most cases serve in a courageous, but non-combatant, support staff role. Therefore, it is vital to analyze the impact of revolutionary chaplains within the context of the time period in which they served.

MacWhorter simultaneously served in the traditional role of chaplain, ministering to the troops. When the chaplain preached during the encampment at White Plains, many of the senior officers attended his services. General Washington reportedly became a frequent attendee of the services and sermons MacWhorter offered.⁸¹⁰ The religious leaders were similarly appointed as participants in committees that informed Congress; for this reason, MacWhorter’s role expanded with the war. In 1779, the Reverends MacWhorter and Chapman, among others, were appointed as members of a group with the mission of informing the national governing body on various issues.⁸¹¹ Having

⁸⁰⁹ Thompson, 147

⁸¹⁰ Headley, 328

⁸¹¹ Wickes, 199

ministers in the field helped to ensure the maintenance of both religious and revolutionary principles throughout the conflict. MacWhorter later paid a significant price when his home was attacked and burglarized by British troops.⁸¹² Like many of the pastors of the time, he looked fondly on his time at the College of New Jersey and helped to raise funds to rebuild the college.⁸¹³ MacWhorter exemplified the strong, educated New Jersey pastor who sacrificed for the cause.

The Reverend MacWhorter began his service as pastor in Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1779.⁸¹⁴ He concurrently served as president of Charlotte Academy.⁸¹⁵ The invasion by Cornwallis forced him to evacuate his family.⁸¹⁶ Following a series of attacks which resulted in the destruction of his home and possessions, MacWhorter moved north, settling in Abington, Pennsylvania, where he served as the minister.⁸¹⁷ After the College of New Jersey suffered significant damage due to a fire, his contemporaries on the board of trustees requested that the well-respected MacWhorter travel to England to solicit donations for its rehabilitation.⁸¹⁸ The dedicated minister died on July 20, 1807.⁸¹⁹

The Reverend Jedediah Chapman

Ministers were successful in organizing pro-revolutionary groups; however, their work and sense of duty was not concluded once parishioners joined the ranks of the militia, Continental Army, or financial supporters. When military engagements were in

⁸¹² Headley, 329

⁸¹³ Headley, 329

⁸¹⁴ Headley, 328

⁸¹⁵ Headley, 328

⁸¹⁶ Headley, 328

⁸¹⁷ Headley, 328

⁸¹⁸ Headley, 329

⁸¹⁹ Headley, 329

progress, especially in areas with proximity to their homes, ministers left the traditional pulpit for a battlefield chaplain position.⁸²⁰ These battlefield pastors served not only to comfort the dying but also to excite and motivate the troops. While the Reverend Chapman, as a volunteer chaplain, was “not regularly commissioned, as were two of his coadjutors . . . his ringing voice and his eloquent appeals were none the less efficient, however, in encouraging the solders to heroic deeds.”⁸²¹

In the case of Jedediah Chapman, Presbyterian Minister in Orange, his works became known by both the Americans and the British.⁸²² In both his roles, as a local preacher and chaplain of Colonel Martin’s New Jersey Regiment, he committed to passionately speaking out about liberty.⁸²³ This approach, in close proximity to areas that were under control of the British, resulted in the Tories bestowing upon him the title of “Rebel High Priest.”⁸²⁴ This distinction was accompanied by a bounty on his head.⁸²⁵ The British clearly saw him as a threat to their control and authority over New Jersey, which suggests that the Tories understood the organizing and persuasive power of the ministers during this period. The British increased his profile, and thus his organizing power in the community. This universal understanding of the influence of Patriot chaplains during the American Revolution demonstrates that their importance was as well appreciated during the period as it is with modern analysis.

⁸²⁰ Winsor, 242

⁸²¹ Wickes, 199

⁸²² Crowder, 153

⁸²³ Crowder, 153

⁸²⁴ Crowder, 153

⁸²⁵ Crowder, 153

The Reverends Amos Thompson and Nathan Kerr

The Reverends Amos Thompson and Nathan Kerr were ordained by the Presbytery of New Brunswick in order to help serve the soldiers of the New Jersey regiments.⁸²⁶ Both newly licensed ministers became revolutionary chaplains in order to fill a need that was recognized by Presbyterian Church authorities.⁸²⁷ The records on these men are minimal, as neither led a congregation prior to the war, and records of the works of chaplains were typically minimal unless recorded by a follower to memorialize what he perceived to be exceptional service. It is known that Thompson served as chaplain in Stephenson's Maryland and Virginia Regiment in 1776.⁸²⁸ He additionally served in Captain Hollinshead's Company, Second Battalion, Second Establishment, of New Jersey.⁸²⁹ He died on September 8, 1804, in Loudoun County, Virginia.⁸³⁰ Kerr reportedly served as a New Jersey chaplain, but he is not found in Stryker's listing of New Jersey soldiers.⁸³¹ He died in 1804 in Goshen, New York.⁸³²

Baptist Chaplains

The Presbyterian ministers were certainly most prolific in their support for the revolutionary cause. Their participation as chaplains was comparatively frequent and distinguished. However, the pluralistic religious environment in New Jersey ensured that

⁸²⁶ Thompson, 149

⁸²⁷ Thompson, 149

⁸²⁸ Crowder, 166

⁸²⁹ William S. Stryker, *Official Register of the Officers and Men of New Jersey in the Revolutionary War* (Trenton, NJ: Wm. T. Nicholson and Company, 1872), 297.

⁸³⁰ Crowder, 166

⁸³¹ Crowder, 166

⁸³² Crowder, 166

multiple denominations were represented in the ranks of the chaplaincy. While the New Jersey chaplains were of several different religious backgrounds, they were placed in units that were comprised of members of all participating New Jersey denominations. Certainly, the militia chaplains would be more likely to minister to more of their followers due to religious boundaries being somewhat defined by geographic region; however, this was not certain and did not apply to Continental Army units. Despite the clear denominational differences, assigned chaplains ministered to all of the soldiers under their care. The sectarian lines were less important when the common cause of liberty was paramount. Of course, there was also a logistical reason for this for acceptance of the unit chaplain regardless of denomination: there were not enough clergy attached to military units to allow for plurality in the ranks. This situation represents the greater conversation of the acceptance of religious pluralism in the state. Religious freedom, one of many sacred liberties, became guaranteed in the New Jersey Constitution. The differences were less important during times of conflict and struggle.

The Reverend Nicholas Cox

Like their Presbyterian counterparts, Baptist ministers answered the call to the chaplaincy. The Reverend Nicholas Cox was ordained by a denominational council in the Sussex County township of Wantage.⁸³³ He served as the chaplain of the First Battalion of the Second Establishment. Cox served for a period of four years, beginning in November of 1776.⁸³⁴ His longevity demonstrated a commitment to the revolutionary

⁸³³ Brace, 9

⁸³⁴ Brace, 9

cause. Similarly, it demonstrates that the troops and leadership were accepting of his Baptist denominational affiliation despite it being a relative minority among the New Jersey and national forces. After the conclusion of the war, Cox found a position as minister of the Baptist Church in Kingwood, a village in Hunterdon County.⁸³⁵

The Reverend William Worth

The Reverend William Worth similarly carried the Baptist tradition into battle. He was the founding minister of the Pittsgrove Baptist Church in Salem County.⁸³⁶ The congregation was founded in 1771, shortly before war began.⁸³⁷ This was more likely to happen in the Baptist tradition since its existence was gradually developing in comparison to more established denominations like Presbyterianism. Worth concurrently served as the pastor while serving as chaplain of the Salem County Second Battalion.⁸³⁸ Despite there being fewer Baptists than Presbyterians in New Jersey, the denomination did have exposure in multiple regions. The congregation that Cox served was in the very northern part of the state, while that of Worth represented the South Jersey contingent. The evangelical nature of the Baptist faith contributed to its spread to various regions. Additionally, many congregations in the southern part of the state were satellites of Philadelphia institutions.

⁸³⁵ Maring, 72-3

⁸³⁶ Maring, 73

⁸³⁷ Maring, 73

⁸³⁸ Brace, 9

The Reverend Jacob Davis

Cox and Worth were joined in the Baptist chaplaincy by the Reverend Jacob Davis. He was the young leader of the Baptists who congregated in the Monmouth County Area.⁸³⁹ When the revolution occurred, members who came from various towns were not able to formally meet due to security risks and wartime priorities.⁸⁴⁰ The Reverend Davis was called to serve a new mission as a chaplain in the Army.⁸⁴¹ Many male members of his Congregation followed him into service through regular army enlistment.⁸⁴² While this church was forced to break apart, its mission remained consistent in its new form.

The Reverend David Jones

The transition of role and responsibility by ministers became a theme among the less stable Baptist denomination. This was particularly evident in areas that were the homes to proportionately larger Tory populations.⁸⁴³ When the Reverend David Jones was forced to leave the Crosswicks Church in Upper Freehold, he transferred to the Great Valley Baptist Church near Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.⁸⁴⁴ His oratorical skills were highly developed and regarded as being able to move men.⁸⁴⁵ While there, he was recruited by Colonel Dawes to preach a sermon on a day of fasting ordered by the

⁸³⁹ Griffiths, 522

⁸⁴⁰ Griffiths, 522

⁸⁴¹ Griffiths, 522

⁸⁴² Griffiths, 522

⁸⁴³ Cathcart, 38

⁸⁴⁴ Maring, 71

⁸⁴⁵ Cathcart, 38

Continental Congress.⁸⁴⁶ Jones assigned the sermon the title “Defensive War in a Just Cause Blameless.”⁸⁴⁷ He preached a three-pronged message: that people have a duty to God to assert their rights of liberty and property through armed conflict, that the war that was rapidly increasing in intensity was a defensive one, and that armed conflict was a virtuous means to a virtuous end.⁸⁴⁸ In what became a widely published text, the former New Jersey leader connected God and liberty by demonstrating that the war was no different than ones in which Americans had previously engaged as agents of the Crown:

“. . . Our present dispute is just, our cause is good. We have been as loyal subjects as any on earth; at all times when occasion called, we have contributed towards the expense of war with our liberal hands. . . . When we have been called on to venture our lives in defence of our King and country, have we refused? No, verily; we have been willing to spill our precious blood. We have been charged with designs of independency. . . . A martial spirit from God has spread throughout the land. Surely, if this is not a heavy judgment, it is a presage of Success. we are fully persuaded that this spirit is not a judgment, because our cause is good, even in the sight of other States. To the Most High we can appeal and submit the event to his pleasure.”⁸⁴⁹

Jones made a clear argument that God was sanctioning the patriot cause in war, due to its goal of freedom for the participants. This further demonstrates the importance of ministers proving the “holiness” or “righteousness” of the Patriot cause. His sermon is unique in that he chose to compare the cause of arms to ones that were initiated by the British. He focused on how “just” the war was—certainly more just than were the previous British imperial engagements. His words demonstrate a clear connection to the

⁸⁴⁶ Maring, 71

⁸⁴⁷ As qtd. In Maring, 71

⁸⁴⁸ Maring, 71

⁸⁴⁹ Maring, 71-2

political climate of New Jersey and indicate that the willingness to connect political and religious doctrine learned in that state was being transmitted to other areas.

Reformed Chaplains

The Reverend John Mason

The profile of the New Jersey revolutionary chaplain is largely consistent. Chaplains were born in the colonies, and either lived or were educated in the state. The Reverend John Mason, however, was one who was not representative. Mason was born and educated in Scotland, where he lived for 27 years until he found placement in Cedar Street, New York, as a pastor in the Reformed Presbyterian Church.⁸⁵⁰ As a Scottish transplant to the colonies, Mason had a higher propensity to be resistant to British policy in the region. Despite the Act of Union several decades earlier, Scotland maintained an identity unique from that of England. When the reign of kings with Scottish heritage diminished, this became increasingly pronounced. Scottish Presbyterians were leaders of the Enlightenment in Great Britain. Their parliamentarians called for republican reforms. The Reverend Mason was thus more immediately sympathetic to the beliefs of the American colonists when he arrived in 1761, during the later years of the French and Indian War.⁸⁵¹ Mason ministered in New York, which, due to its status as a trade center, included a more nationally diverse population that was loyal to the British power. Mason became an outspoken critic of legislation enacted as a result of the financial crisis facing Britain in the wake of the Seven Years War. As a result, the Tories identified him as

⁸⁵⁰ Brace, 9

⁸⁵¹ Brace, 9

enemy, forcing him to migrate away from New York when British forces occupied the colony at the outset of conflict.⁸⁵² The actions of the British that required Mason to flee certainly helped to ensure that the minister would join the revolutionary cause in an identifiable manner. He found a safe-haven in the northern New Jersey village of Pluckemin, from which he became invested as a chaplain in the militia.⁸⁵³ Pluckemin is in relative proximity to Jockey Hollow, the site of the winter encampment at Morristown during the pivotal winter of 1776-1777. Like many of his counterparts, Mason transferred from the militia to the Continental Army as the war progressed. He was regarded as a “wise counselor and a great inspirer of the men under his care.”⁸⁵⁴ While Mason entered the colonies as a political reformer, his story suggests otherwise would likely have been compelled into service by the British through the Tory persecution that he would have faced.

Mason continued his public service after the war concluded. He served as a trustee of the College of New Jersey from 1779-1785, helping to oversee the education of the next generation of American religious and political leaders.⁸⁵⁵ He was able to do so while continuing in his capacity as pastor of the Cedar Street Church.⁸⁵⁶ Mason died on April 19, 1792.⁸⁵⁷

⁸⁵² Brace, 9

⁸⁵³ Brace, 9-10

⁸⁵⁴ Brace, 10

⁸⁵⁵ Brace, 10

⁸⁵⁶ Brace, 10

⁸⁵⁷ Brace, 10

The Reverend Gilbert Nevelling

The reformed traditions were gaining popularity during this period as a result of the spread of Enlightenment principles throughout Europe and America. The tradition went beyond the scope of those of British heritage. The Germanic States had been the root of The Reformation many centuries prior, and the people had developed a Protestant tradition that was often found to be at odds with the leadership of the states in Europe. Individuals with German heritage became one of the most significant blocs of non-British persons in the colonies. The plentiful farmland, separation from the political issues in the Germanic states, and the ability to create new German communities helped to increase immigration. Colonies such as Pennsylvania became popular for German expatriates. The Reverend John Wesley Gilbert Nevelling was the product of this tradition when he immigrated with his family to the colonies in 1750.⁸⁵⁸ After settling in Pennsylvania, Nevelling moved to Amwell, New Jersey, in 1772 in order to assume pastoral leadership of the German Reformed Church in that town. At the onset of the war, he was quickly appointed chaplain of the militia.⁸⁵⁹ Nevelling believed greatly in the revolutionary cause. He reportedly loaned all of his money, amounting to about 12,000 dollars, to the American government in order to aid the Patriots. Nevelling lost the note that he was issued in exchange for the loan and was thus never able to regain his funds.⁸⁶⁰ This did not dissuade him from remaining a loyal supporter of the revolutionary forces.

⁸⁵⁸ Brace, 10

⁸⁵⁹ Brace, 10

⁸⁶⁰ Brace, 10

Washington ordered that he be protected by a detail of cavalrymen after the British sought his capture, complete with an advertisement for a reward.⁸⁶¹

It is apparent that the British found Nevelling to be a threat due to his commitment. Nevelling expanded his service in the chaplaincy by serving as a significant financial supporter of the revolution. His story suggests that some ministers were able to amass personal wealth, which allowed them comparatively more options and freedom than many of their congregants and clergy counterparts. It is clear that Nevelling made an educated choice to aggressively participate in the revolutionary cause, and that it was not simply an expectation placed upon him which he met out of obligation. The involvement of clergy members as chaplains was purposeful.

Nevelling lived to the age of ninety-four, despite being disabled as a result of illness shortly after the war.⁸⁶² Even though he suffered a severe throat injury that affected his ability to speak, the pastor continued to preach.⁸⁶³ The Reverend Nevelling refused to allow such barriers to inhibit his ability to continue service to his fellow man. He died in 1844 in Philadelphia, making him the chaplain with the most longevity following the war.⁸⁶⁴

⁸⁶¹ Brace, 10

⁸⁶² Brace, 10

⁸⁶³ Brace, 10

⁸⁶⁴ Brace, 10

Anglican Chaplains for the Patriot Cause

The Reverend Dr. Robert Blackwell

The majority of the revolutionary chaplains emanated from Protestant, non-Anglican traditions. However, ministers representing such denominations were not the exclusive participants in the chaplaincy. The Reverend Robert Blackwell was one of the identifiable priests representing the revolutionary American members of the Anglican Communion. Despite his sectarian alignment, Blackwell graduated from the Presbyterian College of New Jersey in 1768.⁸⁶⁵ By this time, the College had become an institution that went beyond training those destined for the ministry. The Enlightenment had created the desire to educate within the framework of reason. Although guidelines had changed in order to allow prospective Anglican priests to be educated in the colonies, candidates were required to be ordained in England. However, Blackwell returned to the colonies, where he would serve as a chaplain. Despite his New Jersey roots, he was assigned to serve the First Pennsylvania Brigade. The Reverend assumed additional duties as a surgeon to the unit.⁸⁶⁶ Blackwell concurrently served in the role of chaplain for the entirety of the war.⁸⁶⁷ The education that Blackwell had received at the College of New Jersey allowed him to serve dual capacities. Blackwell committed himself to both of these responsibilities even though he had been inducted into the priesthood quite recently in England. The political nature of the conflict transcended such ties, and he was able to serve the faithful regardless. The concept of an Anglican chaplain to American soldiers

⁸⁶⁵ Brace, 10

⁸⁶⁶ Brace, 11

⁸⁶⁷ George Prowell, *The History of Camden County, New Jersey* (Philadelphia: L. J. Richards & Co., 1886), 58.

might be foreign to some; however, it is necessary to note that many of the key leaders of the revolution, like General Washington, were active Anglicans. The pluralism to which Blackwell was exposed in his New Jersey upbringing and Princeton education fostered his ability to successfully relate and minister to the troops, many of whom practiced denominations that were far more Protestant on the scale than Anglicanism.

The Reverend Blackwell was able to reconcile Anglicanism with the needs of the new American nation, helping to maintain and increase the influence of the Episcopal Church. In 1781, Blackwell was appointed an assistant minister of Christ Church and St. Peter's Church in Philadelphia.⁸⁶⁸ Blackwell continued to serve in these pastoral roles until 1811.⁸⁶⁹ He died twenty years later on February 12, 1831.⁸⁷⁰

The Reverend John Hurst

The Reverend John Hurst served in New Jersey while acting as chaplain to the 4th, 5th, and 6th Virginia Battalions.⁸⁷¹ Hurst was one of the few Episcopal pastors who served in a chaplain role in the revolutionary forces and had an influence on forces in New Jersey.⁸⁷² Since he was ministering to soldiers from Virginia, it was likely that such a pastor would be a representative of the Anglican Communion, as there was limited denominational diversity in Virginia, once the center of Royal influence in the colonies. When Hurst travelled to New Jersey with his battalions, he became a well-respected and

⁸⁶⁸ Brace, 11

⁸⁶⁹ Brace, 11

⁸⁷⁰ Brace, 11

⁸⁷¹ Headley, 372

⁸⁷² Thompson, 254

well-known preacher. He had a talent for applying biblical references in his sermons in support of his statements of mission:

“For after all the definitions of patriotism that ever was or ever will be given, this is the quintessence of it, the opposing ourselves foremost in the field of battle against the enemies of our country.” He took for his text, Psalm cxxxvii. 5,6: “If I forget thee, oh Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.”⁸⁷³

Hurst was able to assign greater virtue to the revolutionary cause through his words, likening the issues that the Americans faced to those the Israelites faced.⁸⁷⁴ He similarly expressed the unnatural state of the American situation before he repeats the previous reference to scripture:

Oppression and servitude through a damp upon every noble faculty, no wonder, then the sacred musician could ill exert the heavenly harmony under the dispiriting pressure of a foreign tyranny. “How shall we sing the Lords song,” &c. Here the faithful patriot turns by a very natural transition from lamenting over his country’s fate to the strongest professions of preserving his affections forever inviolate towards her.⁸⁷⁵

The pastor made the strong case that the soldiers had a divine duty to fight and incorporated meaningful words like “patriotism” into his sermons.

Hurst seemed to wish to assign divinity to the land that Americans shared as a home. His sermons had the effect of consecrating the very land upon which he and the soldiers were standing. In later sermons, Hurst specifically incorporated references to “Continental Congress, provincial assemblies, and commanding officers,” thus

⁸⁷³ Headley, 372

⁸⁷⁴ Headley, 373

⁸⁷⁵ Headley, 373

eliminating some of the subtlety of his sermons.⁸⁷⁶ Hurst later became the first chaplain in the Regular Army of the United States in 1791 after the country was successful in its efforts for independence.⁸⁷⁷ The chaplaincy remained an important staff role in the American military, demonstrating that the revolutionary chaplains had established an important precedent for the young country, which became ingrained in the culture of the armed forces.

⁸⁷⁶ Headley, 374

⁸⁷⁷ Thompson, 254

Lutheran Ministers

Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg – The Pastor Turned General

The Reverend Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg is representative of the members of clergy who participated in revolutionary government, and then transferred that devotion into the chaplaincy. Muhlenberg was born in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, in the Village of Trapp.⁸⁷⁸ He was first educated in the colonies, but then left to continue his education in Europe, which was customary for members of the clergy at this time, as the central religious structures for many denominations remained housed in their countries of origin.⁸⁷⁹ Following his ordination in 1768, Muhlenberg first served as a minister in the western part of New Jersey, where he assisted his father with fulfilling his growing pastoral responsibilities.⁸⁸⁰ In 1772, Muhlenberg traveled to England in order to be ordained by an English bishop so that he could be authorized to lead a church in Woodstock, Virginia.⁸⁸¹ While Muhlenberg left New Jersey, it is fitting that he would return to the state during the revolution.

The well-educated Muhlenberg became a natural participant in the provincial governments in the pre-revolutionary era. He became an acolyte of famed radical Patrick Henry and was elected to be chairperson of his county's committee of safety.⁸⁸² He was later elected chair of the committee of safety that was convened by the Virginia House of Burgesses, and he served as a member of the convention that was called by the Virginia

⁸⁷⁸ Headley, 122

⁸⁷⁹ Headley, 122

⁸⁸⁰ _____, "John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg," Penn Biographies [Online], Accessed July 2, 2018.

⁸⁸¹ Headley, 122

⁸⁸² Headley, 122

province in 1776.⁸⁸³ ⁸⁸⁴ The main objective for this position was troop recruitment, a task that Muhlenberg quite effectively accomplished.⁸⁸⁵ The natural progression from minister to radical leader was not universally favored. Muhlenberg's minister brother Frederick attempted to dissuade him from participating in political and military affairs. The radical Muhlenberg did not regard his pastoral role as an exception from service to the new country, but rather an imperative.⁸⁸⁶ Peter Muhlenberg wrote convincingly to his brother:

“Do you think, if America should be conquered, I should be safe? Far from it. And would you not sooner fight like a man than die like a dog? I am called by my country to its defense. The cause is just and noble. Were I a bishop, even a Lutheran one, I should obey without hesitation, and so far am I from thinking I am wrong, I am convinced it is my duty so to do, a duty I owe to my God and my Country.”⁸⁸⁷

Muhlenberg deliberately connected God and country in his note to demonstrate that the causes were not mutually exclusive but rather interdependent at the time. There could not be a new country without the blessings of God, nor could his ability to freely practice his faith be continued without benefitting from political liberty. He uses the term “just,” which seems like a relatively simple phrase with a clear definition; however, Muhlenberg had reason to believe that God was the ultimate arbiter of justice, and thus he endorsed the Patriot cause.

The Patriotism that Muhlenberg held was clearly evident to those in government roles and was later appreciated by members of his congregation. He effectively used his pulpit to preach in favor of the cause of freedom.⁸⁸⁸ It was not a surprise, therefore, when

⁸⁸³ Penn Biographies

⁸⁸⁴ Crowder, 106

⁸⁸⁵ Crowder, 106

⁸⁸⁶ Crowder, 106

⁸⁸⁷ Crowder, 106

⁸⁸⁸ Headley, 122

Muhlenberg chose to make the deliberate transition from pastor to military officer. His education and previous military experience during the Seven Years War made him an excellent candidate for the colonelcy.⁸⁸⁹ Muhlenberg cited Ecclesiastes 3:1 in his final address to the members of the church, and observed:

“I feel truly grieved to announce that this is my farewell sermon, but if it is God’s will I shall soon return to you. It is a sacred duty that calls me from you and I feel I must submit to it. The endangered fatherland, to which we owe wealth and blood, needs our arms—it calls on its sons to drive off the oppressors. You know how much we have suffered for years—that all our petitions for help have been in vain—and that the King of England shut his ears to our complaints. The Holy Scripture says: There is a time for everything in this world; a time to talk, a time to be silent, a time to preach and a time to pray, but the time for me to preach as passed away—but also a time to fight—and that time has now come! Therefore, whoever loves freedom and his new fatherland, he may follow me!”⁸⁹⁰

Muhlenberg brilliantly and genuinely sanctified his military service, demonstrating that he was following divine will by participating. He provided a political argument for separation, citing oppression and the failure of the royal government to respond. In fidelity to his role as a minister, he then carefully transitioned to a calculated discussion of scripture. Muhlenberg argued that the traditional means of political and religious activity had passed, and that the armed rebellion was the only option to protect the new political structure which he described as the “fatherland,” a term that his parishioners had just years earlier applied to Britain, or potentially Germany as it was a Lutheran congregation. This was not an academic exercise for the pastor, as he spoke in a manner designed to evoke a specific, emotional response. He passionately communicated his thoughts to his Virginia congregation:

⁸⁸⁹ Penn Biographies

⁸⁹⁰ As qtd. In Thompson, 127-128

He took leave of his people in a farewell sermon which glowed throughout with the most devoted patriotism. At the close he told them of the resolution that he had taken to fight, and if need be, die for his country on the battlefield. It was a strange announcement from the pulpit, but there were few to criticize his abandonment of his profession, for he had breathed his own fervid spirit into his congregation, and the kindling eye and speaking countenance told him that his course had their hearty approval.⁸⁹¹

For many of the pastors of this period, the transition from pastor to chaplain was subtle, often associated with a sense of duty to a region or the members of his congregation who would be fighting in the war.

Muhlenberg distinguished himself by his deliberate and passionate actions that were designed not only to demonstrate his Patriotism and intent but also to inspire his congregants to fight. This was especially important in the Virginia colony, as his contemporaries in this region were often less committed to the revolutionary cause since British actions had not affected the southern region as much as New England. His remarks diverged from those of his counterparts in other churches, as he advocated merely for liberty but for purposeful armed conflict to achieve it. Many pastors saw participation in the war as an extension of their Christian ministry. They felt they had a responsibility to both congregants and country to maintain Christian teachings and to perform ministry to the soldiers. While some pastors reluctantly took up arms as chaplains, others refrained in order to focus on their religious duties. Muhlenberg made the deliberate decision to serve in a belligerent capacity. His military background presumably helped to facilitate this, but much of the responsibility lay in his strong

⁸⁹¹ Headley, 123

passion for political liberty. He had espoused this in a series of sermons leading to this moment.

Regardless of his reasons for participation, the intentions of Pastor Muhlenberg became abundantly clear when he appeared in full military officer uniform immediately after the service.⁸⁹² He had set aside his vestments and executed a literal transition from pastor to colonel: “Apparently, [the] congregants saw nothing in serving God as a commander to be in violation of the expectations of a minister. Rising to their feet, the congregation burst into a song which spoke of loyalty in an earlier period of revolution, and of trust in their God.”⁸⁹³ The drama did not end at this point, however. Muhlenberg used the opportunity to capitalize on the invigorated emotion and Patriotism of the congregation by recruiting volunteers. With a drum beating at his order, Muhlenberg led most of the fighting-age congregants from the church and toward combat roles.⁸⁹⁴ In under thirty minutes, he successfully recruited 162 congregants for military roles.⁸⁹⁵ Muhlenberg was clearly a devoted and powerful leader of men. He led by example, and he engaged for this purpose the communication skills that he had refined as a preacher.

The leadership and communication skills that Muhlenberg mastered gave him many of the tools necessary to be a successful soldier-chaplain. The development of his pastoral skillset began during his ministry in New Jersey. The connection to the state was reestablished throughout the war. As a follower of George Washington, Muhlenberg consistently participated in the major tactical movements of the war. New Jersey was the

⁸⁹² Headley, 123

⁸⁹³ Thompson, 128

⁸⁹⁴ Headley, 123-4

⁸⁹⁵ Thompson, 128

great crossroads of the revolution, arguably the geographic center of the conflict.

Muhlenberg had been promoted to the rank of brigadier general and had been assigned the responsibility of commanding all of the regular army troops in Virginia.⁸⁹⁶ It is important to note that Muhlenberg was a commissioned officer of the Continental Army and not a member of the less-organized citizen soldiery of the militia. Muhlenberg later commanded troops in New Jersey, when he reported under General Washington in Middlebrook.⁸⁹⁷ He followed Washington to the horrific encampment at Valley Forge, where he reportedly worked to ensure the morale and commitment of the soldiers as they were facing significant hardships.⁸⁹⁸ His military leadership and ad-hoc chaplaincy helped to ensure that the encamped troops would be ready to engage in significant tactical victories and repel the British in mid-Atlantic states like New Jersey.

Muhlenberg was one of the chief tactical commanders of troops at the Battle of Monmouth, which was, ironically, fought on the Sabbath.⁸⁹⁹ Muhlenberg's pragmatism and desire for freedom fostered his ability to alter his compliance to religious doctrine in order to meet the more emergent need. The decentralized nature of religious authority in America allowed him to act independently. While one might argue that due to his combat officer assignment, Muhlenberg was not acting in an official chaplain role in service, the two need not be mutually exclusive. Muhlenberg was a well-known minister who used his influence to attract Americans to the revolutionary cause. He was a passionate preacher and minister. While he donned different apparel, he remained a man of God and believed that he was acting in service to the Creator. This attitude would have been

⁸⁹⁶ Headley, 124

⁸⁹⁷ Headley, 124

⁸⁹⁸ Headley, 124

⁸⁹⁹ Headley, 124

appreciable by the officers and men of the Continental Army, and it validated the cause with moral certainty. This allowed Muhlenberg to successfully lead men during the conflict and was an, albeit immeasurable, influence on the ability of the Continental Army to force a retreat of the British. It is clear that chaplains and ministers had both strong and varying influences during the conflict.

Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg was promoted to Major General at the conclusion of the war, after having fought in significant battles like Germantown, Monmouth, Stony Point, and Yorktown.⁹⁰⁰ Following the war, the pastor-turned-general continued to serve the public in positions of prominence and trust. Muhlenberg was elected to be a member of the executive council of Pennsylvania, and in 1801 sent by the legislature of the state to be a United States Senator.⁹⁰¹ He acted in this capacity while serving as the Pennsylvania supervisor of internal revenue.⁹⁰² When he died in October of 1807, Muhlenberg was remembered as an honest, faithful, and brave man.⁹⁰³ His legacy is one of a hero who could thrive in multiple capacities in service of the young American nation.

Notable Chaplains who Fought in New Jersey Engagements

While much of this study focuses on the publicity, recruitment, and retention efforts of ministers who were native to New Jersey, many other chaplains participated by serving in units and fighting in engagements throughout the state. The geography of New Jersey resulted in many troop movements, battles, and skirmishes occurring within and

⁹⁰⁰ Headley, 125

⁹⁰¹ Headley, 125

⁹⁰² Headley, 125

⁹⁰³ Headley, 125

across its borders. In addition to the aforementioned pastors, several others became experienced chaplains who participated in multiple combat situations.⁹⁰⁴ John Gano and David Avery had actively participated in a series of battles including “Boston, Bunker Hill, the Canadian expedition, Long Island, and the retreat through Jersey.”⁹⁰⁵ As a result of these repeated combat assignments, these chaplains became some of the most experienced members of the Continental Army. Thompson suggests that “Chaplain Avery may have developed that sense of tough invulnerability so commonly found in old combat soldiers.”⁹⁰⁶ Avery and Gano participated in the Battle of Trenton, reportedly firing at the Hessians who were attempting to escape from the town.⁹⁰⁷ This engagement resulted in Avery being shot in the hip, distinguishing himself as one of the chaplains who would become part of the growing casualty statistics of the conflict. While Avery was not able to participate at the subsequent Battle of Princeton, he was well enough to participate in events of Continental Army significance like Valley Forge and Ticonderoga.⁹⁰⁸

The Reverend John Gano

As a chaplain, John Gano represented the Baptist minority in his lifetime home of New Jersey. The Reverend Gano became the pastor of the Baptist Church in Scotch Plains.⁹⁰⁹ Gano was born into a Presbyterian family but converted to the Baptist

⁹⁰⁴ Thompson, 148

⁹⁰⁵ Thompson, 148

⁹⁰⁶ Thompson, 148

⁹⁰⁷ Thompson, 148

⁹⁰⁸ Thompson, 148

⁹⁰⁹ Crowder, 70

denomination when he could not reconcile the practice of infant baptism that was practiced by the former.⁹¹⁰ He became one of the notable preachers of the Great Awakening and was responsible for the conversion of many individuals.⁹¹¹ Gano preached first without formal training. He was able to be ordained without further instruction due to his recognized talents and the need for such in the evangelical denomination.⁹¹² His preaching was widely regarded and in demand throughout America.⁹¹³ While he left to preach in the southern colonies where the denomination was growing at a higher rate, he returned to New Jersey in his capacity as chaplain in the 19th Continental Infantry Regiment.⁹¹⁴ Gano found himself in a combat role, after which he observed: “My station in time of action I knew to be among the surgeons; but in this battle I somehow got in front of the regiment, yet I durst not quit my place for fear of dampening the spirits of the soldiers, or of bringing me an imputation of cowardice. Rather than do either, I chose to risk my fate.”⁹¹⁵ Gano further transitioned to the role of a combatant chaplain when he crossed the Delaware before the Battle of Trenton while he was under the command of General Glover, who executed the feat.⁹¹⁶ At Chatterton’s Hill, he was celebrated for maintaining composure and bravery when the British were advancing on his position, one that had been somewhat abandoned by the remainder of the American forces.⁹¹⁷ His bravery and adaptability earned Gano the respect of superior officers. This credit was gradually extended to other Baptist chaplains and the

⁹¹⁰ Maring, 53

⁹¹¹ Maring, 53

⁹¹² Maring, 54

⁹¹³ Cathcart, 40

⁹¹⁴ Crowder, 71

⁹¹⁵ Crowder, 71

⁹¹⁶ Crowder, 71

⁹¹⁷ Cathcart, 41

denomination in general.⁹¹⁸ Shortly after he left the war to return to his home and congregation, General James Clinton and Colonel Louis DuBois asked him to become a regimental chaplain and to eventually assume the role as the spiritual leader of the brigade.⁹¹⁹ While Gano did not return to New Jersey after surviving combat in Princeton and Trenton, he continued to minister to the army that traversed the state.⁹²⁰ The Reverend Gano was part of a cadre of chaplains whose influence and importance grew during the revolution.

The Reverend John Rosbrugh

Ministers who travelled to New Jersey from outside of state continued to have an impact on the war, most notably through their ministry to the troops and their commanders. With their ministry came sacrifice in service to the greater goal of freedom. The chaplains who accompanied the militia and regiments of other states left their families, congregations, and often livelihoods in order to be with their new flocks. Some sacrifices rose to the ultimate. The Reverend Avery would not be the only casualty suffered by a chaplain within the confines of New Jersey. Scotch-Irish Presbyterian minister John Rosbrugh, serving as both chaplain and militia commander, was killed between the Battles of Trenton and Princeton on January 2, 1777.⁹²¹ The Reverend Rosbrugh had been a divinity student at the College of New Jersey in the 1760s.⁹²² He died in close proximity to the institution at which he learned the skills which qualified

⁹¹⁸ Cathcart, 42

⁹¹⁹ Crowder, 71

⁹²⁰ Crowder, 71-2

⁹²¹ Thompson, 148

⁹²² Thompson, 148

him to be a chaplain. While at the College, based on the description of a scholarship award Rosbrugh received, he had been regarded as “of promising genius, Calvinistic principles, and in the judgement of charity, experimentally acquainted with a work of saving grace, and have a distinguished zeal for the glory of God, and salvation of men.”⁹²³ Before moving to Pennsylvania, Rosbrugh had served at the Greenwich Presbyterian Church in Warren County.⁹²⁴ Like many of his counterparts in New Jersey, Pastor Rosbrugh worked to recruit members of his Congregation for the Pennsylvania Militia, allowing for few excuses.⁹²⁵ After reading to the Congregation a letter from George Washington, Rosbrugh offered “a sermon using Judges 5:23 for his text: ‘Curse ye Meroz, saith the angel of the Lord; curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty.’”⁹²⁶ The pastor made it clear that the cause was not only righteous but a mandate for his members. The righteousness of the conflict was in part demonstrated by the manner of his death. It was reported by a Captain Hays that the chaplain was taken prisoner by Hessians after he surrendered.⁹²⁷ Apparently still angered by their defeat at Trenton, the mercenaries brutally executed him with multiple bayonets and swords as he prayed for their forgiveness.⁹²⁸ The British officer was reported to have made it clear that he knew that he had killed a “rebel parson.”⁹²⁹ It is difficult to validate the truth of this story, as it was nearly impossible to verify accounts at the time. However, the method of his death, on knees praying, established Rosbrugh as a martyr in the eyes of his religious and military counterparts,

⁹²³ Thompson, 149

⁹²⁴ Thompson, 149

⁹²⁵ Thompson, 150

⁹²⁶ As qtd. In Thompson, 150

⁹²⁷ Thompson, 151

⁹²⁸ Thompson, 151

⁹²⁹ As qtd in Thompson, 151

and he was regarded as such at the time.⁹³⁰ Even if the accounts were not completely accurate, the story demonstrates that the American leaders needed martyrs. The cause required heroes, as few existed in the incredibly brief life of the new country. The brutal slaying of a minister suggested that Hessians and British regular army were ruthless, godless, and not deserving of American mercy, and that they were proud to physically destroy the religious liberty in America. The public relations machine at the time was able to spread this message with tragic examples. The occurrence of the death in New Jersey, the Presbyterian stronghold, would ensure that the story was retold for religious and secular purposes.

The New Jersey Connection – The Reverend William Tennent

The religious pluralism in New Jersey created a vibrant and diverse environment for the education of new pastors. In the same manner as the Reverend Muhlenberg, many of the influential pastors and chaplains during the conflict had been raised or educated within the state before they were called to other assignments throughout the colonies. The government structure and denominational pluralism in New Jersey instilled in the young, active ministers the expectation of both political liberty and the democratization of religion through decentralization of church power. These attitudes spread to colonies as far away as Maine and South Carolina, which helped to facilitate the discussion of natural and political rights that preceded the revolution. These values were communicated during the education of the next generations of religious and political leaders. The College of

⁹³⁰ Thompson, 151

New Jersey at Princeton was responsible for training a significant number of the Calvinist ministers during this period, who were distributed amongst the colonies and states. The New Jersey values of political and religious liberty were thus becoming more present throughout the new country. As the values that those in training learned at the College of New Jersey became more evident in the vernacular of the revolution, the ideas were regarded as more mainstream.

Presbyterian Pastor William Tennent exemplifies the impact of ministers with a New Jersey connection. The Reverend Tennent was born in Freehold into a family of individuals of significant consequence in religious circles.⁹³¹ Tennent completed his education at the College of New Jersey at age eighteen and left the state to preach in Connecticut and South Carolina.⁹³² When the war broke out, Tennent passionately advocated for liberty, respect, justice, and the independence of Americans.⁹³³ His statements were often not well received by friends and parishioners in South Carolina, and he found himself in a minority of advocates.⁹³⁴ Tennent's upbringing in New Jersey and education at the College of New Jersey instilled in him keen senses of democracy, liberty, and self-government. He held a very different understanding of natural rights than did his contemporaries in South Carolina, a colony that was reluctant to participate in the revolution until its ability to trade was compromised.⁹³⁵ While Tennent did not preach the cause of independence from the pulpit, following the service he elected to make passionate pleas at the local courthouse for the duty of the citizenry to support the

⁹³¹ Headley, 115

⁹³² Headley, 115

⁹³³ Headley, 115

⁹³⁴ Headley, 115

⁹³⁵ Headley, 115

American cause.⁹³⁶ Tennent chose to use his position of authority in the community to advocate for the revolution. His willingness to spread the message of liberty in the courthouse demonstrates his understanding that natural and political rights can be discussed in an entirely civil environment. He allowed individuals the right to be free from the more political message of liberty during the worship service.

Tennent was able to adapt his College of New Jersey education and New Jersey upbringing to a less welcoming and more skeptical environment. Tennent eventually toured most of the state, while his former acolyte, Alexander MacWhorter, toured one state to the North.⁹³⁷ While MacWhorter did not keep records of his travels, Tennent left for public consumption a “Journal of his efforts ‘to induce the Tories to sign an Association to support the cause of the colonists.’”⁹³⁸ He was later elected to the Provincial Congress and the Council of Safety. His reputation in these bodies resulted in him being appointed to tour the state in order to garner support for the revolutionary cause.⁹³⁹ The individuals whom he was visiting were those who were resistant to any efforts for independence. His speeches were well received by groups that were often significantly divided.⁹⁴⁰ His success was one of the factors that led to South Carolina joining the remainder of the rebellious states. Headly argues that “in executing this mission, he not only swayed the people by his eloquence, but by his shrewdness and sagacity broke up many dangerous plots and combinations.”⁹⁴¹ Tennent was able to

⁹³⁶ Headley, 116

⁹³⁷ Thompson, 147

⁹³⁸ Thompson, 147

⁹³⁹ Headley, 117

⁹⁴⁰ Headley, 118

⁹⁴¹ Headley, 119

successfully communicate lessons that were popular in the political climate of New Jersey in order to organize the citizens of other states.

The reach of the Tennent family extended beyond South Carolina. William McKay Tennent, a College of New Jersey Graduate, married the daughter of another army chaplain, the Reverend Dr. Rodgers, and then later served in a pastoral capacity in Greenfield, Connecticut.⁹⁴² While not much is known specifically about the Reverend Tennent's ministry, it is clear that like his New Jersey relatives, he supported the revolutionary cause. The Presbyterian Tennent served during the war as a chaplain in Swift's Connecticut State Regiment, carrying out the tradition and precedent that had been set for him by generations of family.⁹⁴³

Conclusion

The chaplains in the American Revolution occupied a variety of roles during the conflict. They were able to simultaneously minister to the sick, preach, inspire troops, provide tactical advice, keep two guns astride, and become decision-makers in the military. The role of the chaplains expanded as the military forces required. This demonstrates that the military favored the influence of chaplains and regarded them as vital to the war effort. The chaplains reminded individuals why they were fighting, expressing the virtuous reasons for war in both religious and political contexts. The chaplains were able to ground the forces so that they could be reminded of the liberty that lay ahead. The lack of one "formula" for the performance of a chaplain was indicative of

⁹⁴² Headley, 377

⁹⁴³ Thompson, 264

the inability of the central authorities to establish those roles as quickly as they were needed during the course of the war. Instead, the chaplains were left to play to their strengths while inspiring, organizing, and educating their countrymen.

The combat chaplains complemented those at home who were espousing the virtues of liberty and participation. The transition of ministers from pastoral to military roles demonstrates an evolving sense of urgency with respect to their participation. The responsiveness of the chaplains to this need served as an example for laypersons to fight in or provide logistical support to the war. The pluralism that existed allowed ministers to make their own choices regarding participation based on what they believed to be the needs of the congregations, civil authorities, and the higher power. This represented the liberty that they enjoyed and were fighting to preserve. This pluralism was the physical embodiment of the convergence of Enlightenment and Great Awakening principles. Enmeshing the ministers in the fabric of the military structure further demonstrates the organizational value of these distinguished clergymen.

Chapter 8

Conclusion: The Legacy of New Jersey Religion in the American Revolution

The American Revolution was not only a cause of unrest, destruction, and strife but also an opportunity to rally and organize the inhabitants of the colonies around the ideas of liberty, republicanism, unity, and self-determination. The sermons of great preachers like the Reverend Dr. John Witherspoon, the Reverend Jacob Green, and the Reverend Philip Fithian were comprised of deliberate instruction to parishioners and wider audiences to involve themselves in a struggle not only for political liberty but also for religious freedom and fidelity. The religious pluralism in New Jersey created an environment in which no denomination exerted singular and preferred authority. The residents of the colony grew accustomed to freedom and self-government and were, with the direction of structures, ministers, and political leaders, able to process the evolving religious and political philosophies with respect to their own lives. The common language of the Enlightenment and Great Awakening provided for concepts like natural rights to not be confined within the boundaries of either the political or religious realm. These sacred ideals emerged as vital components of an intended universal American experience. By need and natural progression, the exclusivity of such ideas disintegrated. While some of this convergence was deeply philosophical, much of it was developed in response to practical needs of governments and organized religion.

The revolutionary national and provincial governments were desperate for the support of the colonists. The elites in New Jersey had helped to facilitate an environment

in the colonial assembly that provided for a significant degree of popular rule and individual freedoms, including religious exercise. The result of this was that residents were able to choose their religions and were empowered to make personal choices about whether to become involved in the war for independence. In New Jersey, the process of recruitment and commitment to the war was comparatively slow when one takes into consideration the radicalism evident in the provincial congress and committees of safety. The civil authorities needed to ensure that their networks could impart the same zeal upon the inhabitants of the colony. As a result, New Jersey authorities required organizational forces to rally support for the cause. The evidence demonstrates that regional ecclesiastical governments, local churches, and individual ministers were able to use the power of governance and the pulpit to augment the ranks of the Continental Army and militia. They were equally successful in organizing non-combatant and logistical support to the armies. The hesitation of many New Jersey residents demonstrates that the influences of religious structures and ministers were vital to the recruitment and unification efforts in the region.

The events in New Jersey illustrate that the churches and their leaders did not simply move to involve their members for altruistic and patriotic reasons. While those forces were evident, the words and actions of the religious leaders at the time demonstrate that they recognized that a loss in the war would potentially result in introduction of a tax-funded, government-preferred Anglican Church that would dominate the religious and political landscape in New Jersey. The royal government would have been inclined to impose this change in order to solidify its level of control over the previously radical colonists. This would have been followed by a restriction of

religious liberty. The plurality of denominations were effectively fighting for survival and were employing the military and governments for their battle. An acceptance of a state church would have violated the central philosophies of both the Enlightenment and Great Awakening. The majority of the Protestant churches were fighting for their lives, as the political realm was struggling for the maintenance and extension of individual liberties and self-government.

Throughout the conflict, ministers reacted to the political and religious developments and implications of the victories and defeats of the American forces. Preachers both privately and publicly regarded American sin as the cause of devastating losses and lack of timely progress. The analysis of sermons and letters demonstrates that calls for fasting, prayer, and humiliation became a standard remedy for the errors of the people. Thus, a common narrative developed which focused on making the residents of New Jersey better Christians. The plurality of the time offered individuals more religious liberty, which occasionally extended to a lack of practice. In the spirit of the Great Awakening, ministers called for a revival, for the survival of both free America and organized religion. The ministers were able to fulfill both sectarian and secular goals through their targeted thoughts. The individual letters suggest that while there was a common narrative, it was not artificially manufactured. Individual ministers independently held this thought, which evolved into a common understanding.

While politicians used religious structures to win the war, and ecclesiastical leaders employed the conflict in their struggles for religious liberty and strength, there existed authentic desires for victory in both arenas. While there were practical applications of both religion and military, the philosophical connection between the

Enlightenment and Great Awakening remained strong and genuine. The convergence of these ideas allowed for people from different sectors to fight for the common goal of natural rights and the government and religious structures that would exist to support the application of this concept. It was apparent to these individuals and groups that God was present in the conflict, on the side of the Patriots, and by extension, not on the side of the British.

While certain denominations did not participate deliberately in the war effort, this did not undermine the ability of the New Jersey residents to organize. The pluralistic environment mitigated the impact of denominations like the Methodists who officially professed support of the king for the sake of survival, while allowing the structures of the Presbyterian, Baptist, and Reformed Churches to meet with success in their efforts. The lack of one controlling denomination provided for a model of liberty during the war. The population and strength of the Presbyterian movement was indicative of its power but did not overshadow the efforts of its counterparts. Rather, the strong denomination served as a model to those which, due to their small populations and infancy, had not yet developed the structures necessary to provide for large-scale organizing. However, their efforts on smaller scales illustrate the power of religious communities in inspiring a generation of Patriots. The Presbyterian Synod served as the model of the power of a unified denomination strengthened by a representative structure. The organization was able to send guidance to its pastors in order to end the isolation of individual churches and dispatched representatives to areas that needed to be organized for the cause. Ecclesiastical leaders like Witherspoon and Caldwell were able to serve with fidelity in

both religious and political governments while ensuring that both were centered upon the common cause of liberty.

The Patriot ministers of the revolutionary era were by design the ecclesiastical leaders; however, the revolution challenged them to become political standard-bearers. They were the educated men to whom others looked for direction. Their understanding of natural rights and ability to communicate the same during the war allowed them to develop a narrative of duty and imperative for themselves and their parishioners. James Caldwell radicalized his congregation, drew from other churches, served in the Synod, provided logistical support as an army officer, and took up arms during battle; other pastors had similar roles. The ability of the men of God to reconcile their religious and civil obligations helped to attract others to the war effort in a time where confusion and uncertainty were the enemies of unity. The ministers led by example and saw recruitment and financial support as the fruits of their labors. The case of the ministers during the revolution demonstrates the key qualities of a society established on liberty. The men were able to participate in different ways, while experiencing the achievement of common goals. The ministers reminded people in both congregations and the public of their political and religious objectives, virtues, and obligations. They provided the direction that was so desperately needed during the time of war.

It is equally apparent that the power of ministers and religious organizations was not solely a characteristic of the Enlightened Patriot ministers. The Anglican priests in New Jersey were able to use their influence to maintain support for the Crown. The powerful Reverends Thomas Chandler and Jonathan Odell continued a liturgy that blessed the King and British government. They supported the British Army and mocked

the Patriot cause. They maintained control over congregations which provided material support to the Loyalist militia and British military. However, much of their mission was to maintain support, rather than to garner new support from those who were unsure about the conflict. The efforts of the Anglicans were undermined by a lack of ministers for all of their churches and deliberate Patriot actions that restricted Loyalist movements. Still, the ministers remained the standard-bearers for Loyalism. In contrast, the majority of the Quakers worked deliberately to maintain their pacifism. Their expulsion of members who took up arms or paid fines in avoidance of such is indicative of a high level of commitment to denominational fidelity. This also demonstrates that their representative governance structures were successful in maintaining the philosophy of the community. There are some exceptions to the experiences of these two denominations; however, both enjoyed relative stability. The cases of the Anglicans and Quakers do not undermine the claims of this study. Alternatively, the experiences serve as examples of the power of ministers and denominational structures in forging public opinion, engaging in efforts of community organization, and approaching an exertion of social control. While opposing forces, their successes are important to proving that the Patriot ministers were able to accomplish the same levels of influence in their own spheres. The Quakers and Anglicans provide context for the remainder of the New Jersey congregations. However, the former did not enjoy the same levels of freedom as those denominations that supported the Patriot cause.

It is important to reconcile that the Protestant-supported government and local committees of safety engaged in calculated campaigns against the rights of Anglican and Methodist ministers to organize their constituents. This would seem to suggest that the

secular forces eclipsed the Christian principles of the ministers and members who were active in the Patriot cause. Such actions arrested the liberty of groups, in violation of the converged political and religious principles at the time. However, examination of the scriptures that the ministers employed suggested that the Patriots were the virtuous forces which were supported by God. They had to engage in deliberate actions in order to stop what they considered to be the false Anglican use of religion to maintain power. The Anglicans were committing strikes against not only the government that would ensure liberty but also against God.

Many Anglican leaders made sacrifices in order to maintain the fidelity of their beliefs. The Patriot ministers and congregations suffered the same consequence when individuals like John Rosbrugh and James Caldwell were killed while performing their merged religious and secular duties. Churches were burned, and generations of faithful suffered due to losses of property—and were even injured or killed. One might argue that the principles of both civil government and religious liberty were sacrificed when religious and secular concerns converged during the war. However, the New Jersey Constitution provided for religious freedom, and most ministers worked after the war to strengthen and revive their congregations. While some ministers continued to participate in government, the common values of the Enlightenment and Great Awakening, like natural rights and self-determination, were infused into the government. The barriers were not broken when the opportunities presented themselves. The civil and religious leaders subscribed to common and clearly articulated values with respect to the future of government.

In the present, the Supreme Court of the United States is increasingly the arbiter of cases regarding the relationship of religion and government. The study of the role of religion in the American revolutionary era helps to provide context by analyzing the deliberate actions and beliefs of the founders. The debate hinges on whether the framers of the government and society intended a Christian country. This study does not conclusively answer that question. Instead, it suggests that Americans accepted the strong relationship between religious and government structures when needed to win the war for independence. This was strengthened by common philosophical and practical goals of both ecclesiastical and political leaders. The convergence of religious and political forces was natural and successful because they believed in the same basic tenets. Jon Butler argued that “‘the Revolution was a profoundly secular event.’ And that ‘religion and Christianity’ played ‘only a secondary role.’”⁹⁴⁴ This opinion is certainly in opposition to that of Mark Noll, who argued that religion is a key factor in American life and government. The reality is that both men are correct. The convergence of political and religious philosophy occurred as a result of need by both the church and state. It was the commonalities that forged the bond; therefore, the cause of liberty was supported by ideas of both republicans and Christians: the same ideas. The war was not fought for Christianity; however, leaders recognized its power in the organization of the American people, and the necessity of the war in ensuring the survival of religious freedom. New Jersey is the most important case study in exploration of this concept because of the religious pluralism that existed in the state, as well as because the power of the assembly instilled in its residents the concepts of freedom and self-determination that were

⁹⁴⁴ As qtd. In Tiedemann, 307

important in both arenas. There was not one controlling religion which exerted dominance in the political or military spheres. New Jersey was indicative of the cooperation, sense of duty, and liberalism that were needed to forge a successful new country.

Appendix A

Synthesized Listing of Documented New Jersey Chaplains

Name	Denomination	Unit
Patriot		
Armstrong, James	Presbyterian	2 nd Maryland Brigade
Blackwell, Robert	Episcopalian	1 st Pennsylvania Regiment
Caldwell, James	Presbyterian	3 rd New Jersey Regiment
Chapman, Jedediah	Congregationalist	Colonel Martin's New Jersey Regiment
Cox, Nicholas	Baptist	
Davis, Jacob	Baptist	
Eakin, Samuel	Presbyterian	New Jersey Salem County Militia
Fithian, Philip Vickers	Presbyterian	Colonel Necomb's Battalion of the New Jersey Militia
Green, Enoch	Presbyterian	
Hollingshead, William	Presbyterian	New York Flying Camp, New Jersey Militia
Hunter, Andrew	Presbyterian	3 rd New Jersey Regiment
Kerr, Nathan	Presbyterian	
MacWhorter, Alexander	Presbyterian	Knox's Artillery Brigade
Mason, John	Presbyterian	3 rd New York Regiment
McKnight, Charles	Presbyterian	
Nevelling, John Wesley	Reformed (German)	
Spencer, Elihu	Presbyterian	Hospital Chaplain of Middle District
Worth, William	Baptist	2 nd Battalion, New Jersey Militia
Loyalist		
Batwell, Daniel	Anglican	3 rd Battalion, New Jersey Volunteers
Cooke, Samuel	Anglican	
Milledge, Phineas	Anglican	1 st Battalion, New Jersey Volunteers
Monden, Charles	Anglican	2 nd Battalion, New Jersey Volunteers
Odell, Jonathan	Anglican	Secretary to Major Andre

Appendix B

Map of Referenced Places in New Jersey



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