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Bishop Madison and the Guardian Angels of Science

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BISHOP MADISON AND THE GUARDIAN ANGELS OF SCIENCE

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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of

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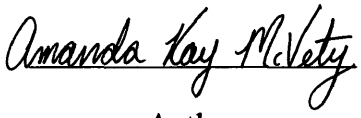

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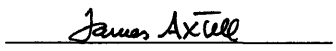

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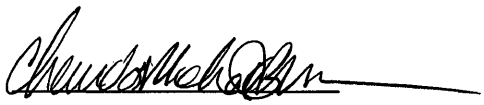

Chandos Brown

Dale Hoak

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the historical discussion of the influence of the Enlightenment in America through an examination of one of its forgotten disciples. Bishop James Madison (1749-1812) was a patriot, Episcopalian bishop, scientist, and college president. A fascinating and complex man, Madison united his various—and seemingly incongruous—interests through a passionate devotion to natural philosophy. Strongly influenced by Scottish "Common Sense" philosophy, Madison exemplified one of the most significant expressions of Enlightenment thought in America. The leading men of the American Enlightenment have largely been segregated into the theologians of the north (particularly at Princeton) and the deists of the south (particularly in Virginia). Madison, however, does not belong in either of these groups and has, consequently, been neglected by history. Bishop James Madison gave up neither his religion nor his science, but molded the two together in one coherent vision of Truth. The story of his life provides a glimpse of a largely forgotten strand of Enlightenment thought in America—one where scientific and religious careers where not mutually exclusive, but mutually reinforcing.

BISHOP MADISON AND THE GUARDIAN ANGELS OF SCIENCE

INTRODUCTION

WILLIAMSBURG, WINTER 1781-1782

The Chevalier d'Aucteville was in a good mood. Franco-American forces had just scored a victory against Cornwallis at Yorktown and the French were settling into Williamsburg, intent on recuperating with a few months of leisure and small-town entertainments. The weather that winter was mild, rarely dropping below freezing, and the Americans welcomed their new foreign deliverers.[1] All of these factors must have combined to give D'Aucteville a generous spirit while composing a description of his new home. The Frenchman saw a "handsome American town" with one main street, "blocked at both extremities by two handsome edifices—the college at the West end and the capitol at the East." He went on to exclaim over the charm of the brick and wood buildings that filled the spaces between those two symbols of the town's political and intellectual prestige.[2] D'Aucteville certainly knew that Williamsburg was no longer the capital of Virginia, and the use of its main building as a hospital alerted him that the College of William and Mary had closed. Such information was apparently of little interest to him, however, for he filled his journal with descriptions of people and activities that made few references to the impact of the war upon the town's 1,500 citizens.

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[1] Jean-Francois-Louis, Comte de Clermont-Crévecoeur, *The American Campaigns of Rochambeau's Army: 1780, 1781, 1782, 1783,* ed. and trans. Howard C. Rice, Jr. and Anne S. K. Brown, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972) 1: 67.

[2] Stephen Bonsal, *When the French Were Here* (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1945): 183.

Not everyone was as light-hearted in Williamsburg that winter. In their relief at being freed from the oppression of the British troops who had occupied the area between June and October of 1781, the citizens received the Frenchmen graciously, but the wounds of war were fresh and the memory of them must have continually hung over their celebrations. The man who perhaps felt the damages most acutely was the Reverend James Madison, bishop of the Anglican Church and president of the College of the William and Mary. In June, 1782, writing to Ezra Stiles, president of Yale, Madison reported, "The College is still an Hospital and has been such ever since the Arrival of the French Army; as it was entirely evacuated both by Professors and Students when the Britons took Possession of this Part of the Country."[3] British possession was hard on the college president. Cornwallis himself had evicted Madison and his family from their home the previous summer with what St. George Tucker called "a contemptuous treatment," forcing them to relocate outside of Williamsburg for the fall and winter of 1781.[4] Madison returned to town in the spring of 1782 only to find the burnt remains of a house and library that had caught fire the past November. He wrote his cousin James Madison, later president of the United States, that he had "not a Book left" after the fire, which had also claimed many of his scientific instruments.[5] The year had certainly been a difficult one and the troubles led Madison to question his future role as college president and pastor. "I am gradually undergoing a Conversion," he told his cousin in 1781, "and I think, if Constitution will stick by me, I shall in less than a year exchange my present

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[3] James Madison to Ezra Stiles, 19 June 1782, in *Letters and Papers of Ezra Stiles,* ed. Isabel M. Calder (New Haven: Yale University Library, 1933): 50-51.
[4] Parker Rouse, Jr. *A House for a President* (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1983): 80.
[5] Madison to James Madison, 15 June 1782, in *The Papers of James Madison*, ed. William T. Hutchinson et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962-) 4: 338.

Profession for a more fashionable one at least." He began studying law, which was "disagreeable—but Divinity & Philosophy in ye Bargain will starve a Man in these Times."[6] Like most of his fellow Virginians in the final years of the Revolutionary War, Madison found his world badly shaken, to the point that he was no longer certain of his place within it. He knew he was a patriot—that was all, but it was enough.

[6] Madison to James Madison, 18 January 1781, in *The Papers of James Madison,* 2: 294.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PATRIOT, AUGUST 1772

Williamsburg must have been bustling with excitement on August 15, 1772, as "Gentlemen in the City and Neighbourhood" gathered at William and Mary to commemorate the founding of the college. In honor of the occasion, the two top students were asked to give speeches before being awarded their bachelor's degrees. Nathaniel Burwell had earned a "Gold Medal" for his work in classical studies; James Madison, one for moral and natural philosophy.[1] Madison's oration focused upon civil and religious liberty, topics he considered the "most important Interests of Humanity."[2] Although Virginians had been speaking more often and more loudly against the British in recent years, they still considered themselves good subjects and their pulpits regularly emitted prayers for the king. Madison's own professors had Loyalist leanings—political inclinations that would send them fleeing to England within a few years. The young man was apparently undaunted by such considerations, however, and used his moment in the spotlight to assert that "The Authority of the People is the best corrective of the Disorders of a State." Madison urged his fellow Virginians to sever the ties between religion and the state, recalling those ancient societies where "the Magistrate has most strictly confined his Attention to civil Interests" as most closely following Nature's intention.[3] "We were born to be free," he maintained, "let it be our Concern to become Worthy Freeman." Madison

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[1] Alex Purdie and John Dixon, *Virginia Gazette* (20 August 1772): 2.
[2] Madison, "An Oration in Commemoration of the Founders of William and Mary College," *Bulletin of the College of William and Mary in Virginia* 31: 7 (November 1937): 7.
[3] Ibid., 12.

called for minds unfettered by the religious and civil oppression that prevented men from entering the "deep academic Grove, where Wisdom reigns with Beauty and with Truth."[4] His critique of the monarchical society that held sway over the lives, and fewer of the hearts, of Williamsburg's citizens certainly must have raised a few eyebrows. Such sentiments, however, were not radical enough even to warrant comment in the *Virginia Gazette*. The gentlemen present were likely more interested in Madison's call to separate the religious and civil spheres of their lives, since they had spent the last two years struggling over the creation of an Anglican bishopric in Virginia. Regardless of where the loyalties of most of those present resided, all seemed content enough to shelve their differences for a while "and spent the day in decent Festivity."[5]

This celebration was possibly many gentlemen's first introduction to James Madison, a man who eventually proved to have a profound influence over the sons and grandsons of these planters and statesmen. It also serves as an informative introduction for modern readers who—while denied the pleasure of Madison's famous oratorical abilities—get a taste of the passions that inspired him throughout his life. Madison adhered to one set of ideals virtually his entire lifetime, committing his soul to God and his time to God's work as a professor and a bishop. His thoughts were those of eighteenth-century America, however, not of a later time. The dying man in 1812 was still firmly committed to the freedoms he so eloquently spoke of in 1772, but he was uttering them in a world that little resembled the Williamsburg of his youth. This new world was unwilling or unable to understand him and the

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[4] Ibid., 13.
[5] Purdie, *The Virginia Gazette* (20 August 1777): 2.

principles that had guided his life as a bishop and as president of William and Mary. Words earning him a place amongst Virginia's respected revolutionary figures in the 1770s were now alienating him from the leading religious and academic institutions of the early nineteenth century. Madison was dismissed as a deist and his college as a center of radical liberalism.[6]

The discussion about Madison and his role in Virginia's history has continued to the present day but it has been limited to few participants. No biographies have been written about him and only one scholarly article was devoted to this talented Virginian.[7] Histories wherein Madison claims a page or two often misrepresent him by emphasizing either his collegiate reforms or his religious liberalism, missing the connection between the two.[8] He is worth closer investigation, because Madison's life presents a fascinating glimpse of the effect of Enlightenment thought in America. Madison—a bishop, a professor and a patriot—spent his life convincing others of the truth of the philosophical values supporting those employments. A dutiful republican, he hated Hamilton and fought fiercely for the Bill of Rights; an unusual clergyman, he was more interested in promoting moral behavior than in producing "saved" Episcopalians; a devoted teacher, he introduced several generations of Virginia's young men to the wonders of the Newtonian universe. Charles Crowe grasped part of Madison's complexity, writing, "In pamphlets, petitions, sermons, and letters written between 1772 and 1800, Madison wove into a tightly fashioned web

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[6] Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976): 333.
[7] Charles Crowe, "Bishop Madison and the Republic of Virtue," *The Journal of Southern History* 30: 1 (February 1964): 58-70.
[8] Examples include: Parker Rouse, Jr., *A House for a President* (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1983); Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

conceptions of the United States as a Republic of Virtue, the home of liberty and equality . . . and revolutionary leader for the reform and purification of the world."[9] What Crowe overlooks, however, is *how* Madison was able to weave this web—what it was that held it all together. The key to the puzzle lies in the one aspect of Madison's life most often neglected: his passionate interest in science. This was eighteenth-century science: natural and moral philosophies, united by their reliance upon Newtonian conceptions of Nature and its universal laws. Madison, well versed in the physical and moral worlds, was fascinated by both their theoretical foundations and their practical implications. This fascination, born in an adolescent interest in scientific experimentation, determined the course of his entire life.

Madison approached Christianity with a passionate conviction that individuals could only begin to comprehend the glory of their Creator after they comprehended the wonders of his Creation. Nature cried out that God existed and revealed details of that existence. The study of natural philosophy led people to Truth, because nothing contrary to God's will could be discovered through scientific investigation. As natural philosophy was ultimately a tool of religion, Madison's role as a professor was as important a Christian service as was his time in the pulpit. Teaching Virginia's young men to glory in the wonder of Nature's laws guided them toward rational examination of Truth. "After contemplating all inferior things, and observing the wonderful adaptation of means to ends," Madison told his students, "the mind, disdaining to be confined to this terestial scene, springs aloft into the ethereal regions of unbounded space, and while it contemplates the infinite wisdom and power to form so many suns and systems of worlds, and to adjust their bulks, orbits, and periods

[9] Crowe, "Bishop Madison and the Republic of Virtue," 68.

with such exactness, is led to form the sublimest conceptions of the author of the universe."[10]

Madison was born into what the historian Henry May labeled America's Moderate Enlightenment when people worshiped a "delicate balance between religion and science."[11] Intellectual life in America between 1763 and 1800 was dominated by the "Common Sense" philosophies of Scotland, which gave religious leaders a means of defending Christianity through science.[12] This Gaelic connection has been well researched in histories of the northern sections of the country with John Witherspoon and the Princeton circle serving as its premier example. Far less attention has been paid to the presence of common sense thought amongst Southerners, with the exception of President James Madison a graduate from Princeton. Historian Mark A. Noll wrote his examination of common sense thought, *Princeton and the Republic, 1768-1822,* to rescue college president Samuel Stanhope Smith from historical neglect: "Neither in his own day nor since has Smith's vision of a republican Enlightenment received the serious attention that has been given to the more strictly theological ideas of his Presbyterian colleagues or the more thoroughly political ideas of the early republic's great statesmen."[13] Smith and Bishop James Madison have suffered a virtually identical fate in the pages of history owing to the similarity of the college presidents' philosophies. Believing that one must first prove God's existence from Nature before attempting to understand Him,

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[10] Robert D. Murchie, A Compendium of Lecutres as delivered by James Madison, president of William and Mary, 1809, AA # 1981.44, Bound Vol. 9, University Archives, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.
[11] May, *The Enlightenment in America,* 100.
[12] Mark A. Noll, "Common Sense Traditions and American Evangelical Thought," *American Quarterly* 37: 2 (Summer 1985): 218.
[13] Mark A. Noll, *Princeton and the Republic, 1768-1822* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989): 190.

Smith and Madison represent the Christian Enlightenment in American thought. While Noll has rescued Smith from being lost amongst the theologies of his more conservative Presbyterian colleagues, no one has yet saved Madison from being obscured by his more liberal statesmen friends. Madison's reliance upon the traditions of Scottish thought is important both because it shows the similarities between academic instruction in northern and southern institutions and because it allowed the bishop/professor to unite his faith with his philosophy.

One of the main reasons historians have not ferreted out the Gaelic interests of Southerners such as Madison is that they have not been sensitive to the religious faith educated Americans maintained in the midst of their "enlightenment." Recognizing that such people have too often been labeled deists (a broad term that historians lay upon all types of people, from Thomas Paine to John Adams), Conrad Wright argued that it is more precise to refer to them as "Supernatural Rationalists."[14] The term comes from A. C. McGiffert's book, *Protestant Thought Before Kant*. That it was written in 1912 would seemingly have given historians plenty of time to adopt its greater specificity. Scholars continue to generalize about deism, however, instead of trying to gain a clearer understanding of those men who believed in God's revelation and involvement in his creation, but firmly held that his involvement could be found only through natural philosophy. This was the middle ground between deism and evangelical Christianity, and it had a profound impact upon American culture in second half of the eighteenth century. "Supernatural Rationalism was Christian apologetics," wrote Wright, "framed in language appropriate to the physics of

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[14] Conrad Wright, *The Liberal Christians: Essays on American Unitarian History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970): 5.

Newton and epistemology of Locke. When the Lockean philosophy lost its persuasiveness, Supernatural Rationalism became irrelevant."[15] Rational Christianity had never included the general populace amongst its adherents for it was based upon philosophical systems that held little interest for most working-class men and women. But its popularity amongst many of the country's leading thinkers allowed it to have a powerful impact upon the structure of American society. When the skepticism of the late Enlightenment questioned the foundations of reasoned religion, its adherents were forced to find new ways of defending their beliefs, or give them up altogether. Many intellectuals ended up rejecting a church that no longer seemed necessary. Conversely, evangelical revivals provided an emotionally based faith that attracted many people away from the impersonal God of rationalism. Unlike most Americans, Madison and his college did not alter their rational foundation or their Christian purpose and, consequently, found themselves out of favor with much of the country.

Madison's religious belief and academic philosophy were born during the patriotic fervor of the Revolutionary period. Famous as having always referred to Heaven as "that great republic," he devoted his life to leading his students toward that republic by educating them to appreciate their own.[16] But Madison's patriotism was not simply the product of Virginia passions; rather, it stemmed from his belief that democratic governments were part of God's divine plan. Science taught that God existed and yielded much information about his nature—information about the virtue of republican governments. Madison believed in intellectual, religious, and political liberty because he knew that people would find the right way if given freedom to

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[15] Ibid., 20.
[16] Leon G. Tyler, "Early Presidents of William and Mary," *WMQ* 1st ser. 1: 2 (October 1892): 73.

explore the world God had created for them. What they would find was essentially a republican government maintained through the educated virtue of its citizens, who humbly gave thanks to God for the blessing of liberty, knowledge, and salvation. Madison devoted his life to being a professor and a bishop, ostensibly because he believed it his patriotic duty to create virtuous citizens, but essentially because science taught him that God desired his children to revel in the glorious freedoms possible in the new America. In nature lay the Truth; in science lay the means to discover it; and in the professor and preacher lay the power to guide people towards it.

Madison's thoughts were already heading in this direction in 1772 when he gave his well-received oration. His four years as a student at William and Mary gave academic synthesis to his thought and direction to his life. His fervent patriotism and belief in the indispensability of liberty gave him the courage to publicly assert the political means to the intellectual end of establishing a virtuous American society. When he introduced himself to the "Gentlemen in the City and Neighbourhood," he called on them to remember that the "theoretical Knowledge of Mankind is susceptible of daily Improvement, of Refinements which not only sublimate Religion, but every Science that glows in the Poet, or shines in the Philosopher."[17] It is likely he had already decided that his own duty lay in helping others to improve their knowledge, and he effectively turned his listeners' attention to the nobility of that goal.

The Madison name was certainly familiar to the Virginia gentlemen in the crowd that afternoon, but it did not yet wield great influence over their opinion of the

[17] Madison, "An Oration in Commemoration of the Founders of William and Mary College," 10.

speaker. James' parents, John and Agatha, were not as wealthy as their cousin whose own son would eventually become the fourth president of the as yet unborn nation. John Madison was the first member of his family to settle in America, leaving Westmoreland for Augusta County, Virginia.[18] James entered the world on August 27, 1749, to become one of eight sons and two daughters raised at "Madison Hall," which John purchased in 1751 to give his large family easier living than their original frontier home had allowed. Little is known about James's early years, except that he was educated at home before going to an academy in Maryland. James entered William and Mary in 1768, a more momentous date than even an eager nineteen-year-old could have foreseen, for he would spend the rest of his life there.[19]

The lack of any of Madison's writings predating his move to Williamsburg makes it impossible to know whether he developed the interests that shaped the rest of his life at William and Mary or if they were present from a young age. Certainly they were enhanced by the new opportunities afforded him. Williamsburg must have seemed wondrous to this young man from the country: it combined the excitement of Virginia's cosmopolitan center with the educational possibilities of one of the finest colleges in America. Those two claims to the town's fame were not resting easily together, however, as dissention murmured in the streets and hollered in the taverns. William and Mary's location in the middle of one of the hotbeds of revolutionary activity—Virginia taking second place only to Massachusetts—placed it in the peculiar position of treading a thin line between academics and politics. It proved

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[18] Rev. C. I. Gibson, "Sketch of Our First Four Bishops," in *Addresses and Historical Papers Before the Centennial Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Virginia* (New York: Thomas Wittaker, 1885): 134.
[19] Dumas Malone, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography,* vol. 11 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946): 182.

decidedly unskilled in the task. The college was rather at odds with the town because while most of the faculty members were Tories intent upon maintaining ties to the English government and its Anglican Church, the men in the House of Burgesses were increasingly hostile to both institutions. Madison's exposure to the issues of the time must have been sharply divided between the lectures he heard during the day and the discussions he engaged in at local taverns in the evening. They were impassioned discussions, particularly over the question of an American episcopate, an issue that occupied the thoughts and pens of many Virginians between 1771 and 1772. Madison's own decision to become a bishop was shaped in the midst of this struggle—reflecting a young man's desire to save his colony from the threat of further English oppression.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STUDENT, AUGUST 1771

Thomas Adams was probably not surprised to receive Richard Bland's long letter lamenting the episcopal troubles besetting Williamsburg. Bland was well known as an ardent champion of colonial rights and any letter with news of Virginia was bound to be filled with information about the latest threat to its well-being.[1] In August 1771 that threat took the form of the Commissary James Horrocks, President of William and Mary, who was determined to raise support for the creation of an American bishopric. Horrocks had published an ad in the *Virginia Gazette* the previous April calling for a meeting of the clergy, but he received little response. Not a man to accept defeat, he placed another ad in the paper in May, calling for a June 4th meeting to discuss "the Expediency of an Application to proper Authority for an *American* Episcopate."[2] Even with this second attempt, only twelve of the one hundred-some divines showed up, the others apparently thinking it not worth the trouble of a trip to Williamsburg.[3] The twelve present quickly divided themselves into two camps, with eight in favor of establishing a bishopric and four against it. Both the bitterness of the division and common knowledge of the meeting made it impossible to keep the events out of the public sphere and the two camps rapidly swelled with lay support. "After much Jangle & Disputation," Bland wrote to Adams, "Formal Protests were published in the Gazettes by the four Protesters,

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[1] Richard Bland to Thomas Adams, 1 August 1771, *WMQ* 1st ser., 5: 3 (January 1897): 157.
[2] Purdie, *The Virginia Gazette* (9 May 1771): 3.
[3] Purdie, *The Virginia Gazette* (6 June 1771): 2.

against the legality as well as the regularity of the proceeding. This brought on a Severe Paper War."[4]

This war was a topic of great interest for almost everyone in Virginia, but it was a source of special contention at the college, as it divided the small faculty. Madison surely heard the pleas of divinity professor the Reverend John Camm for establishing a bishopric, just as he must have read the letter of protest by fellow professors the Reverend Samuel Henley and the Reverend Thomas Gwatkin in the *Gazette* on June 6th. Henley and Gwatkin had been in Williamsburg only since 1770 and were proud of their English loyalties, but they argued against the Virginia Episcopate. They had seven objections, but most interesting was their belief that it would give the colonies greater independence from Britain by not requiring that their bishops go to London for approval and ordination.[5] Their argument was not that of most of Virginia's men, but both were working toward the same end. The patriots believed that bringing an episcopate to the colonies would give the Anglican Church, and correspondingly the king, greater authority over America. "But of all Tyrannies a spiritual Tyranny is the most to be dreaded," wrote "A Real Layman" in the *Gazette*, "and of all Schemes to enslave the Colonies this of establishing a Bishops is the most effectual.[6] Both sides were in deep earnest and Bland adopted a fittingly grave tone in his letter to Adams, saying that if a bishopric were installed in Virginia, it would "produce greater convulsions than any thing that has ever as yet happened in this part of the Globe."[7] It had already become a topic of debate in the capitol, with the House

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[4] Bland to Adams, *WMQ*, 153.
[5] Purdie, *The Virginia Gazette* (6 June 1771): 2.
[6] Purdie, *The Virginia Gazette* (20 June 1771): 1.
[7] Bland to Adams, *WMQ*, 154.

of Burgesses issuing an official statement of thanks to Henley and Gwatkin for "the wise and well timed opposition they have made to the pernicious project of a few mistaken Clergymen."[8]

The paper war continued to fill the pages of the *Gazette* until March 1772, but the arguments for and against the proposed episcopate remained little changed over time.[9] The monotony led Purdie and Dixon's *Gazette* to declare their paper closed to any more letters on the subject, for "many of our Readers, for some Time, have complained of their being tired with the Dispute . . . and we begin to be *sick* of it likewise."[10] The episcopate was never instituted and the matter seems to have died a slow death from social boredom, the issue already settled in the readers' minds; however, while Virginians found new issues to argue about, they did not forget the bishopric war and its repercussions continued long after the letters stopped making front-page news. Near the beginning of the fight, Bland had forebodingly remarked that "a Religious Dispute is the most Fierce and Destructive of all others to the Peace & Happiness of Government."[11] Fortunately for Virginia, the colony did not tear itself apart over the issue of a bishopric and Bland's dire warning to Adams never came to pass. The college was not so lucky, however, and did not come out of the fight unscathed—too many of its principal men had involved their pens and their reputations.

President Horrocks, the man responsible for starting the whole thing, earned the ire of many people as a conspirator for the crown. After listing the various offices

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[8] Rind, *The Virginia Gazette* (18 July 1771): 1.
[9] George W. Pilcher, "Virginia Newspapers and the Dispute Over the Proposed Colonial Episcopate, 1771-1772," *The Historian* 23: 1 (November 1960): 111.
[10] Purdie, *The Virginia Gazette* (12 March 1772): 3.
[11] Bland to Adams, *WMQ,* 154.

that Horrocks held, Bland told Adams that "he is not content with an accumulation of Preferments, he is attempting to soar higher by setting all America into Flame, in which, perhaps, he may be made the First Sacrifice."[12] The words proved to be more prophetic than Bland could have known. Horrocks headed to England in June 1771, avowedly for health reasons, but the talk of Williamsburg held that he was off to plead his case before the king.[13] There must have been a sense of righteous vindication amongst the citizens of Virginia when they learned that he never made it to London, dying in Portugal on March 20, 1772.[14] Horrocks proved to be the first and only official sacrifice of the bishopric war, but his former faculty was still trying to repair the damage it caused. The Reverend John Camm, appointed president following Horrocks removal, was in a rather delicate position, considering he was one of the former president's firmest allies. While Gwatkin and Henley must have reveled in their "thank you" from the Burgesses, Williamsburg kept it in mind that their argument was born more of English than colonial loyalties. Gwatkin remained especially suspect, for his opposition to the idea of a colonial episcopate was later revealed as having much to do with his decision that it was simply impracticable. Henley, at least, had based many of his arguments on a general suspicion of clerical authority as likely to remove individual freedom.[15] While the issue of the bishopric was laid to rest, suspicion towards William and Mary's faculty simmered beneath the surface of Williamsburg life until becoming a public issue again in 1774.

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[12] Ibid., 155.
[13] Ibid., 154.
[14] Thad W. Tate, "The Colonial College, 1693-1782," in *The College of William and Mary: A History*, ed. Susan Godson et al., 2 vols. (Williamsburg: King and Queen Press, 1993) 1: 118.
[15] Ray Hiner, Jr., "Samuel Henley and Thomas Gwatkin; Partners in Protest," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 37: 1 (March 1968): 48.

Such was the atmosphere at the college and surrounding town during Madison's last two years of school. He must have had a difficult time balancing his loyalties between the professors who were opening up the intellectual world and the Virginians who shared his passionate desire for autonomy. Challenging though it was, balance was achieved: young Madison successfully gained the favor of the faculty through his natural talents and the friendship of his increasingly radical peers through his liberal leanings. Showing his approval of Henley's arguments during the bishopric fight, Madison dedicated his 1772 oration to his moral philosophy professor.[16] The faculty returned the esteem by appointing Madison writing master in May 1772 and professor of mathematics the following spring.[17] Throughout this time, the young man must have often contemplated the course of his future. In Williamsburg he had found an outlet for his intellectual interests and an invigorating political atmosphere, and the idea of leaving both to follow his father's course as a farmer was incompatible with his tastes as an enlightened young scholar. Madison decided that his future calling was to be a professor and a minister, choices complicated by the political climate of Virginia in the 1770s.

It is difficult to determine the specific motivations behind Madison's decision in 1773 to begin studying theology. On the one hand, his fellow professors were all ordained clergymen, standard practice since William and Mary was affiliated with the Anglican Church. The history of his role in the church, however, makes such an explanation seem rather hollow. If he became a bishop solely for practical reasons, he could have cast aside his robes after the Revolutionary War when the college

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[16] Madison, "An Oration in Commemoration of the Founders of William and Mary College," 4.
[17] "Journal of the Presidents and Masters," *WMQ* 1st ser., 13: 4 (April 1905): 234; "Journal of the Presidents and Masters," *WMQ* 1st ser., 14: 1 (July 1905): 28.

became a state institution instead of a religious one. He proved a devoted servant of the Episcopal Church until his death. It is more probable that Madison's decision to study divinity was based upon both his belief that natural philosophy led its students toward knowledge of God and an urge to support his fellow Virginians' desire to fill their pulpits with colonials instead of Englishmen. Madison was a patriot, and he knew he could serve his state, and perhaps eventually his country, in the dual position of professor and minister.

One of Horrock's arguments for establishing an American episcopate had been that it would encourage more colonists to become bishops. "A Real Layman" admitted in the *Gazette* that having more natives in the order would be a great advantage for Virginia, but concluded that the benefits did not outweigh the potential for tyranny invited by a stronger English presence.[18] In addition to the fear of greater British power, the colonists were also wary of the imposition of Old World "hierarchical social norms" on to their firmly established order.[19] Vestries were eager to hire American men to lead their parishes, rather than imported, likely corrupt, Englishmen. The vestries had not been very successful, for between 1723 and the Revolution, only 46 of the 174 recorded Virginia clerics were graduates of American colleges.[20] With such distributions, it was easy for colonials to argue that all of the problems they had been having with their clergy, specifically the bishopric issue, stemmed from placing Europeans in their pulpits. Historians have long debated the validity of these claims against Virginia's clergy in the years preceding the

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[18] Purdie,*The Virginia Gazette* (20 June 1771): 1.
[19] Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia,* 197.
[20] David Holmes, *A Brief History of the Episcopal Church* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1993): 22.

Revolutionary War. Writing the history of his church, Bishop William Meade derisively declared in 1857 that the early clergy were largely "the refuse or more indifferent of the English, Irish, and Scottish Episcopal Churches, who could not find promotion at home." In contrast, Meade praised the laity as "natives of the soil" whose "morals and religion were in general greatly in advance of that of the clergy."[21] Modern accounts have lost much of the evangelical scorn that characterized Meade and his contemporaries' visions, and twentieth-century historians are much kinder to the colonial clergy. In his recent history of the Episcopal Church, David Holmes asserts that they were generally competent men with sober lifestyles.[22] Realities sometimes have little to do with perceptions, however, and Virginians were clearly disposed to view their clergy unfavorably. The list of grievances with England continued to grow and to it was added the dependence of the colonists upon Old World clergy.

Virginians were proud of their college, but many must have pondered in 1774 whether it was worth all the trouble it seemed to encourage. It probably did not take reflective citizens long to conclude that the problem was not the college itself, but the English clerical professors who just could not fit in with their Williamsburg neighbors. Samuel Henley raised eyebrows with his liberal theology in the classroom and fueled anger with his attempts to obtain the clerical post at Bruton Parish.[23] Thomas Gwatkin had more than eyebrows raised toward him: he informed his fellow faculty members at a meeting in May 1774 that he had recently been awakened by the

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[21] William Meade, *Old Churches, Ministers and Families of Virginia* 2 vols. (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1966) 1: 50-51.
[22] Holmes, *A Brief History of the Episcopal Church,* 43.
[23] For the full story of Henley's rise and fall in the eyes of Williamsburg's citizens, see Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia,* 209-40.

pounding of drunken students upon his door.[24] The inebriated visitors had perhaps been riled up by tavern arguments over politics and decided to come "discuss" the issue with their confessedly-Tory professor. Gwatkin earned the derision of the rest of Williamsburg that same month by refusing to preach a sermon in honor of the citizens of Boston, who were suffering the "hostile invasion" of the British in their harbor. Gwatkin was apparently uncomfortable joining the Burgesses in prayer for "Divine Interposition" to "give us one Heart, and one Mind, firmly to oppose by all just and proper Means, every Injury to American Rights."[25] The professor committed the ultimate sin in February 1775, when he agreed to serve as chaplain to Lord Dunmore, the colonial governor who was alienated from most of Williamsburg's populace.[26] Having placed himself in Dunmore's camp, Gwatkin soon found himself in his same boat—sailing to England with the evicted Dunmore in April, glad to be finally rid of the rebellious colonists. Frustrated by his own deteriorating relationships with townspeople over the Bruton Parish issue, Henley quickly followed Gwatkin's lead, making his own passage back across the Atlantic.[27]

Gwatkin and Henley's exit from the Williamsburg scene left Madison and John Camm the star players at the college. Camm was still president of the college, but it had been a dubious position from the beginning. His arguments in favor of establishing the bishopric still rang in the ears of Williamsburg's citizens. One who had proved himself a traitor to the patriotic cause once, they figured, would surely do so again. Much faith must have been invested in young Madison, the native son who

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[24] "Journal of the Meetings of the Presidents," *WMQ*, 1st ser., 14: 4 (April 1906): 244-45.
[25] Purdie, *The Virginia Gazette* (26 May 1774): 2.
[26] Dixon & Hunter, *Virginia Gazette* (18 February 1775): 2.
[27] Hiner, "Samuel Henley and Thomas Gwatkin," 50.

had proven himself a friend of liberty in his oration three years before. The times called for patriots, both in the legislature and in the churches. When men like Gwatkin refused to use the pulpit to preach the righteousness of the colonial cause, it reinforced the opinion of Virginians that they needed to be listening to Americans instead of Englishmen on Sunday. Church was a social meeting place, and the ears of parishioners rang with the local news almost as much as they did with recitations of Common Prayer.[28] The political responsibilities of the clergy gave them a role of great importance in colonies where resisting governmental authority had become commonplace. There were surely nods of approval in the taverns when Madison's decision to become an ordained bishop was discussed: finally, they would have a man who understood the colonial situation to teach their sons and preach to their families. Madison's announcement in the *Gazette,* "I intend for England soon," must have brought almost as much satisfaction to its readers as had the departure of his former faculty members, but for an entirely different reason.[29] The same issue also informed Virginians of their own Peyton Randolph's election to the presidency of the Continental Congress, that group of men who had "distinguished themselves in the cause of American freedom."[30] Madison was doing his own part for the cause, and his neighbors surely sent him off early that summer of 1775 with warm wishes for a safe journey and a speedy return.

Little is known about Madison's time in London between the summers of 1775 and 1776. He received his ordination from the bishop of London in the fall of

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[28] Lester Douglas Joyce, *Church and Clergy in the American Revolution* (New York: Exposition Press, 1966): 39.
[29] Dixon, *The Virginia Gazette* (27 May 1775): 3.
[30] Ibid.

1775. Instead of immediately returning home, however, Madison took advantage of the educational opportunities of the cosmopolitan city, studying chemistry and anatomy under Thomas Cavallo, the famous Italian scientist.[31] Cavallo apparently left an impression upon Madison, for he was still assigning the Italian's book, *A Complete Treatise of Electricity*, to his students in 1803.[32] Even so, as much as he enjoyed his scientific pursuits, the young American must have been frustrated to be away from the events occurring across the Atlantic and felt isolated from the Englishmen around him. Summer found him on the return voyage to the newly-declared but not-yet-independent United States of America. He was surely as glad to be leaving as the English were to see him go. Madison had been under surveillance as a suspected spy, a not erroneous accusation considering he arrived in Falmouth at the end of July with papers from London that were kept for the "use of General Washington."[33] The new bishop returned to a continent and a college torn apart by conflicting loyalties.

In the eyes of Williamsburg's citizens, this patriotic young man presented quite a contrast to the other faculty members. President Camm, Emmanuel Jones, and John Dixon were all inspiring bitter feelings among their neighbors for their Tory sentiments.[34] Meanwhile, the newly-returned Madison quickly set about helping to form a student company of volunteers who were "to do duty with the militia" of Williamsburg. He was elected captain and saw fighting a couple times in the next

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[31] Lyon G. Tyler, *Williamsburg, The Old Colonial Capital* (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, Publishers and Printers, 1907): 166.
[32] Theodore Hornberger, *Scientific Thought in the American Colleges, 1638-1800* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1945): 64.
[33] Dixon, *The Virginia Gazette* (24 August 1776): 3; Tate, 127.
[34] Tyler, *Williamsburg: The Old Colonial Capital,* 166.

few years.[35] But most of his time was still devoted to the college, and Madison and the newly-hired John Bracken held their own against the other faculty. On November 29, 1776, Madison moved to eliminate the king's name on surveying licenses that the college was issuing.[36] Camm refused to sign the document and, probably knowingly, sealed his fate. Virginians had little sympathy for Tories that winter, and in the spring the college board dismissed Camm, Jones, and Dixon.[37] Camm retreated with his wife and children to his farm in York County, though it was but a brief exile, for the former president died in 1779.[38] His post did not long remain empty: the board appointed twenty-eight-year-old Madison (two years shy of the official age requirement) president of William and Mary for one year in September 1777.[39] The temporary post became permanent, not absented until Madison's death in 1812.

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[35] Dixon, *The Virginia Gazette* (22 August 1777): 2.
[36] "Journal of the Presidents and Masters," *WMQ* 1st ser., 15: 2 (October 1906): 141-142.
[37] Tate, "The Colonial College," 128.
[38] Rouse, *A House for a President,* 72.
[39] Dixon, *The Virginia Gazette* (5 September 1777): 2.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PRESIDENT, AUGUST 1780

It was likely a pleasant surprise for Madison to receive a letter from Ezra Stiles in the summer of 1780, for the fields between Connecticut and Virginia were bloody with fighting. The two men were strangers connected by their new government (letters between the two were delivered by delegate friends at Congress in Philadelphia) and their roles as college presidents. Bridging the distance between them, Stiles wrote, "We are to glory that an Infant Republic of Letters is to be found in America. The infant Seminaries, Colleges & Universities here, I think, should cultivate a mutual Intercourse & honorable friendship with one another."[1] Madison accepted the invitation with pleasure, replying that "frequent Communication" would strengthen the intellectual spirit in America. Such intellectual development was an issue of great importance to Madison because he desired to make Europe view the country as a "new Star" in the literary horizon. "But surely," he wrote, "it belongs to our Colleges & Universities to lay the Foundation from [which] the future glory of America shall arise."[2] Madison's interest in the issue was not limited to the prestige of the new country but extended to its future well-being, an issue he also saw as intimately tied to its intellectual progress. "If the rising Generations be thereby rendered wise & good," he anticipated, "if America can behold her Sons encreasing

[1] "Correspondence of Ezra Stiles, President of Yale College, and James Madison, President of William and Mary College, 1780," *WMQ* 2nd ser., 7: 3 (July 1927): 292.
[2] Ibid., 293.

in Knowledge and in Virtue, then indeed may we, Sir, at least, as far as respects ourselves, rejoice in having rendered the most solid advantages to our Country."[3]

Madison's idea that educated virtue would prove a blessing to a nation struggling for its existence was a reminder of his enlightened education. While the French did not begin sending troops to aid the American fight against oppression until 1778, they had been sending the liberating works of their philosophers across the Atlantic for years. One of the most influential of these French writers upon American thought proved to be the Baron de Montesquieu. *L'Esprit des lois* was translated into English in 1750 and was in the hands of many educated Americans by the time Madison entered college. The Baron's pen was witty and his thought profound as he contemplated the three forms of government and the ways in which they maintained their control. A reader did not have to progress further than the author's forward to meet his essential vision of virtue as the "spring that makes republican government move."[4] This virtue was not Christian; the author claimed it to be political. Virtue is a love of one's country and "a renunciation of one's self, which is always a very painful thing." Since people are not naturally disposed to sacrifice their good for the public good, it becomes necessary to educate them that they should do so. "It is in a republican government," Montesquieu wrote, "that the full power of education is needed."[5]

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[3] Ibid., 293-294.
[4] Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws,* trans. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, and Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989): xli.
[5] Ibid., 35.

Madison embraced the idea that education in his new America "should attend to inspiring" this political virtue, for "everything depends on establishing this love."[6] "I am persuaded Republicanism can never acquire the Ascendancy it ought to in this Country," he wrote Thomas Jefferson, "until a plan of Education . . . is carried into Effect with Sincerity and Ardour."[7] Yet the clergyman was unwilling to neglect the Christian virtue Montesquieu dismissed as unnecessary. Throughout his life, Madison filled the ears of his students and parishioners with admonitions to be virtuous in *all* respects, with emphasis on moral and political aspects. Nevertheless, he was indebted to Montesquieu for his passionate belief in the importance of education for making patriots of the nation's young men. The revolution being fiercely waged that summer of 1780 when Madison wrote to Stiles of the "rising Generations" gave Americans a sense of a new, grand beginning. Even before the cannons ceased their booming, these college presidents were eagerly at work ushering in a new era of education devoted to producing a virtuous citizenry.

These were not easy times in which to begin transforming collegiate education, especially at William and Mary, where severed ties with England meant lost funds for the formerly Anglican college. "Since the Revolution," Madison wrote Stiles, "its former Resources have been almost annihilated." In 1780 the institution was relying upon a paltry rent from lands outside Williamsburg. "But even reduced as we are in our Resources," he continued, "a Change has taken Place, which I flatter

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[6] Ibid., 36.
[7] Madison to Jefferson, 10 February 1799, "Letters of Rev. James Madison, President of William and Mary College, to Thomas Jefferson," *WMQ* 2nd ser., 5: 2 (April 1925): 92.

myself, will render this Seminary infinitely more beneficial."[8] The change was a radical reform of the college's foundation and structure, a reform initiated by Jefferson and acted upon by the Board of Visitors in 1779.

The first challenge to William and Mary's system came on June 1, 1776, in an anonymous article in the *Virginia Gazette*.[9] The author, an early proponent of Madison's thought that the "first Plan of our College was imperfect," provided a number of suggestions on how to perfect it.[10] Jefferson took action on the issue of making the college "more useful" in 1779 in the midst of a larger attempt to reform Virginia's legal structure. He asked the legislature to assume control of the institution, a request he cushioned with structural reforms of the college to make it "as publicly advantageous, in proportion, as it is publicly expensive."[11] Jefferson proposed to dismiss the divinity, grammar, and Indian schools, leaving the institution with eight professorial chairs. Jefferson told the legislature that it was their "peculiar duty" to aid the school where "those who are to be the future guardians of the rights and liberties of their country may be endowed with science and virtue, to watch and preserve the sacred deposit."[12] The Virginia legislature clearly showed itself to be less than thrilled with the idea of collegiate reform, not even taking up the full report until 1785.

Dismayed by the delegates' refusals of assistance, the Visitors of the college met on December 4, 1779, to undertake the work themselves. They did not have the

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[8] "Correspondence of Ezra Stiles, President of Yale College, and James Madison, President of William and Mary College, 1780,"*WMQ,* 294.
[9] Tate, "The Colonial College," 127.
[10] "Correspondence of Ezra Stiles, President of Yale College, and James Madison, President of William and Mary College, 1780,"*WMQ,* 294.
[11] Thomas Jefferson, "A Bill for Amending the Constitution of the College of William and Mary, and Substituting More Certain Revenues for Its Support," in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson,* 2: 538.
[12] Ibid., 539.

funds to enact Jefferson's specific plan, but they followed his general idea.[13] "The Society at present," Madison explained to Stiles, letting him know the extent of their reforms, "consistes of a President—who is always to be one of the Professors, and is now Prof. of Math. & Nat. Phily. 2. of Law & Police. 3. of Chymistry & Medicine. 4. of Ethics & the Belle Lettres. 5. of Modern Languages." Madison was also careful to explain they had done away with the divinity professorship since "it is now thought that Establishments in [Favor] of any particular Sect are incompatible with the Freedom of a Republic."[14] This attempt to bury the college's Anglican history was not only a stride toward freedom but also one towards economic stability, since the legislature had proven unwilling to give either time or money to a school infamous for the religious and political troubles of the 1770s.[15] Madison's legacy from his former professors proved to be the difficult job of not only overseeing academic reform but rebuilding William and Mary's reputation.

The solution to distancing the new college from the old was found in the word so dear to Virginians' hearts—"freedom." Freed from the religious and civil ties with England, William and Mary gradually opened to more students and allowed them the liberty of shaping their own education. "The Doors of the University are open to all," Madison bragged, "nor is even a knowledge in the Ant. Languages a previous Requisite for Entrance." Closing the gap between the educational opportunities afforded the young men of Virginia, the Visitors decided that the college should welcome more than simply the sons of planters and businessmen. After all, these

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[13] Tate, "The Colonial College," 131-133.
[14] "Correspondence of Ezra Stiles, President of Yale College, and James Madison, President of William and Mary College, 1780,"*WMQ,* 294.
[15] Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia,* 238.

young men were all going to be voting citizens of this new nation and needed to have the same virtuous education instilled within them. The second aspect of these academic opportunities came in the Visitors' decision to allow the students to pick their own classes. "The Students have the liberty of attending whom they please," Madison wrote, "or all the [different] Lectures in a Term if they think proper." William and Mary was the first college to adopt this elective system later championed in Jefferson's University of Virginia. The radical nature of this step can be seen in a letter written by a former Virginia student on a northern college that still had not adopted it in 1841. Shocked that Princeton would not accept students who could not or would not take all the available courses, Judge William H. Cabell remarked, "It is wonderful to me that a free people will submit to such aristocratic tyranny."[16] William and Mary's open structure would eventually become the standard in America, but it took a while for the rest of the country to embrace the radical reforms of 1779.

Having secured for Virginia's young (white) men the freedom to pursue studies of their own liking, Madison quickly set to work persuading them to pursue those most directly leading to virtue. In the college president's mind this meant science. "I want to see adopted a Mode of Education," he wrote his cousin, "which shall tend to strengthen & not depress the mental Faculties . . . which shall habituate the infant Mind to think, to reason at as early a Period as its Powers will permit, & thus conduct it gradually to real Science."[17] He published a resolve for the "Encouragement of Science" in the *Gazette* on January 8, 1780, making his

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[16] Judge William H. Cabell to Samuel McDowell Reid, 19 June 1841, "Glimpses of Old College Life," *WMQ* 1st ser., 8: 4 (April 1900): 227.
[17] Madison to Madison, 24 December 1794, in *The Papers of James Madison*, 15: 422.

predilection for the subject a topic of public interest. The paper announced that "a Student on paying annually one thousand pounds of Tobacco shall be entitled to attend any two of the following Professors."[18] While amusing to modern eyes, this economic barter made it is easier for more students to take more classes. Madison personally hoped they would see it as an incentive to take more science classes.

Madison was not alone in his enthusiasm. "A faith in science, specifically in American science," wrote historian Russel Blaine Nye, "permeated the thinking of all ranks and classes of Americans during the years 1776-1820."[19] The citizens of Williamsburg were generally eager to be educated and entertained by the popular experiments of the eighteenth century. Many probably attended Mr. Wall's lecture on electricity, advertised in the *Gazette* on January 5, 1775, for "ALL LOVERS OF THE SCIENCES." "For promoting religion, morality, useful knowledge, the instruction of the curious, and for the benefit of all persons afflicted with paralytic disorders," the townspeople gathered to witness the wonders of a "small shower of artificial snow" and the "electrical kiss."[20] Newspaper editors John Dixon and William Hunter did their own scientific promotion, advertising the sale of a catalogue of books that included twenty-nine scientific works. Williamsburg's citizens could purchase *Shaw's Chemical Lectures for the Improvement of Arts, Trades, and Natural Philosophy* and *Ferguson's Astronomy* at the same time as they filled their shopping baskets with *Don Quixote* and *Hedrico's Greek Lexicon.*[21] Americans looked favorably upon science with both pragmatic and patriotic eyes. They knew it could

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[18] Dixon, *The Virginia Gazette* (8 January 1780): 4.
[19] Russel Blaine Nye, *The Cultural Life of the New Nation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960): 56-57.
[20] Pinkey, *The Virginia Gazette,* (5 January 1775): 3.
[21] Dixon, *The Virginia Gazette* (25 November 1775): 1.

enhance their industry and agriculture, and they hoped it would eventually free them from even *intellectual* dependence upon Europe.[22] The idea that science would make them virtuous was not as popular among the general public, but they certainly were not averse to the idea. They listened contentedly to those men who preached and lectured about the virtues inherent in an examination of the sciences they so enjoyed.

"Every circumstance concurs to make it probable," David Ramsey told a Charlestown audience in 1778, "that the arts and sciences will be cultivated, extended, and improved, in independent America. They require a fresh soil, and always flourish most in new countries."[23] Eighteenth-century Americans felt a peculiar attachment to this "fresh soil," imagining it to be an unending source of prosperity and growth. Citizens of Europe had long ago corrupted the fertility of their land through overuse and political structures incompatible with nature. America was a new beginning for mankind, one where humanity would receive its "most finished touches."[24] "Americans recognized the dangers as well as the opportunities of the physical and social environment they occupied," wrote the historian Barbara G. Rosenkrantz, "but with all the benefits of useful knowledge potentially accessible through 'demonstrative experiment,' one senses the urgency to make good the promise."[25] God had blessed them by giving the land on which to live and the liberty to examine it as they willed, securing them an opportunity for scientific esteem greater than any possible in Europe. "Our independence will redeem one quarter of

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[22] Scott L. Montgomery, *Minds for the Making* (New York: Guilford Press, 1994): 16-18.
[23] David Ramsay, "On the Arts and Sciences in a New Republic," in *Theories of Education in Early America, 1655-1819,* ed. Wilson Smith (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1973): 226.
[24] Ibid., 228.
[25] Barbara G. Rosenkrantz, "Early American Learned Societies as Informants on Our Past: Some Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Research," in *The Pursuit of Knowledge in the Early American Republic* ed. Alexandra Oleson and Sanborn C. Brown (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976): 348.

the globe from tyranny and oppression," Ramsay optimistically asserted, "and consecrate it the chosen seat of truth, justice, freedom, learning and religion. We are laying the foundation of happiness for countless millions."[26]

Madison shared Ramsay's sentiments and furthered the argument for supporting education with his insistence upon the virtue of scientific study. God had given the Americans the tools with which to establish themselves as a free people: a land safe from corruption and full of scientific opportunity. It was now their job to make sure they took advantage of their blessing, devoting time and effort to studying that land and the greater natural laws controlling its existence. The rewards of their work would be innumerable, creating a society able to maintain its freedom in the face of a world hostile to their intentions. This republic, supported by the springs of virtuous citizens, would shine as the height of human government. "I hope the best supporters to our Republic will go forth from our University," Madison wrote Jefferson, "and that with the Assistance of Science, Time will only serve to give her more and more stability."[27] Just as Madison had served as captain of William and Mary's college company, he continued to serve his country through his work of turning young students into virtuous patriots. His call was to the classroom and to the pulpit, for America needed intellectually capable men in both capacities. "Of what infinite importance, then, is it not to parents and to their children," he preached in 1799, "to have in their own neighbourhood, or in their parishes, schools under the guidance of men whose profession and whose duty is the inculcation and the practice of the sublimest moral duties, while they are instilling into the infant mind the first

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[26] Ibid., 229.
[27] Madison to Jefferson, 28 December 1786, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson,* 10: 643.

rudiments of science. Parents ought to have the highest security that the pastor of their church will be the faithful guardian of the morals and improvement of their children."[28] Madison's role as a statesmen encompassed both his time in the classroom and in the pulpit, for he remained firmly committed to the idea that virtue could not be found where Christianity was absent.

[28] Madison, An Address to the Members of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Virginia, 1799, Bishop Madison Papers, AA# 1981.121, University Archives, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BISHOP, FEBRUARY 1800

It was solemn day in Williamsburg; mourners filed quietly into Bruton Parish. They had come to remember their country's former president and greatest patriot, George Washington, who had departed from this life on December 14, 1799. February 22nd would have marked his sixty-eighth birthday, and it seemed fitting to gather to hear a sermon in honor of the man they all loved. Madison delivered the discourse that morning in grand style. The eulogy was appropriately devoted to remembering Washington's personal history, but Madison also wanted to impress upon his listeners the lessons they should take from the great man's life. "Ah! Fellow-citizens," he boomed from the pulpit, "remember that virtue only is estimable in the eyes of God; and that, without it, republics are victims destined for the altars of ambition."[1] He wisely returned their minds to the freedoms they had fought for just twenty years before. If anyone in the audience remained unconvinced that religion was necessary to the continued prosperity of their country, they were silent in respect for Madison and Washington. Madison devoted his life to helping to secure that freedom through his work of inspiring men to educated virtue at the college. He believed that his calling as a bishop spoke to the other area of people's lives where they might continue the fight against tyranny. "Remember," he urged them, "that

[1] Madison, *A Nation Mourns: Bishop James Madison's Memorial Eulogy on the Death of George Washington*, ed. David L. Holmes (Mount Vernon: The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, 1999): 60.

without just sentiments of religion, virtue perishes; a dreadful prostration, liberty is gone for ever."[2]

Madison was not alone is his belief that it takes both education and religion to create a prosperous state. In a 1786 address, Benjamin Rush argued that they combined to influence individuals and governments with such great affect that "it is impossible to measure the degree of happiness and perfection to which mankind may be raised."[3] Madison, Rush, and other leading American intellectuals devoted themselves to the goal of creating a moral populace from which would come the next generation of leaders. They did not believe such a task could be accomplished outside of Christianity, because mankind's virtue came from God. "Virtue," Madison preached in 1795, "such as republics and Heaven require, must have its foundation in the heart; it must penetrate the whole man."[4] This goal of securing people's hearts proved as challenging as securing their minds, if not more so. Religious institutions had suffered during the Revolution, particularly Madison's own Episcopal Church, which severed ties with its English mother. Madison spent his entire life trying to strengthen the church in Virginia. It was a challenging task, especially because his commitment to liberty extended to the other churches and individuals who opposed his efforts.

"The churches have remained shut," the French observer Chastellux wrote of Virginia in 1782. "People have done without a minister, and have not even thought of any future arrangements for establishing an Anglican church independent of

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[2] Ibid., 60.
[3] Benjamin Rush, "On Republican Education," in *Theories of Education in Early America,* ed. Smith, 255.
[4] Madison, *Manifestations of the Providence Towards America* (Richmond: Thomas Nicolson, 1795): 18-19.

England."[5] Had they read his journal, colonists would probably have informed the Frenchman that other matters had occupied their attention the past few years. They must win the war before they could begin reconstruction. Even when it came time for such work to be undertaken, however, many Americans were too preoccupied with the political and economic aspects of their new nation to worry overly much about the state of its churches. Clergymen like Madison faced a difficult task in the years following the Revolution, fighting an uphill battle against the laity and the new government to reorganize religious institutions ripped asunder by war.[6]

When the war began in 1776, the Anglican Church in Virginia claimed 164 churches and 91 clergymen. By the time of the first convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church (the name started in Maryland in 1780 and quickly became the established title) in 1785, there were only 36 clergymen serving in the state.[7] The convention's first act was the election of the thirty-six-year-old Madison to its presidency. The initial goal of these proceedings was disestablishment, to get the church out of the control of the government, securing the freedoms enjoyed by the evangelical sects in Virginia.[8] Freedom brings responsibility, however, and Episcopalians throughout America were confronted with the difficulty of creating a church united by a common purpose and government. While the Virginians were working out local problems at their convention, they sent the Rev. David Griffith to

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[5] Marquis de Chastellux, *Travels in North America in the Years 1780, 1781, and 1782*, trans. Howard C. Rice, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963) 2: 442.
[6] Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989): 59-60.
[7] T. G. Dashiell, "History of the Church in Virginia from 1785 to the Death of Bishop Meade," in *Addresses and Historical Papers Before the Centennial Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Virginia, 1885* (New York: Thomas Whittaker, 1885): 62; Holmes, *A Brief History of the Episcopal Church*, 50.
[8] Edward Lewis Goodwin, *The Colonial Church in Virginia* (Milwaukee: Morehouse Publishing Co., 1927): 114-15.

Philadelphia in the fall of 1785 to represent them at the Constitutional Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America. Struggles over this constitution (in many ways mirroring those in the U. S. government) continued until 1789, when it was finally ratified. The clergy had promised England that they would not begin to consecrate their own bishops until they had three who had officially undergone ordination in England. The first American shipped back to London for ordination was Madison, who became a bishop of the *Episcopal* Church in September 1790.[9]

Even though it claimed the honor of having the first bishop, the Episcopal Church of Virginia did not recover from the wounds of the war until well into the next century. The last two decades of the eighteenth century constitute a "dreary page in religious history" for the Episcopalians as they waged a futile fight against both evangelicals and their own indifferent laity.[10] The Baptists took them to court, arguing that equal stature in the law was a falsehood if the Episcopalians were allowed to hold on to lands the king had granted them in colonial times. Since state taxes had paid for the upkeep of church properties before the war, the Baptists argued, it only made sense that the land be viewed as public property.[11] The legal battle continued for years, finally reaching a conclusion in 1802 with the passing of the Glebe Act. The act declared that all Episcopal glebes (farms) that had been

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[9] For a detailed history of the Episcopal National Convention, see Edward Frank Humphrey, *Nationalism and Religion in America, 1774-1789* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965): 194-233.
[10] Dashiell, "History of the Church in Virginia from 1785 to the Death of Bishop Meade," 64.
[11] Ibid., 68; Holmes, *A Brief History of the Episcopal Church,* 24.

purchased before 1777 be sold for public benefit upon the death of the current pastor.[12] The church was morally and financially devastated.

Most Episcopal clergymen viewed the evangelicals in a less-than-positive light during what they later termed an "era of strife, litigation, distress, and feebleness."[13] Madison was not numbered among these understandably bitter men. The bishop embraced the evangelical groups as fellow Christians and worked to strengthen interdenominational ties, particularly with the Methodists. Madison believed that Christianity was not based upon institutional doctrines but the Word of the Lord and His Creation. He saw most of the issues dividing Episcopal conventions as unimportant because such systems imposed upon Christianity could "only involve us in error."[14] "Truth," he preached in 1786, "like the Eternal, is one. In which church shall we find it? I will presume to say in none of them. He who would search for the truth must search for it in the scriptures alone."[15] Madison could afford to be generous to other denominations because he believed they fulfilled the primary responsibility of Christianity as adequately as the Episcopalians could. This ideological difference with his ministerial peers stemmed from his "enlightened" perception of religion as being most importantly a tool of social morality. This philosophical foundation to his religion is probably why he stopped attending the conventions after 1795, disheartened by his fellow clergymen's lack of attention to what he believed should be their primary focus.[16] He never renounced the Episcopal Church, but Madison grew tired of fighting with men who did not share his devotion

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[12] Holmes, *A Brief History of the Episcopal Church,* 25.
[13] Dashiell, "History of the Church in Virginia," 74.
[14] Madison, "Extract of Sermon, May 26, 1786," *The Christian Messenger* 3: 12 (October 1829): 269.
[15] Madison, "Extract of Sermon, Mary 26, 1786," 269.
[16] Holmes, *A Brief History of the Episcopal Church,* 27.

to moral philosophy. Madison had never been particularly worried about producing Episcopalians; he struggled to create Christians—men whose knowledge of the scriptures and the natural world inspired them to be virtuous citizens.

Struggle Madison did, because the years following the Revolution left a large portion of the old Anglican laity more interested in political and economic matters than in morality.[17] "Religion, the only anchor which holds man to his duties, no longer finds that firm ground on which in can inhere," Madison lamented in 1799, "morals, and with them private and public, present and future happiness, are left to the mercy of a rude storm, which threatens their destruction."[18] Madison could not accept such disinterest in religion because he believed it an essential component of democracy. Individuals must be Christians before they could hope to be republicans and Americans not bolstered by religion could not long retain their newly acquired freedoms. Speaking at Washington's memorial service, Madison maintained that the former patriot had seen "that republicanism without morality was a chimera; and that morality without religion was as evanescent as the baseless fabric of a vision."[19] It seems rather ironic that Madison would use a man who usually attended church only once a month as the supreme example of the virtuous Christian, but it was not inconsistent with the bishop's general theology.[20] Just as Madison dismissed most of his fellow clergymen's arguments with the evangelicals as superficial matters of doctrine, so to did he think many of the motions of religion unimportant. People were much more likely to find God through examining the heavens than through listening

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[17] Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity,* 14.
[18] Madison, An Address to the Members of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Virginia, 1799.
[19] Madison, *A Nation Mourns,* 57.
[20] Holmes, *A Brief History of the Episcopal Church,* 49.

to continual recitations of the Book of Common Prayer. And He was much more interested in securing their happiness than in demanding sacramental observances. "[A wise man] will become the sincere and the active friend of rational religion," Madison concluded, "convinced that it is the only foundation upon which good morals, and, consequently, private, social, and eternal happiness, can securely rest."[21]

Madison's Christianity rested upon a rational foundation: the individual discovered God's existence and was correspondingly blessed by assuring revelation. It was a journey possible only in the context of liberty, "for religion, to be profitable to the individual and acceptable to God, must be the result of free inquiry and the determination of reason."[22] Madison's patriotic and enlightened devotion to liberty come out in his descriptions of the development of a man's faith: "This right of free inquiry, and of judging for ourselves, is a right natural and unalienable. It is the glory of our nature, the truest source of joy and triumph to an American, and constantly to recur to it, the indispensable duty of a Christian."[23] Madison was likely influenced in this opinion by his friend Jefferson, whose *Act for Establishing Religious Freedom*, though published in Paris in 1786, had circulated in Williamsburg back in 1779. Jefferson argued that God had created human minds free of external control, so men should have sufficient liberty to express the religious principles they discovered through their reasoned search.[24] While Madison may have been more certain than Jefferson that free inquiry would lead men to God, they agreed that men were naturally due that right.

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[21] Madison, An Address to the Members of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Virginia, 1799.
[22] Madison, "Extract of a Sermon, May 26, 1786," 267.
[23] Ibid., 267.
[24] Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia,* ed. William Peden (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982): 223-225.

Madison's passionate devotion to liberty stemmed both from a youth in liberal Virginia and from a firm belief that God wanted his people to live and naturally prosper under republican governments. "But I do most firmly believe," he wrote Jefferson, "that the Xn Religion rightly understood, & carried into full effect, would establish a pure Democracy over the world. It's main Pillars are—Equality, Fraternity, Justice, universal Benevolence."[25] The most famous story about Madison is that he never referred to heaven as a kingdom, but as "that great republic where there was no distinction of rank and where all men were free and equal."[26] Madison invested large amounts of ink in his attempt to keep the American government on the right track and devoted his whole life to promoting the virtue he thought necessary to its prosperity. He did these things because he believed that Scripture and the natural world taught men they were supposed to live in democratic equality and freedom. His belief in the truth of Christianity led him to support freedom of religion, so that men would not be forced before God but would find Him in their own contemplations and examinations of the world. Madison believed it as much his patriotic duty to warn his cousin against the problems of the new Constitution as to teach his students about the laws of gravitation.[27] Both occupations worked to secure America's place as the living example of God's ultimate plan for all people. "God of all nature," he prayed, "Father of the human spirit, preserve these prosperous, these happy

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[25] Madison to Jefferson, 1 February 1800, "Letters of Rev. James Madison, President of William and Mary College, to Thomas Jefferson," *WMQ* 2nd ser., 5: 3 (July 1925): 148.
[26] Tyler, "Early Presidents of William and Mary," 73.
[27] Madison to James Madison, 1 October 1787, in *The Papers of James Madison*, 10: 183-85.

republics."[28] These happy republics were the stronghold of Truth in a world corrupted by those who would deny liberty of thought and religion.

Madison bridged religion and politics with Scripture and natural philosophy. The former was a traditional approach, but the latter largely developed in the eighteenth century and the Enlightenment celebration of the world and man's place within it. Madison urged his fellow Americans to look into nature for the truths that should guide their lives. "[Man] sees everywhere a system upheld by laws," he wrote in 1799, "both physical and moral, which never err; and which, the more they are investigated, the more do they evince the beneficent design of the Creator." These investigations teach men the "attributes of God" and the "relation we bear to him," which, in turn, direct humans to fulfill their religious and civil duties.[29] The start of people's journey to a virtuous life began for Madison in the laboratory of the world, where they could use their reason to interpret nature. Science opened the doors to Christianity and republicanism, a grand unity that held Madison's three great loves in close accord.

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[28] Madison, *Manifestations of the Providence Towards America,* 23.
[29] Madison, An Address to the Members of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Virginia, 1799.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PROFESSOR, DECEMBER 1794

St. George Tucker enjoyed reading French newspapers to keep informed of events abroad; at least, he did so when he could get them during the tension-filled days of 1794. France was at war with Britain, and the Americans were trying to keep the British from seizing their ships as war booty. This present danger was likely why Tucker's attention was caught by an invention described in one of the French papers as having been of great use to their army. The Virginian wrote in his journal on December 5th of a "newly invented machine by which Intelligence has been conveyed to and from armies of France and the capital, with a rapidity that seem'd at first to shock belief."[1] Reading the description of the telegraph machine left Tucker convinced that he could build one himself. He spent the next ten days constructing the simple machine of "an upright post, & two cross pieces, by the help of which sixteen different signs can be expressed very distinctly."[2]

Satisfied that his faith in his abilities was justified, Tucker called on his old friend Bishop Madison to help him test the fruit of his labors. Tucker set the telegraph up in the cupola of the capital while Madison waited with his telescope at the college. "The Bishop deciphered several sentences distinctly at the College," Tucker wrote in his journal, "the distance 200 yards short of a mile, with a Telescope adjusted to land objects. He was of opinion that the same little instruments would

[1] St. George Tucker, St. George Tucker's Notebook, vol. 8, Tucker-Coleman Papers, University Archives, Swem Library, College of William and Mary, 1-12.
[2] Ibid.

have answered at the distance of three miles."[3] Tucker, delighted by the success of the experiment, promptly decided that he should make it a gift to Congress. Reminded, perhaps by Madison, that he should get another opinion before so generously donating his latest creation, Tucker agreed to defer the matter to their mutual friend and Virginia representative to Congress, John Page. Tucker sent the telegraph to Page with an accompanying letter on December 18th. "In this I submit to your own judgment & discretion," Tucker wrote, "for I believe that I am rather too apt to put a high value upon things, which other men think not worth a thought." Tucker assured his friend he would "lay aside the character wholly" if Page decided the telegraph would not be particularly useful to Congress, but Tucker probably spent the holidays in great anxiety wondering what would happen to his new creation.[4] Unfortunately, the outcome of the matter after Page received the telegraph has been lost to history. Tucker did not write about his creation again in his journal, using later pages for new observations and experiments, many of which he possibly shared with his old friend Madison.

Madison was a member of an elite group of Virginia gentry connected by ties of family, money, and mutual interests in politics and philosophy. Madison and Page had been founding members of the Society for the Advancement of Useful Knowledge back in 1774, the former serving as secretary and the latter as president.[5] The two men spent much time pursuing their mutual love of science. Page recorded in his memorandum book that they observed the transit of Venus together at the

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[3] Ibid., 9.
[4] St. George Tucker to John Page, 18 December 1794, Page Family Papers, University Archives, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.
[5] Purdie, *The Virginia Gazette* (16 June 1774): 2.

college in November 1776.[6] Madison wrote his cousin in October 1782, asking whether he had "a [sufficient] Acquaintance with Mr. Rittenhouse to desire him to furnish you with one of the new invented Cakes for Electrical [Experiments]—on my Acct. He is himself probably too much engaged to attend to it himself, but he might have it made under his Eye. . . . Mr. Page & myself have both attempted to make them but Without Effect."[7] Within four years, Madison's own acquaintance with David Rittenhouse, the famous Philadelphia scientist, had progressed to such a level that Madison wrote him a letter "Containing Experiments and Observations upon what are commonly called the Sweet Springs," which was soon published in the *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*.[8] The college president eventually had five of his letters to other scientifically-bent gentlemen published in the *Transactions*, but they are only a small representation of the correspondence of this man who filled almost *all* his letters with scientific questions and observations.

The connections that linked Madison to the educated and powerful men of the late eighteenth century were largely formed in his student days at William and Mary. It was assumed that a Virginia man should be politically liberal and academically knowledgeable—two characteristics Madison was already diligently pursuing in the early 1770s. The young man took advantage of the educational opportunities of his new home, quickly assuming a reputation as an adept scholar of the classics, philosophy, and mathematics. He was particularly interested in science and had the

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[6] John Page, "Memorandum Book, 1762-1797," MV. Me4., University Archives, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.
[7] Madison to Madison, 3 October 1782, in *The Papers of James Madison*, 5: 179.
[8] Madison to Rittenhouse, "A Letter from J. Madison, Esq. To D. Rittenhouse, Esq. Containing Experiments and Observations upon what are commonly called the Sweet Springs," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 2 (Philadelphia: Robert Aitken, 1786): 197-99.

good fortune of finding himself in a college well supplied to serve him. Thomas Gwatkin, not yet the object of the town's ire, had been raising the level of scientific teaching at the college since 1770.[9] Gwatkin had the good fortune of being an academic successor to the work of William Small, professor of natural philosophy and mathematics from 1758 to 1764. Small had earned the gratitude of William and Mary students by introducing the modern lecture system, rescuing them from the traditional practice of recitation and pure memorization. Of even greater consequence to Virginia's young men, however, was his work in purchasing scientific equipment from Britain to further enhance their educational experience. Small spent over £300 on such marvels as a "Solar Microscope with Apparatus" and "an Electrical Machine," giving William and Mary a collection rivaled only by Harvard.[10] The instruments were of great interest to the citizens of Williamsburg because the townspeople shared the students' fascination with nature and its laws. Indeed, one of them was so sensitive to the treatment of this apparatus that he criticized the college in 1771 for their being "suffered to lie in a Room like useless Lumber." Professor John Dixon promptly responded in the *Gazette* that those burgesses angry at the treatment of the equipment "are ignorant that in the learned Universities in England these are looked upon only as Raree-Shows, and consequently are despised and neglected."[11] Apparently more demanding than their English counterparts, Virginians were dissatisfied by rare shows of scientific demonstration, viewing their apparatus as sources of entertainment and edification.

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[9] Tate, "The Colonial College," 117.
[10] Galen W. Ewing, "Early Teaching of Science at the College of William and Mary in Virginia," *Bulletin of The College of William and Mary in Virginia* 32, no.4 (April 1938): 8; and I. Bernard Cohen, *Some Early Tools of American Science* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950): 11.
[11] Purdie, *The Virginia Gazette* (1 August 1771): 2.

While a large number of Virginians were fascinated by the experimental side of eighteenth-century science, a relatively small number possessed the leisure and education necessary for understanding its theoretical foundations. This branch of natural philosophy was generally limited to the land-holding, college-educated males. The William and Mary boys who got to use the "solar microscope" were also introduced to the past century's revolutionary advances in the metaphysical realms of science. Madison studied natural and moral philosophy under Gwatkin and Henley respectively during his student years at the college. While he benefited from the wonderful collection of scientific instruments, his mind was also opened to the wonders of the universal laws revealed to mankind through research with such instruments and mathematical calculations. In 1772, the year of Madison's graduation, the college possessed among its holdings copies of Newton's *Principia* and his *Optics*, Richard Jack's *Mathematical Principles of Theology: or, the existence of God geometrically demonstrated*, and Franklin's *Experiments and Observations on electricity*.[12] Such texts reveal the college's growing interest in science and lay a foundation for explaining how Madison created his own philosophical system—a system fundamentally based on the scientific revolution of the previous century.

Revolutions in thought are never the product of a single mind, but the gradual displacement of one paradigm with another. To begin a discussion of eighteenth-century philosophy with Newton, then, seems rather unfair to Copernicus, Galileo, Bacon, Descartes, Kepler, Moore, and Boyle, all of whom began questioning the

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[12] Fraser Neiman, *The Henley-Horrocks Inventory* (Williamsburg: Botetourt Publications, 1968): 11-12.

heliocentric paradigm long before Newton arrived at Cambridge.[13] However, despite his reliance upon earlier work to construct his mathematical vision, Newton was responsible for bringing the questions of science into European philosophical thought. "No other work known to the history of science," Thomas Kuhn wrote of the *Principia*, "has simultaneously permitted so large an increase in both the scope and precision of research."[14] Madison shared this appreciation, telling his students that "it was Sir Isaac Newton who first discovered the general law of nature, namely, gravity, which operates throughout the universe, keeps the planets in their orbits, and preserves the whole fabric of nature from confusion and disorder. He laid the foundation of the present system of philosophy which has finally overthrown the chimerical hypotheses which so long retarded the progress of the true philosophy."[15] This "true philosophy" encompassed all aspects of life in late seventeenth-century England, as religious and political leaders grabbed on to Newton's theories as defenses of their own ideological visions. Questions of natural philosophy's social applications became the center of intellectual discourse in post-Restoration England, soon spilling over into its American colonies.

Newton published the *Principia* in 1687, but the mathematics of his theory proved too complicated for all but a few to comprehend. The diffusion of his ideas did not begin until 1691 with the establishment of the Boyle Lectures, which consequently turned "Newton's scientific achievements into one of the pillars upon which rested that intellectual stance most commonly described as the

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[13] See Lisa Jardine, *Ingenious Pursuits: building the scientific revolution* (New York: Nan A. Talese, 1999) for a history of the development of the scientific revolution.
[14] Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962): 30.
[15] Murchie, A Compendium of Lectures.

Enlightenment."[16] Anglican leaders seized upon Newton's theories as a means of unifying the country under a God whose existence was no longer determined by religious dogma but by a reasoned approach to Scripture and the natural world. This "holy alliance," as historian John Gascoigne has termed it, was based upon a selective use of natural philosophy, primarily focusing upon Newton's assertion of God's necessary presence in running the affairs of the universe.[17] "This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets," Newton wrote in the General Scholium of the *Principia*, "could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being."[18] The holy alliance soon fragmented, however, into high-church Newtonians with Tory loyalties and latitudinarian groups with generally Whig sympathies. The Tories distanced themselves from the new sciences in an attempt to maintain the power of the high church's ecclesiastical tradition. Latitudinarians, in contrast, continued to be supportive of philosophies that encouraged theological unity between Anglicans, Presbyterians and Congregationalists. [19] While it divided religious groups, Newton's philosophy also inadvertently strengthened the divide between those who opposed the church and those who supported it. These "Freethinking Whigs" rejected science to embrace what historian Margaret C. Jacob termed the "pagan naturalism of the late Renaissance." In agreement with their fellow Whigs' support of parliamentary government, the Freethinkers fostered their political liberalism in materialism instead of Newtonian principles of equality under

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[16] Margaret C. Jacob, "Newtonianism and the Origins of the Enlightenment: A Reassessment," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 11:1(Autumn 1977): 2.
[17] John Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the Age of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989): 3.
[18] Isaac Newton, *Principia*, trans. Andrew Motte (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952): 369.
[19] Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the Age of the Enlightenment,* 147.

universal laws.[20] Despite disagreements over the foundation of their liberalism, it soon became clear that Whig theories of proper political order had triumphed over the high-church Tories. Philosophers throughout the British Isles had begun proposing ideologies complementary to the Newtonian proofs of universal law and order.

"The Knowledge of Nature is a Good," Voltaire wrote in 1741, "to which all Men have an equal Right: all are for knowing their Good, which few have Time or Patience to calculate; this Newton has done for them."[21] While Newton had laid out the laws of universal order, it was left to his contemporary and friend, John Locke, to calculate the laws governing human order. Historians remain in disagreement as to the influence Newton had upon Locke, but it seems to have been less than originally thought. The two men were friends towards the end of Locke's life, but he had already published many of his philosophical works.[22] It seems more realistic to understand Newton and Locke as having two complementary approaches, one primarily scientific and one primarily philosophical (in twentieth-century terminology), to the questions being argued at Oxford and Cambridge in the late seventeenth century. Locke was well versed in the science of his day and, while he did not possess the mathematical genius of Newton, his philosophy was a response to many of the same works upon which Newton based his universal vision.[23] Madison held the two men in the highest esteem: just as he hailed Newton in his lectures as the

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[20] Jacob, "Newtonianism and the Origins of the Enlightenment," 18-25.
[21] Voltaire, *The Elements of Newton's Philosophy*, trans. John Hanna (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1967): 3.
[22] James L. Axtell, "Locke, Newton and the two cultures," in *John Locke: Problems and Perspectives*, ed. John W. Yolton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969): 176-180; G. A. J. Rogers, "Locke's *Essay* and Newton's *Principia*," in *Philosophy, Religion and Science in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,* ed. John W. Yolton, vol. 2, *Library of the History of Ideas* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1990) 2: 368-371.
[23] Rogers, "Locke's *Essay* and Newton's *Principia*," 372-373.

founder of natural philosophy, Madison lauded Locke in his orations and sermons. "Immortal Locke! thine was the glory to arm the orator with the sacred panalopy of truth," Madison preached in 1800. "Nor to him alone were thy energies confined. Thy hallowed page, dear to liberty, to virtue, and to religion," he continued, "shed intellectual light over this western world, and taught a lesson congenial to the first sentiments of man."[24] While Madison's praises tend to sound overly romantic to modern readers, his presentation of Locke's influence upon the eighteenth century is on the mark. Locke's "hallowed pages" profoundly shaped Western thinking on epistemological, political, and moral issues.

Where Newton had divided the physical order into matter and motion, seeing the former as given life only by the laws of motion, Locke divided the human order into men and nature. "The natural liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on earth," he wrote in the *Second Treatise on Government*, "and not to be under the will or legislative authority of man, but to have only the law of nature for his rule."[25] Newton had laid out three laws of motion, but Locke insisted that there was only one law of nature. "The *state of nature* has a law of nature to govern it," Locke wrote, "which obliges every one: and *reason*, which is that law, teaches all mankind, who will but consult it, that being all *equal and independent,* no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions."[26] This idea of a natural law governing human action was not new to Locke's readers, having been brought into the seventeenth-century consciousness by Hugo Grotius, Thomas Hobbes, and

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[24] Madison, *A Nation Mourns*, 38-39.
[25] John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967): 301.
[26] Ibid., 289.

Samuel Pufendorf. The novelty of Locke's work was his replacement of an innate knowledge of natural law with an empirical knowledge and, most importantly, the political impact his ideas made upon the English-speaking world.[27] Just as Newton believed men could discover the laws of motion through rational examination of the universe, Locke argued that they could discover the laws governing social order through a rational examination of human nature. "Moral principles," he asserted in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, "require reasoning and discourse, and some exercise of the mind, to discover the certainty of their truth."[28] These moral principles were all founded upon laws constructed by God and man and all subject to the investigation of the primary natural law of reasoning. For Locke, morality was a science based upon rational investigation of the natural world and Scripture.[29]

"Moral good and evil then," Locke wrote, "is only the conformity or disagreement of our voluntary actions to some law whereby good or evil is drawn on us from the will and power of the law maker."[30] He divided these laws into three types: the divine that covered sins and duties, the civil that determined criminality and innocence, and opinion that labeled social activities as virtues or vices.[31] Moral behavior was determined by one's conformity to these laws as one learned them through experiences of reward or punishment under the social, educational, and religious order of one's culture. The foundation of rational law as the principle of morality, Locke assured his readers, makes it possible for humans to find truth

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[27] Knud Haakonssen, *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 51-52.
[28] Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975): 66.
[29] Haakonssen, *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy,* 53.
[30] Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 351.
[31] Ibid., 352.

through reason alone—possible, but not probable. "Experience shows," he wrote in *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, "that the knowledge of morality, by mere natural light, (how agreeable soever it be to it) makes but a slow progress, and little advance in the world."[32] Instead of allowing mankind to fumble slowly towards morality, God sent Jesus Christ to earth to "tell them their duties, and require their obedience." Any moral assertion, then, must clearly be based upon "the principles of reason" or a "commission from heaven," as these are the only means by which men can aspire to discover the dictates of perfect action.[33] Locke was careful to keep Christian revelation in his philosophical system, but by arguing that it was not the only means of establishing moral truth, he placed human reason in a position of power greater than it had been allotted since ancient times. Locke's view of Christianity also signaled the beginning a new understanding of Christ's role as the Savior of mankind. Where the traditional Christian focus had been upon Christ's death as the moment of man's eternal salvation, philosophers of the eighteenth century were more interested in Jesus' life as the example of perfect social morality. Right living was becoming increasingly more important than dying in grace.

Through their work in what they both termed natural philosophy, Newton and Locke bequeathed to the eighteenth century a stable universe: created by God, it was controlled by the natural laws He maintained and discernable to human reason. Born in the tumult of post-Restoration England, the inheritance was a revolution in thought that fundamentally altered Western conceptions of reality—with repercussions echoing in religious, scientific, political, and educational arguments throughout the

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[32] Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, ed. John C. Higgins-Biddle (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999): 149.
[33] Ibid., 150-153.

century. "By 1700," Roger Emerson concluded, "philosophers had replaced divines as the chief inquirers into the grounds of certainty and acceptable belief. As that happened, a sharper distinction was made between revealed and natural knowledge, and more assurance was placed upon the adequacy of the latter."[34]

Some of the most influential of these philosophers lived in Scotland, constructing the common sense philosophy so fundamental to American thought in the eighteenth century. The Scottish Enlightenment was not uniform in either its questions or its conclusions, but it has remained best remembered for the work its schools undertook in moral philosophy.[35] Building on Newton and Locke's complementary visions of the

universe, men at Aberdeen brought their scientific inclinations, Whig loyalties, and Presbyterian beliefs to the struggle to understand human nature and human responsibility.[36] An early figure on the philosophical scene was George Turnbull, whose book, *The Principles of Moral Philosophy*, emerged as a classic example of eighteenth-century moral science. Though Turnbull's work is not as well known as some of the writings of later Scottish philosophers, his ideas built the scaffolding they used throughout the century in constructing their own theories of the connection between natural and moral science. Recent scholarship has argued that he accordingly deserves a more prominent place in the history of the Scottish Enlightenment. Analyzing Turnbull's writings from the 1720s, P. B. Wood has concluded that the Aberdeen professor was instrumental in establishing the use of

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[34] Roger L. Emerson, "Science and Moral Philosophy in the Scottish Enlightenment," in *Studies in the Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. M. A. Stewart (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990): 16.
[35] James Moore, "The Two Systems of Francis Hutcheson: On the Origins of the Scottish Enlightenment," in Ibid., 38-39.
[36] P. B. Wood, "Science and the Pursuit of Virtue in the Aberdeen Enlightenment," in Ibid., 149.

Newton's scientific analysis to the study of morals—asserting the unity of natural and moral philosophy. "It would seem," Wood argues, "that it was Turnbull rather than his pupil Reid who initiated what Larry Laudan has called the 'Newtonian turn of British methodological thought.'"[37] Throughout the eighteenth century, Turnbull's ideas proved more lasting than his name, crossing the Atlantic in a variety of common sense writings into the hands and heads of thoughtful colonists who had been raised upon Newton and Locke. Drawn to the idea of a unified philosophy that could handle their moral, scientific, and political concerns, colonists such as Madison used the Scottish Enlightenment to build an American one.

"Endeavoring to account for MORAL, as the Great *Newton* has taught us to explain NATURAL Appearances, (that is, by reducing them to good general laws)," Turnbull began his lengthy inquiry into moral philosophy.[38] The world Turnbull saw around him was beautiful and ordered and consequently good. This order was determinable through contemplation of empirical evidence, both historical and scientific, and could be reduced to general laws.[39] Just as the existence of the laws of motion led Newton back to God, Turnbull's belief that men could discover the laws of human nature through reason made him give all the credit to a higher power. "We could neither acquire knowledge of any kind, contract habits, or attain to any moral perfection whatsoever," he wrote, "unless the Author of our nature had fixed and appointed certain laws relating to our moral powers, and their exercise and acquisitions."[40] The laws of morality were fixed and humans were free to discover

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[37] Ibid., 132-133.
[38] George Turnbull, *The Principles of Moral Philosophy*, 2 vols. (London: John Noon, 1739) 1: i.
[39] Ibid., 1: 11.
[40] Ibid., 1: 14.

them through reasoned investigation—free to increase their power over nature with knowledge of nature's laws. God had created the moral order with the specific intention of giving men's inner lives the beauty they saw in the external world, and men could achieve moral order only through a reasoned search for moral laws.[41] Natural philosophy was a quest for the order of the universe; Turnbull's moral philosophy was a search for the moral laws underlying the universe.

The link between Turnbull's physical and moral worlds was short and essential to his understanding of science, religion, and society. "The material world was certainly created for the sake of the moral world," he insisted. "They make one strictly, connected system."[42] Man's quest for moral order was essentially a quest for virtue and, good disciple of Locke that he was, Turnbull argued that the quest was best undertaken socially instead of individually. "Man is framed for society, that private and public happiness and perfection exceedingly depend upon our uniting together in a proper manner, or under proper laws, and a right form of government, for promoting our common happiness, dignity and perfection."[43] Turnbull was a firm Whig, believing that the best form of government was a liberal one. Such liberalism required citizens educated in the moral laws and a political order which allowed them to follow the laws towards virtue. "Man therefore," Turnbull asserted in a philosophical defense of his politics, "is made for eternal progress in moral perfection proportional to his care and diligence to improve in it."[44] A society dedicated to the scientific pursuit of natural was sure to be successful: nature ordained it.

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[41] Ibid., 1: 109.
[42] Ibid., 1: 433.
[43] Ibid., 1: 174-175.
[44] Ibid., 1: 272.

Turnbull's philosophy was certainly not the summation of Scottish Enlightenment thought, but his methodological approach to the study of morality appears in many of the century's subsequent philosophical works. Turnbull's intellectual peers were not disciples of a specific moral interpretation, but most were disciples of empiricism and shared his scientific interests.[45] The interest he paid to the anatomical science of the mind and the way it controlled human action reached far beyond the rooms of Aberdeen, echoing in Samuel Stanhope Smith's lecture to his students in New Jersey over fifty years later: "Experience and diligent and attentive observation of the courses of nature, and of the actions of mankind in ever variety of situation in which they may be placed, is the only legitimate means of attaining a competent knowledge of the laws of either the material or moral world."[46] A little closer to home, the first edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, published in Edinburgh in 1771, defined philosophy as the "knowledge of nature or study of nature and morality, founded on reason and experience."[47]

Locke had divided the universe into nature and man, and the Scottish philosophers had increased humanity's power to define its role within that universe. Just as natural philosophy seemed to be making daily progress towards a complete understanding of the natural realm, intellectuals believed that moral philosophy was on the same journey. Turnbull was only one of many who believed that mankind was "made for eternal progress in moral perfection."[48] Empiricism's intellectual

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[45] Wood, "Science and the Pursuit of Virtue in the Aberdeen Enlightenment," 130.
[46] Noll, *Princeton and the Republic,* 192.
[47] Emerson, "Science and Moral Philosophy in the Scottish Enlightenment," 25-26.
[48] Turnbull, 1:272; M. A. Stewart, "The Scottish Enlightenment," in *British Philosophy and the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Stuart Brown, vol. 2, *Routledge History of Philosophy* (London: Routledge: 1996); 274-281.

empowerment gave the Scottish philosophers confidence that they could discover the natural laws of morality and successfully implement those laws among the rest of the population.[49] Human beings were supposed to live a certain way; God had ordained it from the beginning of time, and He had now provided people with the knowledge to secure a social order of earthly perfection. Humanity could not have Heaven until the afterlife, of course, but it could create something beautifully close through harmonious adherence to the natural laws. The future was destined to be a more virtuous—and consequently happier—place, where society was as preoccupied with morality as were the Scottish philosophers.

Eighteenth-century Americans were generally predisposed to a favorable view of Scottish philosophy with its propositions of the power of natural laws to enforce the legitimacy of natural rights.[50] If paradise seemed a moral construct to the men in Scotland, it seemed a political construct to many Americans. "Right in general," John Winthrop lectured in 1768, "may be reduced, as to its source, to the supreme law of moral duty; for whatever men are in duty obliged to do, that they have a claim to, and other men are considered as under an obligation to permit them."[51] American intellectuals championed the idea that it was their moral duty to live according to the natural laws and the British were obligated to allow them to do so. The latter failed to allow the colonies to fulfill their "claim" to their natural rights, so it was necessary to create a political order more in tune with the natural laws. "That Principle also, which unites Man to Man," Madison asserted in 1772, "and forms Communities

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[49] Emerson, "Science and Moral Philosophy in the Scottish Enlightenment," 35.
[50] Haakonssen, *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy*, 311.
[51] John Winthrop, *Lecture on Moral Philosophy*, ed. Jack Scott (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1982): 110.

preservative of those Rights, which are most essential to the Happiness of the human Race, soon designed the beneficent Plan, soon projected the equal Law."[52] In America lay the opportunity to construct a community dedicated to the preservation of natural law.

Ideological optimism was certainly not the only force driving the American struggle for independence, but it was an important one, particularly for men of Madison's economic and educational background. Many of the colonies' most prominent figures were preoccupied by the quest to improve mankind's moral nature through social institutions. Such men had been educated in the eighteenth-century empirical tradition and were familiar with the writings flowing out of Scotland in particular, but also from France. "The theoretical Knowledge of Mankind is susceptible of daily Improvement," Madison reflected, "of Refinements which not only sublimate Religion, but every Science that glows in the Poet, or shines in the Philosopher."[53] Loyal to the Scottish faith in mankind's ability to progress towards closer harmony with the natural order, Madison was eager to stimulate a political revolution which would ensure moral stability. "It seems doubtful," Madison wrote Jefferson in 1786, "whether Men are more slow in collecting the Laws of Nature, or in applying them when collected and known."[54] While he was specifically concerned with astronomical observations at the time, Madison's statement reflects his deeper concern as to his obligation to apply the laws of nature to the world around him. The moral realm demanded a society consistent with the laws European philosophers had been writing about for the past hundred years. Believing it their duty to create a

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[52] Madison, "An Oration in Commemoration of the Founders of William and Mary College," 7.
[53] Ibid., 10.
[54] Madison to Jefferson, 28 March 1786, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 19: 356.

political order of natural rights, they began with the philosophical premise that humans needed equality and liberty to be both virtuous and happy. "The destined period had arrived," Madison later extolled, "for the regeneration of mankind, in this new world."[55] America was the unification of natural law with political order—the society the liberal philosophers had been dreaming about.

"The American revolution," Madison told his fellow Virginians, "like another Ananias, seems to have been sent by Heaven to open the eyes of the Universe."[56] The scales America removed, though not as tangible as the ones with which the Lord had smote Saul, had been no less effective in obscuring His divine plan for the world. Centuries of tyrannical ideologies and scientific ignorance had kept humanity from understanding the universe, but God had determined that men should be ignorant no more. The intellectual endeavors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries finally freed men from Solomon's conclusion that "no one can comprehend what goes on under the sun."[57] Madison was the acknowledged inheritor of an enlightening philosophy, an intellectual belief made real in America's political structure: "It is in America, that the germs of the universal redemption of the human race from domination and oppression have already begun to be developed."[58] America was the summation of over a hundred years of enlightened philosophy, but it marked only the beginning of the most glorious phase in human history. Now that people had established God's called-for republic, they must prove its worth to the rest of the world as a progressive society dedicated to the quest for virtue. America was

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[55] Madison, *Manifestations of the Providence Towards America*, 4.
[56] Madison, *A Nation Mourns*, 53.
[57] Ecclesiastes 8:17.
[58] Madison, *Manifestations of the Providence Towards America*, 7.

"fastened to the footstool of the throne of God," and must do everything to keep the connection secure.[59]

Madison's world-view was constructed upon the philosophical concept of America's divine role in the history of the world—his belief in natural law allowed no other conclusion. The emotional patriotism that led Madison to form a company of volunteers to fight the British was intellectually grounded in his scientific certainty that God ordered the physical and moral realms of the universe to run in perfect harmony. "All the phenomena of this world, of other worlds, so far as we can trace them," he preached, "lead to the necessary conclusion of a presiding, as well as creating God. Nor is it less certain, that our perceptions of moral distinctions, the admonitions of conscience, the irresistible impulse which forces us to love virtue and to hate vice, do all imply a conviction of the moral administration of the universe."[60] Madison's education in the philosophical revolution Newton and Locke had created instilled in the young man the conviction that the world was governed by natural law. Combining his epistemological conceptions with his Christianity, the bishop became a supernatural rationalist who grounded his religion in moral rather than spiritual concerns. Understanding the universe meant understanding its laws, and God had finally granted His children the power to find "those secret principles which had been long concealed in the womb of nature" and the initiative to order society along those principles.[61]

Madison rooted the social order in the classroom, where he introduced Virginia's young men to nature's principles and encouraged them to structure their

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[59] Madison, *A Nation Mourns*, 57.
[60] Madison, An Address to the Members of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Virginia, 81.
[61] Murchie, A Compendium of Lectures.

lives in corresponding harmony. Madison explained the laws of nature to his students as "those immutable laws which every phenomenon in nature is regulated, and which preserve uniformity and order throughout the stupendous system of materialism."[62] While he relied upon lectures to explain the theoretical realms of science, Madison's own passion for science guaranteed that his students would *experience* science. "But from all the other studies put together," William and Mary student Chapman Johnson wrote in 1799, "I do not promise myself half the pleasure I receive from N. Philosophy." While he was skeptical of the competing theories of magnetism Madison presented, Johnson thought the doctrine of central forces to be not "obscured with any of these fanciful theories, here the laws are beautifully explained, and the phenomena satisfactorily accounted for. The Whirling Table is certainly one of the most beautiful machines that was ever invented, for the illustration of Philosophical phenomena. Upon the whole," he concluded, "I think these lectures far preferable to any yet delivered."[63] William and Mary's students were as fascinated by scientific demonstrations as were their fellow citizens of Williamsburg, and Madison relied upon apparatus such as the Whirling Table to bolster scientific enthusiasm. At times, the professor seems to have outdone himself. Student George Blow wrote to his father in 1804 to complain that Madison had kept him up all night watching an eclipse of the moon with the college's telescope.[64]

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[62] Ibid.
[63] Chapman Johnson to David Watson, 19 December 1799, Notebook 2 for "Early Teaching of Science," Papers of Galen W. Ewing, AA #1981.99, University Archives, Swem Library, College of William and Mary, 27-28.
[64] Ludwell H. Johnson, "Between the Wars, 1782-1862," in *The College of William and Mary: A History*, ed. Susan Godson et al., 2 vols. (Williamsburg: King and Queen Press, 1993) 1: 191.

"To the college," wrote St. George Tucker in 1795, "belongs an extensive library and an apparatus, probably not exceeded by any upon this continent. The course of natural philosophy is made more comprehensive than is usual in most colleges."[65] Tucker's boast about the college's scientific collection likely suffered from the excess-enthusiasm that he was warned about when judging his telegraph, since the fire of 1781 had destroyed the collection present in Tucker's own school days. His analysis of the quality of Madison's teaching, however, does seem to be reliable. Not only did Madison perform demonstrations, he also kept up-to-date on the current scientific research and passed the knowledge on to his students (hence Johnson's exasperation with the theories of magnetism). The Duc de la Rochefoucald-Liancourt attested to Madison's scientific enthusiasm in a report on a 1796 visit to Williamsburg: "Bishop Madison is himself a man of considerable knowledge in natural philosophy, [chemistry], and even polite literature. His library, much less numerous than that of the college, consists of a more choice selection of books, especially of those relating to the sciences. He annually augments his collection by the addition of the most esteemed scientific and new publications."[66]

The greatest proof of Madison's involvement in the scientific community of his time remains the writings of his own hand, in letters sent to friends and experiments published in the *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*.[67] "You have no Doubt observed the Comet which made its Appearance here last Friday

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[65] "Education in Colonial Virginia, Part IV," *WMQ* 6: 3 (January 1898): 183.
[66] Duc de la Rochefoucald-Liancourt, *Travels Through the United States of America, the Country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada, in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797*, 2 vols. (London: T. Davison: 1799) 2: 28.
[67] Madison's contributions to the *Transactions* can be found in Vols. 1: 11, 17; 2: 141-158, 197-199; 3: 150-154; 4: 323-328; 6: 132-142.

Evening for the first Time," Madison wrote Jefferson. "Its Situation is near, i, in the Picis Australis. I shall endeavour to trace it's Progress and will send you the Result."[68] Madison and Jefferson shared a friendship based upon their continual fascination with the natural world. Observing the heavens, building water bellows, exploring Indian burial mounds, and lecturing on the effects of electricity upon plants, Madison exemplified the eighteenth-century ideal of the intellectual man.[69] He invested his work with great importance, feeling called to prove America a social order fertile for intellectual development. "Never was there a finer Range for the exercise of such a Spirit [of philosophical observation], than this Country presents," he wrote Jefferson, for America was a republican society built upon and dedicated to intellectual principles.[70]

Madison's lectures in natural philosophy and experimental undertakings were soundly based upon his understanding of the power of the laws governing the material realm, and his moral philosophy rested upon a similar foundation of the laws governing human action. The "Supreme Mind" who had established the physical order had been no less diligent in the moral one. Humans, Madison argued, had inherent rights "which the God of nature consecrated at the birth of every individual," and only in America were "those sentiments of equality, benevolence and fraternity,

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[68] Madison to Jefferson, 23 January 1784, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson,* 6: 508.
[69] Madison to Madison, 28 December 1800, in *The Paper of James Madison*, 17: 450; Madison to Barton, "A Letter on the supposed Fortifications of the Western Country, from Bishop Madison of Virginia to Dr. Barton," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 3 (Philadelphia: C. and A. Conrad, 1809): 132-142; W. N. Edwards, A Compendium of the Lectures on Experimental Philosophy delivered by James Madison, D. D. Professor of William and Mary College in Philosophy, Belle letters & Politics, also President of said College, 1809, AA# 1981.42, University Archives, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.
[70] Madison to Jefferson, 10 February 1789, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 14: 534.

which reason, religion, and nature enjoin," able to "reassume their sovereignty over the human soul."[71]

Just as Newton's physics had largely created Madison's material science, Locke and his Scottish disciples defined the Virginian's moral science. Madison's natural philosophy interests made him the perfect inheritor of the liberal tradition exemplified by Turnbull, where the divisions between the physical and moral realms blurred in a grand, unified conception of Natural Law. "However philosophy may be divided," Turnbull had written, "nothing can be more evident, than, that the study of nature, whether in the constitution and economy of the sensible world, or in the frame and government of the moral, must set out from the same principles, and be carried on in the same methods of investigation, induction, and reasoning; since both are enquiries into facts or real conditions."[72] Though Madison never awarded any of the Scottish philosophers the praises he lavished upon Newton and Locke in his orations and natural philosophy lectures, their ideas are present in much of Madison's surviving writings. Copies of his moral philosophy lectures have been lost to history, so it is impossible to know whether William and Mary students attributed their understanding of the connection between natural and moral science to Turnbull or to one of his Scottish successors. Although Stanhope Smith's assertion that "philosophy is an investigation of the constitution and laws of nature, both in the physical and moral world, as far as the powers of the human mind, unaided by the lights of revelation are competent to discover them," could have come straight out of Turnbull, the Princeton professor cited Francis Hutcheson and Thomas Reid instead of their

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[71] Madison, *Manifestation of the Providence Towards America*, 7.
[72] Turnbull, *The Principles of Moral Philosophy*, 1: 2.

teacher.[73] The same could easily have been the case with Madison, but it does not altar Turnbull's place as the creator of the tree of knowledge wherein morality and natural philosophy shared one scientific trunk. These inquiries into the "real conditions" of the moral realm throughout the eighteenth century left a legacy of republican thought for American intellectuals' political instruction. A good society was one constructed in light of the natural laws the human mind discovered through observation, and the New World provided the best opportunity to undertake such scientific endeavors. America was the real "promised land," fulfilling the divine plan of "a God, who, at the birth of creation, destined man for liberty, for virtue and for happiness, not for oppression vices and misery."[74]

"What is there in this sublunary state," Madison asked his countrymen, "that can attract the smiles of Heaven, or ensure political happiness, but virtue?"[75] Madison's moral philosophy revolved around the quest for virtue—a quest able to be fully undertaken only in a free society. America's republicanism was the best form of government because "it supposes virtue to be the basis, by a daily progression in virtue. It supposes men to be actuated by a spirit worthy of Christianity: sensible, indeed, that no society can exist without certain laws and rules by which the general interest may be regulated and promoted; but cherishing the fond hope that every individual will feel it his sacred duty, either to conform to them, or voluntarily to aid in the enforcement of them."[76] Madison found the "scientific" support for his politics in Scripture's call for virtue and in nature's proof of virtue's power to render people

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[73] Noll, *Princeton and the Republic*, 193.
[74] Madison, *Manifestations of the Providence Towards America*, 16.
[75] Ibid., 17.
[76] Madison, An Address to the Members of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Virginia, 78.

happy and ordered. Virtue made men temperate, prudent, patriotic—"all those qualities, which dignify human nature."[77] The virtue maintained under republican governments secured the harmony among humans that gravitation secured among the planets. Scottish Common Sense and Montesquieu's theories on government bequeathed to Madison the unification of republicanism, virtue, and education. Madison's eighteenth-century moral science was essentially political science, with the professor urging his students to the virtuous behavior that would keep America strong and Heaven smiling.

Madison's republicanism rested upon his moral philosophy, his moral philosophy upon a rational Christianity and liberal politics, and his rationalism upon eighteenth-century conceptions of natural law. The interconnected branches of his worldview reinforced one another with a strength that sustained sixty-three years of living. The professor/bishop devoted himself to being a patriot, helping to create and strengthen a nation that prided itself on being the product of over a century's worth of philosophic labor. He looked back upon the Revolution with romantic nostalgia: "Virginia saw that the moment had arrived when the rights of freemen, Heaven's sacred gift, were to be yielded, or defended with a courage worthy of such a prize."[78] And he looked forward to the future with optimistic faith in the young men he was teaching: "The rising Generation," he wrote his cousin in 1787, "will be much better Actors upon the republican Theatre than their Predecessors."[79]

"I have ever thought," former William and Mary student A. Coles wrote to Henry St. George Tucker (St. George Tucker's son) in 1799, congratulating Tucker

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[77] Madison, *Manifestations of the Providence Towards America,* 22.
[78] Madison, *A Nation Mourns*, 40.
[79] Madison to Madison, 11 June 1787, in *The Papers of James Madison*, 10: 44.

on his graduation, "and still think that William and Mary is the best place on the continent for the education of young men."[80] Virginia's elite generally agreed with Madison that a good education was the surest method of securing political stability. Replacing the pulpit with the classroom as the primary source of inspiration for personal and political virtue, Madison and his peers worked out a peculiarly rational approach to Christianity. Heaven was still the ultimate goal, but salvation—achieved through moral living as opposed to introspection—was manifested in both eternal *and* temporal happiness. Through both the experiments Madison engaged in with the elder Tucker and the lectures he delivered to the younger, William and Mary's president used science to secure America's future. He was successful in producing ambitious leaders for Virginia, but his methodology had repercussions the general populace grew unwilling to accept. "The spirit of skepticism which so much prevailed and which every student acquired as soon as he touched the threshold of the college is certainly the first step towards knowledge," Coles asserted in a decidedly Madison-like line of thinking; "it puts the mind in a proper state not only to receive, but also to receive correctly. That it leads to Deism, atheism, and [etc.] I will acknowledge, but on the same grounds we may object to reason."[81] Madison had argued as much in 1772 at the end of his own college days, telling the previous generation of Virginians that reason enabled men to "embrace a more than cloudy Faith."[82] Madison was never afraid of the effect unbounded reason would have upon his students because he knew that a rational investigation of the universe naturally led

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[80] A. Coles to Henry St. George Tucker, 20 July 1799, "Original Letters," *WMQ* 1st ser., +4: 2 (October 1895): 106.
[81] Ibid., 107.
[82] Madison, "Oration Commemorating the Founders of William and Mary College," 13.

to God and the republican politics He ordained. Science was not a threat to virtue but its very foundation.

CHAPTER SIX

THE VIRGINIAN, JANUARY 1783

The Marquis François Jean de Chastellux perhaps shivered as he composed his letter to Madison in his cabin on the frigate *L 'Emeraude* that January 1783. The cold, however, did not prevent the Frenchman from fulfilling a promise he had made to the college president the previous year during one of their numerous conversations. He entitled the letter "On the Progress of the Arts and Sciences in America," filling it with optimistic reflections about the country that had engaged his sword and his mind for the past three years. He had enjoyed his time in America, filling his journals with notes on the geography, people, and animals of the New World, but the war was now over and, while the Americans were eager to begin the laborious process of constructing a nation, he was anxious to return home. He did not deny his new friend a final moment of his time, determined that his pen should aid the country now that his sword was sheathed. Apologizing that a "foreigner should avoid as much as possible treating matters of which he cannot be a competent judge," Chastellux sought to leave Madison with a bit of advice for going about his role in constructing the new nation.[1] The Frenchman warned that although patriotism was now very strong, Madison should not expect it to "long exist with its present intensity," and that a more resilient foundation needed to be erected. "In a word, one must have education," wrote Chastellux, for "Ignorance is the source of evil, and Knowledge that of good."[2] Sharing his friend's interest in natural philosophy, Chastellux encouraged Madison's belief that scientific knowledge was the proper foundation of

[1] Chastellux, *Travels in North America*, 532.
[2] Ibid., 536-40.

good government. "Doubt not, Sir, that America will render herself illustrious by the sciences, as well as by her arms and her government; and if the attention of the Philosopher be still needed to watch over their progress, it is less to hasten it than to remove the obstacles which might retard its forward march."[3]

Madison took Chastellux's words to heart and devoted himself to being the Philosopher, watching over his county's scientific, religious, and political progress from his vantage point in Williamsburg, Virginia. If he reread Chastellux's letter in his final years, he surely must have reflected upon the statement, "in the moral as in the physical world, nothing stands isolated, no cause acts alone and independently."[4] The words expressed his own life's connection between the passions of his heart and mind. But nineteenth-century Americans were no longer interested in the "moral world" and had little use for philosophical connections between their spiritual and practical lives. The "bad thinking, bad religion, and bad politics sweeping the public at large," historian Mark Noll concluded about America in 1807, made it impossible for the "earlier synthesis of patriotism, faith, and science" to hold.[5] Madison resisted such divisions until his death. He fought the changing attitudes of the Didactic Enlightenment of the late eighteenth century and maintained William and Mary's reputation as the most liberal school in America.[6] Unfortunately, such stubborn adherence left Madison and his college isolated from mainstream society, which was beginning to control the country's religious, political, and economic direction. Even as the country grew into something he did not understand, however, Madison's

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[3] Ibid., 545-46.
[4] Ibid., 532.
[5] Noll, *Princeton and the Republic*, 6.
[6] May, *The Enlightenment in America*, 139.

patriotism remained undiminished. He was a statesman, although his work was mainly undertaken in the halls of the college instead of the capital. Madison, taking Chastellux's warning that love of country must be supplemented by virtue to heart, spent his life reminding Virginians of the religious significance of their republican experiment.

At Madison's funeral in March 1812, the Rev. John Bracken reminded the mourners of the many services this man had done them: "He was a vigilant and prudent superintendent, a great encourager of science and good order; and from his talents and greatly improved mental endowments, a most able, judicious and successful instructor, to which every corner of this commonwealth bears witness." "So long as life remains," Bracken went on, "the remembrance of his worth and services will be embalmed in the hearts of all who feel and have felt the benefits of his instructions, religious, moral and scientific."[7] The most poignant testimony to Madison's effect upon his fellow Americans, however, came not from his funeral but from his eulogy in *The Virginia Argus*. Recalling Madison's forty years of service to the college, the paper's editors worried that the institution would "fall victim to premature dilapidation" upon losing the man who was its center. "May the Guardian Angels of science," they prayed, "[avert] this catastrophe by furnishing a successor ~~who shall possess all those attributes of the heart and understanding which conspired~~ with his years to render Mr. M. one amongst the most venerable of men!"[8] They did not find a replacement, for Madison, the supernatural rationalist of the Christian Enlightenment, was a member of a dying breed. Religion and science had

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[7] John Bracken, Sermon preached at Madison's funeral, 1812, Bishop Madison Papers, AA# 1980.121, University Archives, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.
[8] *The Virginia Argus* (12 March 1812) in Ibid.

increasingly little to do with each other in the America of his birth. His nineteenth-century successors in the church replaced a rational religion with an emotional one, and most scientists had less need for God in a mechanical universe. The Guardian Angels of science, who had overseen Madison's diligent statesmanship, were dismissed as remnants of the previous century and condemned to serve their vigil over his tomb instead of his country.

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