

**Toleration and Reform: Virginia's Anglican Clergy, 1770-1776**

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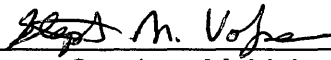
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## APPROVAL PAGE

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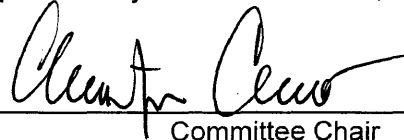
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## ABSTRACT PAGE

This thesis examines Virginia's religious and political literature during the first half of the 1770s and attempts to demonstrate that resistance to the idea of religious toleration and clerical reform among the Established clergy in Virginia was not monolithic. Calls for toleration and reform did in fact emanate from Anglican priests, and the colony's ecclesiastical leaders squandered the chance to work with Methodist evangelicals and adopt at least a measure of the revivalist spirit typical of the dissenter sects. Moreover, there was opportunity for Church leaders and their political allies in the Assembly to enact a limited form of religious toleration that might have blunted later demands for complete disestablishment.

In order to provide adequate background for Virginia's early disestablishment phase, this project briefly reviews the history of the Anglican Church in Virginia, including its structure, growth, and inherent weaknesses. The development of the nonconformist/political challenges to Anglican hegemony before the American Revolution are also considered, in addition to the controversies that most contributed to the destabilization of Church-colony relations, such as the Parsons' Cause and the episcopacy dispute. The discussion then concentrates on particular Anglican clergymen and their efforts to promote toleration and clerical reform during the early 1770s, and concludes with a brief look at the negative impact of the Revolution on Church revitalization.

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## INTRODUCTION

At the outbreak of the American Revolution, the Church of England in Virginia found its privileged status under siege. By the mid-1770s, patriots throughout the colonies increasingly maligned the Church as a loyalist haven. This perception, as well as a concomitant rise in dissenter agitation, seriously undermined the social and political influence of the Anglican clergy. Many unsympathetic leaders in the Virginia Assembly saw the enfeeblement of the Church as an opportunity to advance disestablishment legislation, and in fact, partial disestablishment was achieved in December 1776. Another decade of recurring debate would ensue before the process was completed with the passage of the Act for Establishing Religious Freedom in 1786.

When American independence was declared in 1776, nine of the thirteen states recognized some form of religious establishment. During the Revolution, several states quietly ended official church sponsorship when they adopted constitutions. In Virginia, however, the disestablishment process was prolonged and highly contentious, and involved many of the state's most prominent religious and political leaders. The dissolution of all government support for the Church of England in Virginia was hailed as a great victory for religious freedom, and the episode produced some of America's most significant political writings on church-state relations, such as Thomas Jefferson's "Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom" and James Madison's "Memorial and Remonstrance." Disestablishment in Virginia also signaled the end of official sectarian recognition in the remaining state governments, and it was the basis for the "establishment clause" in the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Over two

hundred years later, skirmishes between church and state—such as the appropriateness of religious symbols in public-funded college chapels—continue to stir controversy in America.

Much of the nondenominational historiography on Virginia's disestablishment experience has been cast within a political/legal framework, which tends to present the episode almost exclusively as a legislative struggle between an entrenched, reactionary Anglican clergy and their supporters and an encroaching dissenter movement allied with a liberal political faction led by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. While this view has merit, it allows room for a more thorough study from the Anglican clergy's perspective, particularly in the years just before partial disestablishment. A sizable portion of the denominational historiography on the subject ranges from quasi-apologist Anglican studies to more triumphalist dissenter epics.

A review of Virginia's religious and political literature during the first half of the 1770s demonstrates that the intransigence of the Established clergy in Virginia has been generally overstated by scholars, and that resistance to the idea of religious toleration and clerical reform within the ministry was not monolithic. Calls for toleration and reform did in fact emanate from Anglican priests, and the colony's ecclesiastical leaders squandered the chance to work with Methodist evangelicals and assimilate at least a measure of the revivalist spirit of the dissenter movement. Moreover, there was opportunity for Church leaders and their political allies in the Assembly to enact a limited form of religious toleration that might have blunted later demands for disestablishment. Unfortunately, such opportunities were ignored or hindered by short-sighted ministers and laymen, and eventually overtaken by the events of the Revolution.

In order to provide adequate background for Virginia's early disestablishment phase, it will be necessary to briefly review the history of the Anglican Church in Virginia, including its structure, growth, and inherent weaknesses. The development of the nonconformist/political challenges to Anglican hegemony before the American Revolution will also be examined, in addition to the controversies that most contributed to the destabilization of Church-colony relations, such as the Parson's Cause and the episcopacy dispute. The discussion will then concentrate on particular Anglican clergymen and their efforts to promote toleration and clerical reform during the early 1770s. A brief look at the negative impact of the Revolution on Church revitalization will complete the study.

## CHAPTER 1

### GENESIS OF INSTABILITY

The Virginia House of Burgesses established the Church of England in its first session in 1619 and assumed greater ecclesiastical regulatory authority in 1624, the same year that Virginia became a royal colony. The Anglican Church grew steadily from its base in Virginia so that by the eve of the Revolutionary War, there were over four hundred active congregations and more than three hundred ordained clergymen scattered throughout the colonies.<sup>1</sup>

The spread of Anglicanism was augmented by British missionaries working under the auspices of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG). Founded in 1701, the SPG's main purpose was to evangelize and convert nonbelievers (including dissenters), and to establish new Anglican congregations. Often referred to as the "Venerable Society," the SPG also helped recruit, train, and finance Anglican ministers in the colonies, although SPG activity was limited in Virginia because of the inherent strength of the Church there.<sup>2</sup>

The SPG was an effective mission program. Anglicanism became the established religion in Georgia and the Carolinas largely through the Society's lobbying efforts, and determined SPG missionaries organized Anglican congregations in all the northern colonies—including over forty in Congregationalist-dominated New England by 1750. Additionally, SPG ministers were influential in the development of Anglican-affiliated colleges, such as King's College and the College of Philadelphia.<sup>3</sup> The Chesapeake,

however, would remain the stronghold of Anglicanism throughout the colonial period and Early Republic.

A typical Anglican parish in the southern colonies encompassed several hundred square miles and often contained more than one church edifice in order to accommodate dispersed populations. Ministers in multicongregational parishes were compelled to rotate Sunday services each week, thus forsaking their parishioners to lay readers during their absence. In the North, parishes were less “typical” in light of the Church’s minority position relative to other Christian denominations.<sup>4</sup> The increase in the number of Anglican parishes generally mirrored population growth. For example, in 1730 the Virginia colony maintained 53 parishes that served an estimated 114,000 people; by 1770 there were 92 parishes spread among a population of around 260,000.<sup>5</sup> Parishes were often subdivided to accommodate population expansion, but mergers between adjacent parishes were also effected to reduce expenses as well as to compensate for a shortage of ministers. Irregular settlement patterns were the main reason for the erratic establishment of parishes, not only in Virginia but throughout the colonies. Parishes in frontier areas were particularly unstable due to variations in land quality and because of their vulnerability to Indian attacks. Parish boundaries were normally settled at the local level by popular vote, although in Virginia the General Assembly retained final approval.<sup>6</sup>

The Anglican Church in Virginia kept no attendance records. In 1624 the Assembly mandated weekly church attendance for all inhabitants and established penalties for absenteeism. In 1705 the attendance requirement was reduced to once a month and exceptions were allowed for nonconformists. In either case, mandatory attendance was often not enforced, particularly in rural parishes, though prosecutions for church

absenteeism still occurred as late as the 1770s.<sup>7</sup> The proportion of baptized Anglicans in colonial Virginia remains uncertain, but recent estimates place the number at well above fifty percent. While the Church no doubt played a very important role in colonial Virginia society, the level of individual religious commitment is nearly impossible to gauge.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Rhys Isaac has argued that church attendance, at least among Virginia elites, “had more to do with expressing the dominance of the gentry than with inculcating piety or forming devout personalities.”<sup>9</sup>

Though buttressed by such a sturdy institution as the Church of England, Virginia’s Church suffered from a host of inherent structural problems that would ultimately lead to its near demise during and immediately after the American Revolution. Of the most irreconcilable was that Anglican ministers, as ordained by the Church of England, swore allegiance to the king as well as to conform to the Book of Common Prayer. After the Declaration of Independence, the ordination oaths invoked intense controversy as allegiance became *the* divisive issue between loyalists within the Church and supporters of the revolution. Moreover, because most Anglican priests were trained in England, and all were ordained and licensed there, the majority of ministers sent to the colonies were either English-born or Scotsmen. At the beginning of the eighteenth century there were no native-born ministers in Virginia; even by the early 1770s, nearly fifty percent of the colony’s clergy were foreign-born.<sup>10</sup>

From an operational vantage, the most serious defect of the colonial Anglican Church was the lack of cohesive ecclesiastical leadership. This stemmed largely from the inability of the Church hierarchy to establish bishoprics in the colonies. The Bishop of London had served as titular supervisor of the colonial church since the 1680s; limited

jurisdiction would not be officially recognized until 1728. A bishop's responsibilities included administering confirmation rites, ordaining ministers, conducting inspections, maintaining ecclesiastical discipline, and otherwise enforcing church regulations. In the absence of colonial dioceses, London's bishop could only delegate these duties (with the exception of ordination and confirmation) to a limited number of Anglican clergymen appointed as colonial commissaries.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, a commissary's actual authority remained unclear and his position tentative since London bishops, unsure of their own dominion over the colonies, issued vaguely worded commission orders or declined to issue commissions altogether. Because colonial commissaries were on shaky legal ground, they never seriously disturbed the status quo in church-government relations.<sup>12</sup> However, as the number of Anglican parishes continued to climb, the need for some form of inter-colonial ecclesiastical coordination became critical, especially as political confrontations between Anglicans and nonconformists became more frequent and hostile. The inability of the colonial Church to engage its detractors from a unified platform was a tremendous handicap during the political battles germane to the Revolution and later disestablishment.

Church-colony relations were further complicated by the Anglican institution of the parish vestry. By 1636 the Virginia Assembly had officially recognized the ecclesiastical authority of the parish vestry; Anglicans in other colonies adopted variants of the system. The vestry's two most important ecclesiastical functions were that of hiring ministers and of funding church construction and glebe maintenance. Vestries appointed churchwardens from among their own members to collect parish levies to pay for both. The vestries also managed poor relief.<sup>13</sup>

The vestry additionally served as a quasi law enforcement body that had the authority to investigate breeches of public morality via the churchwardens, although most cases were referred to the county courts for adjudication. By law, parish vestries consisted of no more than twelve landholders (and the minister), and members were essentially granted lifetime tenure. Because vestries were almost always comprised of the leading citizens of each parish, they wielded considerable power since, in many instances, vestrymen were also members of the county government and many served in the Assembly.<sup>14</sup> The colonial Anglican Church in Virginia could boast among its vestrymen such notables as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, and George Mason.

The vestry system proved to be double-edged for the Virginia Church. On one hand, vestrymen often acted in concert with one of the Church's principal goals—to maintain religious conformity. In this context, the vestries and vestrymen provided a legal bulwark against dissenter encroachment. Moreover, vestries had a stake in the success of the Church because the system invested laymen with financial management responsibility for parish affairs. On the other hand, vestries were formidable local bodies who guarded their independence from both civil and ecclesiastical encroachment.

The obligation of the vestries to present ministers to the governor for induction and permanent tenure was a longstanding point of contention in Virginia. Vestries were hesitant to procure lifetime tenure for ministers and usually opted to hire them on a yearly basis. Perennial probation served as a precaution against future malfeasance as well as an effective method of control. In fact, very few ministers were ever inducted despite recurrent calls from colonial governors and commissaries to have ecclesiastical laws

enforced and/or amended. Ministers were not completely without recourse since they could appeal vestry decisions to the governor and Council, the commissary, or the Assembly. Yet the power of the vestries was such that even in disputes involving the governor or commissary, vestrymen were usually victorious.<sup>15</sup>

Besides domineering vestries, the colonial Anglican clergy had its own internal problems, most of which stemmed from its poor moral reputation and disjointed leadership. Baptist minister and church historian Robert Semple (1769-1831) claimed that the success of the Baptists in helping to overturn the established Church in Virginia was in part attributable to the “loose and immoral deportment” of the Anglican clergy, and that it “was not uncommon for the rectors of parishes to be men of the loosest morals.”<sup>16</sup> Despite Semple’s biased viewpoint, his claims were not groundless. Indeed, the reputation of the colonial Anglican clergy during the eighteenth century was less than stellar. Even Anglican ministers could disparage their fellow parsons as “so debauched that they are the foremost and most bent in all manner of vices.”<sup>17</sup> From 1692 to 1776, official complaints were lodged against 15 percent of the Virginia clergy (including unproven ones). In 1768 one minister in Maryland was charged with murder, while the governor of Virginia denounced another priest for being “almost guilty of every sin except murder.”<sup>18</sup> In a plea to the bishop of London, Virginia commissary James Blair requested that “those [ministers] your Lord sends may be men of good characters; we have too many of [the] indifferent ones.”<sup>19</sup> From 1723 to 1776, forty-four Virginia parsons faced various charges of immorality, of which twenty-five appeared to have merit. Most of the transgressors were foreign-born and most of the transgressions involved alcohol abuse—not uncommon in eighteenth-century Virginia.<sup>20</sup>

Yet recent scholarship has challenged the shabby reputation of the colonial Anglican clergy and instead suggests that this unfortunate legacy is more the product of dissenter propaganda than of pervasive malfeasance. Anglican Church historian Joan Gundersen contends that, from the overall testimony gleaned from contemporary sources, the Established clergy in Virginia were not a particularly immoral lot and that the vast majority of churchmen behaved honorably. She attributes much of the problem of clergy misconduct, at least in the first half of the eighteenth century, to an acute shortage of ministers. And because the difficulty of removing miscreants was never fully resolved during the colonial period, a noticeable shortfall of reputable priests continued until disestablishment. She concludes that roughly ten percent of the Anglican ministry in Virginia was guilty of misconduct for the period 1723-1776.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the assessments of Gundersen and other scholars are limited to only the known recorded cases of clerical misconduct. There are no means to evaluate instances of clerical misbehavior that simply ended with headshakes of disgust from eyewitnesses. Whether the result of New Light harangues, negative publicity from the most notorious cases, or a less identifiable but still egregious pattern of misconduct, the poor public image of the pre-Revolutionary Anglican ministry was very real and a serious detriment to its credibility.

Many historians have blamed the first colonial commissary, the Rev. James Blair (1655-1743), for the perpetual weakness of both the commissary post and the Virginia clergy in general. As the most influential Anglican minister in the colony's history, the Scottish-born Blair served as commissary for fifty-four years from 1689 until his death. Blair's legacy in Virginia was extraordinary. He led the successful petitioning for the

charter of the College of William and Mary and immediately became the institution's first president. In addition to his positions as commissary and college president, Blair served as a member of the Governor's Council and as rector of Jamestown and Bruton parishes.<sup>22</sup> Although Blair was sometimes accused of being more concerned with the operation of the college than of the ministry, relative stability prevailed in the Church during his term. One of Blair's most important achievements was to secure a legislative act of clergy tenure in 1727. The law underscored the right of any minister selected by a vestry to receive a full salary and a glebe. But the issue of ministerial induction was not reconciled during Blair's tenure.<sup>23</sup>

Blair had determination and the gift of persuasion, but he was never invested with any real authority, either from the bishops in England or the Virginia colonial government. As commissary, he did not have the power to ordain ministers (even after the chartering of William and Mary's divinity school), and one of his few recurring official roles was to conduct periodic inspections of Virginia parishes and to report his findings to London. Blair technically retained the power to adjudicate instances of clerical misbehavior based on his commission, but his first and only attempt to create a colony-wide ecclesiastical court system failed.<sup>24</sup> Thereafter, he was left to defer serious cases of misconduct to the governor and Council, which effectively made the Council the final arbiter in most cases of clerical malfeasance.<sup>25</sup> Faulted for ceding too much power to laymen, Blair explained himself, claiming that "Bishop Compton [of London] Directed me to make no further use of my commission than to keep the Clergy in order."<sup>26</sup> He also insisted, justifiably, that a shortage of temperate ministers prevented him from replacing the intemperate ones. Blair, however, did make use of the Council and Assembly to dismiss a few wayward

parsons, and he used the threat of investigation and trial to force the resignation of several others.<sup>27</sup>

To be fair, Blair prepared a comprehensive clerical reform plan in 1699, which among other things would have established ecclesiastical courts (for clergymen only) under the operational control of the commissary. The plan instituted a one-year time limit for vestries to present received ministers to the governor for induction, and it also called for a hefty pay raise and an increase in the size of glebes. But neither the Governor's Council nor the Assembly ever acted on the proposal.<sup>28</sup> Blair's influence on the Council (and with English bishops) helped lead to the dismissal of three of the colony's governors for interfering in church affairs (Andros, Nicholson, and Spotswood). But even this degree of power was insufficient to overcome two other major obstacles: the General Assembly and the vestry system. After Blair's death, no Virginia commissary ever achieved his level of political influence. Nor would any of them attempt to establish a permanent system to deal with clerical misconduct.<sup>29</sup>

Absent strong central authority, the Anglican clergy in Virginia remained largely under the control of the vestries during most of the colonial period. But once received into a parish, ministers were generally treated, however tentatively, as members of the gentry. Some parsons, like James Blair, were able to confirm elite status through marriage; others were the scions of elite families. But a clergymen's economic position was still highly dependent upon several factors, including parish wealth and method of payment, glebe availability and condition, and the tobacco quality of the region.<sup>30</sup> Because the power of selection and presentation still rested with the vestry, it was incumbent upon candidates to ensure that they had the support of influential members of

the parish gentry. It was here where many parsons fell into a subordinate, client-patron status. Immigrant clergymen were in an even weaker position because they had greater difficulty establishing the requisite social connections needed to garner patronage.<sup>31</sup>

Occasionally, vestries assumed the character of “plebeian juntas,” as in the notorious case involving the Rev. William Kay (1721?-1755) and Vestryman Landon Carter (1710-1778) of Richmond County. In 1745, Carter took personal issue with one of Kay’s Sunday sermons in which he had preached against pride. According to Kay, Carter “wanted to extort more mean, low, and humble obedience, than I thought consistent with the office of a Clergyman, all his houts [*sic*] and insults I little noticed, until he publicly declared that I preached against him (which I did not).”<sup>32</sup> Carter enticed a majority of the vestry to agree to lock Kay out of his parsonage, which was then leased to other tenants who then damaged most of Kay’s livestock. In an appeal to the Bishop of London, Kay complained that if vestries continued to sidestep permanent tenure and retain parsons as “annual hirelings,” the Virginia clergy “will soon be discharged for very little reason,” and will have to “beg” for their salaries “as for an Alms, for fear of offences.”<sup>33</sup> Kay took his case to the colonial General Court, which awarded him damages. Carter then appealed to the privy council in London, mainly on the claim that since Kay had never been inducted, the vestry (controlled by Carter) retained the right of dismissal for any reason deemed appropriate. It was not until 1753 that the privy council finally decided in Kay’s favor.<sup>34</sup>

Power plays between vestrymen and parsons notwithstanding, church-state relations also strained over the matter of remuneration. The Assembly first standardized ministerial salaries in 1661 and eventually set remuneration at 16,000 pounds of tobacco

per year in 1696. This figure remained nearly unchanged until after the Revolution. Although this allowance was considered adequate by most standards of the time, ministers occasionally submitted petitions to have it adjusted. The Assembly also obligated vestries to purchase glebes and to construct parsonages supplied with livestock. Many ministers, however, were paid monetary or other allowances in lieu of a glebe due to poor land quality, or because a parish might be located in a non-tobacco-growing area. The Assembly also allowed payments for funeral and marriage ceremonies, and for reading prayers during sessions of the General Assembly. Many clergymen augmented their salaries by operating small “Parsons’ Schools” for parish children.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, the level of compensation varied depending on the wealth of the parish, and often, the quality of the tobacco. Some parsons were simply more fortunate than others. The few missionaries of the SPG usually fared worse because they were often deployed to remote regions that lacked glebes and wealthy parishioners.<sup>36</sup>

In Virginia and other tobacco-growing regions, the wealthiest ministers were also tobacco planters and slave owners. More than a few clergymen among this class achieved a considerable level of personal wealth and acquired large estates along with an abundance of household articles.<sup>37</sup> Even so, after examining surviving eighteenth-century estate records, Joan Gundersen convincingly argues that scholars have overestimated the wealth of the clergy in Virginia, whom she classifies as middle class. She also notes that a majority of ministers in the Chesapeake were able to secure financial stability until the Revolution.<sup>38</sup>

The issue of clerical remuneration generated major controversy in the 1750s. In its 1748/9 session, the Assembly passed a law that reconfirmed the payment of clerical

salaries in tobacco. The tobacco provision was sent to the privy council and the king for approval as part of a package of miscellaneous legislation. Contrary to normal custom, however, most of the legislation was personally ratified by the king, including the tobacco provision. This technically deprived the Assembly of the power to revise any of the approved measures. A few years later, the colony experienced financial difficulties as a result of unexpected expenses incurred from the outbreak of the Seven Years' War. The Assembly then authorized tax increases, and for the first time, issued paper money. In 1755, fear of a tobacco crop failure sparked an anticipated sharp increase in the price of tobacco. In an effort to stave off general insolvency, the Assembly permitted the option of cash payments in place of tobacco for all debts, including minister's salaries. The conversion to cash was set at a rate equaling two-pence per pound of tobacco. The law was to remain valid for approximately one year and was commonly referred to as the Tobacco Act or the Two-Penny Act. The legislation was not without precedent because some parishes in poor tobacco-growing regions often paid their ministers with cash. Yet for clergymen anticipating a windfall pay hike, the Two-Penny Act was instead a *de jure* pay cut.<sup>39</sup>

The clergy's best legal argument against the Two-Penny Act was that it violated what the *king* had authorized in the 1748/9 laws. In addition to disloyalty, the ministry also floated the general charge of breach of contract. Even though no crop failure occurred, a few parsons petitioned the Bishop of London for redress, arguing that the scheme would "draw on the ruin of the Established Church" since priests would now be wary of accepting orders to Virginia. They also claimed that because "the Clergy are confined by their office and circumstances to one way of subsistence," churchmen were constrained

from making up for the decrease in income the bill effectively mandated. Other ministers urged Commissary Thomas Dawson (1715-1761) to summon a clerical convention to fight the legislation, which Dawson refused to do.<sup>40</sup>

Three years later, a severe drought forced the Assembly to authorize a second Tobacco Act, again valid for one year. Several ministers, led by the Rev. John Camm, professor of divinity at William and Mary, again implored Dawson to summon a convention to protest the law. But Dawson's preferred method of protest was to complain in writing.<sup>41</sup> In late 1758 or early 1759, several ministers convened an unauthorized convention and decided that Camm would travel to England and appeal to the king (without consulting the Assembly). The others would then formally petition the governor for an exemption. Though the governor ignored the petitions, Camm eventually succeeded in persuading the privy council and the king to disallow the Two-Penny Acts. Several parsons, including Camm, later sued their vestries for full back pay, but none was successful. Collectively, these suits became known as the "Parsons' Cause."<sup>42</sup>

The clergy's fierce resistance to the tobacco acts was partly a reflection of their insecurity because they interpreted the Two-Penny legislation as an assault on their legal rights. This is especially likely since the leaders of the resistance were college professors who were not materially affected by the acts. By the same measure, the gentry reacted strongly against the machinations of Camm and his allies. The appeals to London were a clear circumvention of Virginia civil authority, and leading vestrymen vigorously defended the Assembly's actions. Richard Henry Lee (1732-1794) argued that the crown's explicit authorization of the colony to make laws was also an implicit authorization to negate them, particularly those that had become "inconvenient or

mischievous.” Landon Carter bristled at the apparent hypocrisy of the parsons’ complaints and explained that the reason the Assembly did not exempt the clergy from the Two-Penny Acts was that it was to be assumed clergymen would humbly share in the “general Commiseration” of the colony, and that as “Ministers of *Christ’s* Gospel, they ought to be *thought* at least always willing to imitate their great Master and Teacher” and suffer quietly alongside their parishioners. Assemblymen Landon Carter and Richard Bland (1710-1776) then pressed the legislature to authorize taxpayer-funded legal defense for any vestry involved in a clerical lawsuit.<sup>43</sup>

The Parsons’ Cause highlighted a major weakness endemic to the clergy and also foreshadowed another. The failure of Commissary Dawson to summon a convention following the *first* tobacco act was a lost opportunity for the clergy to exhibit at least a veneer of unity, and the appeals to London revealed the impotency of the commissary to check the Assembly’s encroachments on ecclesiastical prerogatives. More ominously, the Parsons’ Cause not only exposed divisions within the clergy, it also signaled that anticlericalism was beginning to strengthen among the gentry. Richard Bland declared that “[the] Days are over” when the clergy were “respected, and well used by the People.”<sup>44</sup> Unfairly or not, the whole episode effectively cast the parsons as a greedy clique and it served to alienate them from their parishioners.

Although church-state confrontations such as the Parsons’ Cause aroused the antagonism of the Virginia gentry, no single episode before the Revolution incited more anti-Anglican sentiment throughout the colonies than the episcopacy controversy. At the end of the Seven Years’ War, leading Anglican clergymen from the middle and northern colonies resolved to petition the king, the Bishop of London, and the Archbishop of

Canterbury for American dioceses. Though not the first endeavor to procure a colonial bishop, British authorities were now less than enthusiastic about the idea in light of the recent political turmoil over colonial taxation. Despite British ambivalence, several ministers in the north, led by the Rev. Thomas Bradbury Chandler (1726-1790) of New Jersey and the Rev. Samuel Johnson (1696-1772) of Connecticut, organized a clerical convention in New Jersey in 1766 for the stated purpose of establishing bishoprics in America.<sup>45</sup>

Advocates for colonial episcopacy tried to lessen public apprehension through an outpouring of apologist literature in various pamphlets and editorials. In an open appeal to the American public, Chandler reassured readers that in the campaign for an Anglican episcopate “no Invasion of the civil or religious Privileges of any, whether Churchmen or Dissenters, is [hereby] intended.” But he also warned that unless bishops were sent quickly “we can foresee nothing but the Ruin of the Church in this Country.”<sup>46</sup>

Chandler’s principal theological argument was that the non-induction of ministers equated to a break in the line of apostolic succession, thereby undermining the spiritual authority of all parsons so denied. An American bishop could rectify this abomination and likewise ordain ministers and administer confirmation rites locally. On a practical level, Chandler insisted that the cost and danger of the requisite voyage to England for ordination contributed to the shortage of ministers in the colonies. He also downplayed the potential high cost of episcopacy and deemed as “remote” the possibility of a general tax or tithe to support it.<sup>47</sup> Chandler emphasized the additional benefits of strengthening clerical unity and discipline, which only American bishoprics could provide. He

maintained that episcopacy would place colonial Anglicans on equal footing with the bishops and synods already in existence among rival denominations.<sup>48</sup>

The pro-episcopate convention forwarded a plethora of petitions for colonial dioceses to British authorities and sent representatives into the southern colonies to convince fellow ministers there to join them in the effort. But the Virginia clergy initially resisted, in part because of the animosity generated from the two-penny controversies of the previous decade.<sup>49</sup> Finally, in May 1771, Virginia Commissary James Horrocks (1734?-1772) publicly announced his plans to discuss “the Expediency of an Application to proper Authority for an *American* Episcopate.”<sup>50</sup> In June, a convention was summoned at the College of William and Mary although only 12 out of approximately 100 Virginia ministers attended. After some initial wrangling about a quorum, the ministers voted 8 to 4 to petition the king for a colonial bishop. Horrocks then left for England with the petition.<sup>51</sup>

Chandler’s original letter had set off a colony-wide editorial war between pro- and anti-episcopate forces. Opponents charged that Anglicans and other “Enemies of America” were attempting to install a “mitered generalissimo.”<sup>52</sup> After the Horrocks convention, Virginia newspapers joined in the fray, printing a multitude of letters (many pseudonymous) from both sides of the debate—the anti-episcopate camp being the more prolific. The public’s angry reaction to the possibility of an American episcopate could be expected in view of developing political tension between Britain and the colonies. For the Virginia gentry especially, the prospect of a resident bishop was considered an assault on their temporal authority, although the idea of some type of “very limited” episcopate found support among a few Assemblymen, notably Robert Carter Nicholas (1728-1780)

and Edmund Pendleton (1721-1803).<sup>53</sup> But the Anglican claim that the appointment of colonial bishops would help restore integrity to the native ministry only lent credence to the accusation of a lack thereof. Arch anti-cleric Richard Bland wrote to a friend in England that “if a Bishop is appointed in [A]merica with any Jurisdiction at all; [it] will produce greater Convulsions than anything that has ever, as yet, happened in this part of the Globe.” He also accused Horrocks of being a malcontented opportunist who would set “all America into Flame” if he succeeded with his intrigue.<sup>54</sup>

New York and New Jersey clerics continued to chide Virginia churchmen for their lack of support. In a 1771 open letter to “Episcopalians in Virginia,” they reiterated the main arguments for colonial bishops. To the “professed *Episcopalians*” in the House of Burgesses, they pointed to the seeming contradiction between the Assembly’s longtime patronage of the Church and its sudden refusal to strengthen it. To their fellow ministers, they cited the dissension over episcopacy as proof of the need for stronger clerical oversight, and charged that only “delinquents” would have reason to fear the inspection of a bishop.<sup>55</sup>

The response of a few members of the Virginia clergy to the episcopate proposal was surprising. Two English-born parsons in particular, Samuel Henley (1744-1815) and Thomas Gwatkin (1742-1800), openly opposed the convention’s plans for a colonial diocese; they were two of the four dissenters. Both were young, well-educated, and philosophical mavericks. Henley had possibly attended Cambridge, and after ordination, transferred to Virginia as professor of moral philosophy at William and Mary. Gwatkin had attended Oxford before receiving orders to serve in Virginia as professor of natural

philosophy and mathematics, also at William and Mary. Both men were popular with their students because of their somewhat unconventional views on various subjects.<sup>56</sup>

Shortly after the Horrocks convention, Henley and Gwatkin published a letter in the *Virginia Gazette* protesting the petition crafted by the other ministers. They argued that eight ministers could not legitimately claim to represent the opinions of the vast majority of Virginia clergymen who had not attended the meeting. They also objected to sending the petition directly to the king without the (pro forma) assent of the Bishop of London, and, more importantly, the civil authorities in Virginia. Henley and Gwatkin insisted that it was “extremely indecent for the Clergy to make such an Application without the Concurrence of the President, Council, and Representatives of this Province.”

Considering the sharp rise in nonconformist agitation, the two parsons cautioned the petitioners that the pursuit of an episcopate might “infuse Jealousies and Fears into the Minds of Protestant Dissenters, and to give ill disposed Persons Occasion to raise such Disturbances” to the extent that it might jeopardize the existence of the British colonies in America.<sup>57</sup>

Arguing on behalf of the petitioners was John Camm, now acting president of the college. Camm had long been frustrated over the inability of the native clergy to govern itself. He defended the authority of the convention on the basis that those present acted as the *representatives* of the other ministers in the colony, and in any case, since there had never been a full clerical assembly in the colony’s history, there could be no special rules from which to affirm an acceptable quorum. Camm pointed out that the clergy in Maryland had already petitioned for a bishop and he tried to reassure critics that the “Clergy desire Nothing, on this Occasion, but a fit Ruler for themselves.” He brushed off

complaints that the convention had circumvented the authority of the Assembly and countered that pursuit of civil approval for the petition in Virginia would have been futile “in the Face of an Opposition from any considerable Number of Persons of Weight and Consequence among the Laity.”<sup>58</sup> Although the back and forth in the press between Henley/Gwatkin and Camm would continue for several weeks, the Assembly all but squelched further support for the petition a month later with a press release that thanked the convention’s four dissenting parsons for their “wise and well timed Opposition...to the pernicious Project, of a few mistaken Clergymen.”<sup>59</sup> The petitions for a colonial episcopate came to nothing and the Revolution put the effort on hold for years.

It would not be unreasonable to evaluate the ministers (and laymen) who supported episcopacy as reformers from the perspective that a resident bishop almost certainly would have been a stabilizing force within the Church, not only with respect to clerical discipline, but also as a focal point in formulating colonial Church policy. But the creation of a diocese in Virginia before the conclusion of the Revolution would have posed nearly insurmountable problems, chiefly because of the difficulty involved in negotiating the lines of authority between bishop, Assembly, and vestry. Nicholas’s conception of a “very limited” bishop under the control of the colonial government would have produced nothing more than a glorified commissary.

There was, moreover, the issue as to which institution would retain the right to establish dioceses and select bishops. Historian George M. Brydon (1875-1963) explained that even though the Rev. Samuel Seabury (1729-1796) was appointed Bishop of Connecticut in 1784, the laity in that colony had nothing to do with the process. And disputes over which institution would maintain authority over ministerial selection,

induction, and jurisdiction would likely have immobilized the Virginia Assembly for months or even years. Brydon averred that the long tradition of vestry control in Virginia would probably have been too difficult to overcome, and that the simmering enmity between the crown and the colony was the primary reason most Virginians, including clergymen, were hostile to the idea of a resident bishop.<sup>60</sup>

The appearance of nonconformist sects in Virginia was the most pernicious external challenge for the Established Church before the Revolution, although Virginia's dissenters would not become a vexation until the mid-eighteenth century. In 1700 the Church of England maintained the second largest number of churches in the colonies after the Congregationalists, and Anglican parishioners represented nearly twenty-five percent of the colonial total. Yet despite steady growth, by the mid-1770s Anglican churches served only about ten percent of the colonial population and Anglicans fell behind the faster-growing Presbyterians and Baptists in total number of congregations.<sup>61</sup>

Quakers and Puritans were the most numerous of the nonconformist denominations in Virginia during the seventeenth century. Quakers were viewed as the greater nuisance on account of their pacifism, which made them all but useless near the frontier and also because of their overt lack of deference to authority (i.e., the gentry). Moreover, since Quakers claimed exemption from the parish levy, they effectively increased the tax burden on their Anglican neighbors. Quaker missionaries gained sway mostly among the poorer sort residing in remote areas.<sup>62</sup> So it was owing to their "lies, miracles, false visions, prophecies and doctrines" and their "attempting thereby to destroy religion" that in 1660 the Assembly barred any ship transporting Quakers to Virginia's ports. In 1663,

the Assembly restricted Quakers meetings to no more than four adults and imposed other penalties on sympathizers who invited them to teach or preach in their homes.<sup>63</sup> When the Assembly grudgingly acknowledged the tenets of the English Toleration Act in 1699, Quakers and other dissenters were legally permitted to hold services that same year, though within strict limitations.<sup>64</sup> Quaker proselytizers in Virginia had some success harvesting converts in spite of the severe repression against them. Yet, oddly, after the Assembly permitted their open operation, the number of Quaker congregations declined. Perhaps the lack of danger dampened their enthusiasm.<sup>65</sup>

Puritans were never an influential force in the Virginia colony, even during the English Protectorate. This was partly attributable to their lack of missionary activity and relative dearth of numbers. Historian Philip Bruce (1856-1933) has suggested that the limited growth of Puritanism in Virginia might have been in part a consequence of the colony's isolated plantation system which militated against the creation of the strong social networks necessary to sustain their austere lifestyle. In any case, royalist Governor William Berkeley (1605?-1677) initiated a series of ecclesiastical conformity laws which effectively forced most Puritans to migrate from the colony by the late 1640s.<sup>66</sup>

Presbyterians and Baptists were the predominant dissenter groups in Virginia by the middle of the eighteenth century. Small numbers of Presbyterians had lived in the colony since the late seventeenth century, but it was not until the 1730s that large migrations of Scots-Irish Presbyterians began to settle along the western frontier. The colonial government encouraged Protestant settlement in the region as a counter to French and Indian threats.<sup>67</sup> In 1739, Gov. William Gooch pledged to the Presbyterian synod in Philadelphia that he had always been "inclined to favour the people who have lately

removed from other provinces to settle on the western side of our great mountains, so you may be assured that no interruption shall be given to any minister of your profession who shall come among them.”<sup>68</sup> Presbyterian ministers were still compelled to register their congregations and to secure preaching licenses from the appropriate county court. Nevertheless, the influx of Scots-Irish and various German sects continued unabated so that by the 1740s Presbyterians constituted the majority of the population along the western frontier. Dissenters thus assumed control of local governments by default and often served as vestrymen until enough Anglican settlers could depose them.<sup>69</sup>

In the midst of America’s first Great Awakening, a host of New Light or New Side Presbyterian evangelicals began to filtrate into a few outlying Virginia counties. Though initially discounted as a backcountry phenomenon, these zealous preachers steadily gained converts from the 1740s onward. Virginia authorities reacted negatively to the New Side preachers on account of their itinerant habits and their repudiation of licensing. Even more disturbing was that New Side evangelicals began preaching their revivalist theology in Anglican strongholds while regularly impugning the moral character of the Established clergy.<sup>70</sup> Virginia officials harassed and penalized New Side preachers who “professing themselves ministers under the pretended influence of new light...lead the innocent and ignorant people into all kinds of delusion.” In 1746 the governor issued a proclamation banning New Side activities in the colony.<sup>71</sup>

Tensions began to ease somewhat with the arrival of New Side evangelical, the Rev. Samuel Davies (1723-1761). Davies secured the proper licenses, held his “enthusiasm” in check, and toned down the anti-Anglican rhetoric. He was thus able to register seven congregations in five counties by 1750. But when the Council denied Davies permission

to expand his ministry, he appealed to the crown through dissenter intermediaries, claiming that the Council was acting contrary to the Toleration Act. The Bishop of London concluded that the spirit of the Toleration Act applied to conscientious objectors but not to itinerants like Davies, who sought to “disturb the consciences of others.”<sup>72</sup> In 1753 the Council produced a compromise bill to control itinerants first suggested by attorney general Peyton Randolph, whereby New Side meeting houses would be legally recognized, but only when staffed with a licensed, permanent minister. Hostility towards Presbyterians began to wane after the reconciliation of the Old Side versus New Side schism in 1758. And as other New Light enthusiasts made their way into the colony, Presbyterian evangelicals came to appear tranquil by comparison.<sup>73</sup>

Baptists were considered the greatest menace to the established order. Small groups of Baptists had settled peacefully in Virginia since 1714, but a new wave of George Whitefield-inspired New Light or “Separate” Baptists began to migrate to Virginia and North Carolina during the mid-1750s.<sup>74</sup> To outsiders, Baptists seemed bizarre, overly emotional, and anti-intellectual, especially since they did not regard formal theological training a prerequisite for ministry. Moreover, unlike their “Regular” Baptist brethren, Separates eschewed licensing because they insisted that their authorization to preach came directly from God.<sup>75</sup> To have hundreds of “cheats and enthusiasts” running amok in the bastion of colonial Anglicanism irked Virginia’s elites. Separate preachers countered that it was the prerogative of God to choose his own ministers. They could offer the example of the Apostles—simple fishermen who were empowered to work miracles as part of God’s grand evangelical design. And Elisha, a farmer made prophet who could make iron float as well as overhear the conversations of persons in distant lands. But one

exasperated Virginian fumed that if any of these “pretenders to religion” could relay to him the conversations between King George III and Prime Minister North, he would be more than happy to stand aside and let him preach without further challenge.<sup>76</sup>

Baptists had many serious theological differences with Anglicans but it was their blatant contempt of ecclesiastical authority that most riled the Established Church. Anglican priests objected to the Baptist’s disregard for ministerial ordination and their substitution of established creeds and liturgy for extemporaneous prayer. Most disturbing to the Church was the Separate preacher’s claim of divine revelation and commission. The Rev. James Maury (1718-1769) of Albemarle County authored one of the more circumspect treatises against the Separate itinerants. Maury argued that while Judeo-Christian theology was based upon both reason and revelation, revelation was “supplemental to our natural reason.” And because the “divine revelations” of false prophets had instigated schisms and deceived believers over the centuries, it was imperative for discerning Christians to “examine the validity of [the Separate] claim to a commission from God to teach,” and to demand proof beyond all doubt any declaration of supernatural power, just as the bible commanded. Maury believed that separation from the communion of the Church would be warranted only when a communicant sincerely concluded that obedience to the civil laws requiring conformity was “*repugnant to the laws of God.*”<sup>77</sup>

Prosecution (and persecution) of Separate proselytizers—some cases in clear violation of Virginia law—continued until the outbreak of the Revolution. Despite intense pressure, Separates succeeded in gathering converts, mostly from among the lower sort. This was in part a consequence of many Baptist evangelizers emerging from that class.

More importantly, though, Separate Baptists introduced to colonial Virginia a new community model: one based on equality, respect, and inclusiveness, which also brought with it a sense of empowerment and common purpose. In 1770 there were only 7 Separate Baptist churches in Virginia. By 1774, Separatists could claim at least 54 churches—24 of them north of the James River.<sup>78</sup>

Enlightenment philosophy posed another, more insidious threat to the Established Church. Deism, an offshoot of Enlightenment thought, posited that God and morality could be understood through human reason, and deists largely rejected the formal dogma and moral absolutism associated with traditional Christianity. As Enlightened Deism spread to America, it had a profound influence on many elites, including Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine, and leading Virginia vestrymen such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison. Enlightenment sentiment also affected the clergy. Latitudinarians, who generally regarded supernaturalism, emotionalism, and strict doctrinarism as antirational, were not uncommon among the better-educated ministers of many traditional denominations, including Anglicans.<sup>79</sup>

At the grassroots level, the Enlightenment's most important contribution was to nudge colonial society in the direction of religious toleration, particularly as elites became less emotionally and intellectually attached to doctrinal Christianity. Religious toleration in the eighteenth century essentially meant that each person was to obey his or her own conscience and to worship as each thought best. Toleration did not necessarily presuppose disestablishment, but Jefferson's famous quip that "it does me no injury for my neighbour to say there are twenty gods, or no god," was a subtle challenge to traditional ecclesiastical authority.<sup>80</sup> Statements such as this from high-profile vestrymen

foreshadowed weakening gentry support for Virginia's Church during the postwar onslaught of disestablishment petitioning.

## CHAPTER 2

### OPPORTUNITY AND DECLINE

The Church of Virginia entered the 1770s beleaguered by internal dissension, insurgent dissenters, and incredulous vestrymen. Political discord between Parliament and the colonists exacerbated already weakened public deference toward the Church, while the appointment of arch-Tory John Camm to both the commissary post and the Council alarmed the colony's elites. Camm had been a thorn in the side of the gentry since the Parsons' Cause and his reputation was further diminished during the episcopate controversy. Unfortunately, the ecclesiastical leadership in Virginia would prove incapable of shepherding the Church through the tumultuous first half of the 1770s with the political foresight necessary to salvage its privileged status. Nevertheless, a few Anglican priests were amenable to some form of limited religious toleration as long as it did not endanger establishment. Other parsons saw the arrival of the Methodists as an opportunity to reinvigorate the Church. Ministers from both groups offered forthright, though unwelcome, critiques of Virginia's Church, which ironically, may have prevented the Church from unraveling to the point of collapse.

The Church retained powerful allies in the Assembly despite an insidious undercurrent of public hostility toward the clergy. Since the mid-1760s, Anglican churches had been hemorrhaging parishioners to dissenter congregations, particularly in high-growth, multicongregational parishes where effective management under a single minister had become untenable. The simple remedy was to subdivide these parishes and hire more ministers. In May 1769, the Assembly formed the Committee for Religion to process a

surge of petitions for parish restructuring as well as to oversee “all Matters and Things relating to Religion and Morality.” The original twenty-three-member committee included Robert Carter Nicholas (chair), Richard Henry Lee, Edmund Pendleton, and Richard Bland. The overarching task of the Committee for Religion, at least at the outset, was to define the extent to which toleration could be granted to nonconformists without jeopardizing Anglican (or elite) hegemony. Within four days of its formation, the committee was instructed to prepare a bill for “exempting his Majesty’s Protestant Dissenters from the Penalties of certain Laws.” Although the Assembly was subsequently prorogued by the governor, six months later a new Assembly was convened and committee members were again tasked to compose a bill “granting Toleration to his Majesty’s Subjects, being Protestant Dissenters.” This new mandate was more generous because it now included the word “toleration.” But the records of the Assembly suggest that the committee produced nothing.<sup>1</sup>

The Committee for Religion was again stirred to action in the waning months of the episcopate controversy after nearly two years of inactivity. In early 1772, the committee proposed that, in lieu of a resident bishop, the Assembly establish a “Jurisdiction for superintending the Conduct of the Clergy, to be exercised by Clergymen” as a compromise between pro- and anti-episcopate factions. Final appellate jurisdiction would rest with a “Court of Delegates.”<sup>2</sup> The clergy, however, remained suspicious of what appeared to be an attempt to further subjugate them to civil authority, especially because the bill’s main author was Robert Nicholas Carter, a strong Church supporter, but an assemblyman known for his unsympathetic attitude towards clergymen. The resolution was never taken up by the full Assembly.<sup>3</sup>

During this same period the temperament of the Assembly began to shift towards a moderate-liberal faction led by Thomas Jefferson. In February 1772, a petition from Baptists in Lunenburg County accused the Virginia government of restricting the “Exercise of their Religion” and demanded that all Baptists “be treated with the same kind Indulgence, in religious Matters...[as] other Protestant Dissenters, enjoy.” Similar petitions were filed from Baptists in three other counties. The Committee for Religion judged the Baptist demands “reasonable,” and a month after the petitions were submitted the Assembly drafted a new toleration bill granting dissenters “full and free Exercise of their Religion, without Molestation or Danger of incurring any Penalty whatsoever.”<sup>4</sup>

Even so, the proposal maintained some of the old proscriptions and added new ones. Dissenting preachers remained confined to designated houses of worship, services were restricted to daytime only, and meetinghouse doors were prohibited from being locked during services. The law subjected all ministers and religious teachers in the colony to oaths of allegiance to the king and government as well as to a watered-down conformity pledge. But Virginia’s proposed toleration bill now included a provision forbidding the discussion of the “Unfitness or Unlawfulness of Slavery” with any slave. Another clause denied baptism to and congregational membership for slaves who had not obtained the written consent of their owner.<sup>5</sup> The bill was printed in the *Virginia Gazette*, possibly as a trial balloon to gauge public reaction. No final vote was taken because the Assembly was prorogued by the governor for most of the next two years. Nonconformists (mostly Separates) vehemently opposed the legislation, although no official protests could be lodged until the Assembly reconvened in May 1774.<sup>6</sup>

Within a short period, the Assembly had modified its policy toward religious dissent from one of penalty exemption, to toleration, and finally to (limited) free exercise. Though a long way from disestablishment, the 1772 toleration proposal might have reassured the colony's leaders of their own magnanimity and thereby prevented dissenters from obtaining more concessions. Virginia's clerical leadership was officially mute over the proposal, and thus took a pass at what might have turned out to be an acceptable political stalemate.

Advocates for religious toleration had support among the Anglican clergy—mostly from liberals such as Samuel Henley and Thomas Gwatkin. At the height of the episcopate controversy, Gwatkin was teaching at William and Mary and Henley had become acting rector at Bruton Parish when James Horrocks left for England. Henley's orthodoxy first came under suspicion during the bishop fracas and was made manifest during a 1772 sermon before a special session of the House of Burgesses in which he championed the quasi-separation of church and state. Henley suggested that while religion and civil government can and should act in concert for the common good, they must operate in separate spheres. To a perhaps startled audience, Henley declared that “[h]owever desirous we may be of a general conformity in religious opinions, yet to make nonconformity criminal, would in any Legislature be highly impious.” He added that “[i]f it be objected that unless Government interest itself in behalf of Religion it will soon be excluded [from] the world,” then those “Legislators [who] maintain the cause of Religion, let them sh[o]w its influence on their conduct.”<sup>7</sup>

Gwatkin, using the pseudonym “Hoadleianus,” reinforced Henley's sermon with an editorial in the *Virginia Gazette*. Gwatkin asked readers whether the most “useful” and

“peaceable” dissenters in the colony should be forced to emigrate on account of their beliefs. He recommended that rather than demand subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, the Assembly should extend toleration to all persons who profess a belief in a “Supreme Being” and observe basic rules of morality. Gwatkin argued that religious toleration was essential to securing peace in the colony.<sup>8</sup>

Outright declarations of sympathy for dissenters, in addition to some unconventional remarks shared in private conversation, made for Henley and Gwatkin powerful enemies among conservative elites. At the time Henley delivered his sermon, the Assembly was in the process of crafting the new toleration bill under the direction of Robert Carter Nicholas. Therefore, Nicholas could justifiably take Henley’s comments personally. Nicholas also opposed Henley for his latitudinarian leanings as well as for his anti-episcopate stance. So when James Horrocks died overseas and Henley sought to replace him as Bruton’s rector, Nicholas blocked Henley’s appointment in favor of the Rev. Josiah Johnson (?-1773). When Johnson died soon after and Henley again applied for the post, Nicholas foiled his bid a second time, rallying vestry support behind the more sedate John Bracken (1747-1818). Because the final vestry vote in favor of Bracken was not unanimous, it appears that Henley had gained at least a few sympathetic patrons, most notably, Speaker of the House Peyton Randolph (1721?-1775).<sup>9</sup>

Henley was not graceful in defeat. In an article printed in the *Virginia Gazette*, Henley impugned Nicholas’s “very superficial Knowledge of the Scriptures,” and by implication, his claim to orthodoxy (Henley flaunted his knowledge of Scripture and Greek throughout the letter). In a postscript to the article, Henley called Nicholas’s insinuations and arguments “too far fetched, and too Sophistical, to be striking and

convincing.”<sup>10</sup> The vestryman answered back in the next edition of the *Gazette* where he declared himself “a warm Friend to Toleration,” and insisted that his “Zeal for the Established Church...is not a Zeal without *Knowledge*.” Nicholas explained that his reasons for opposing Henley were a consequence of the “Levity and Disrespect” with which Henley treated the “Rules and Orders” of the Church, in addition to the “Heterodox Opinions” Henley openly espoused. Nicholas denounced Henley for his irreverence (heresy) toward fundamental Christian tenets (i.e., the Thirty-Nine Articles) and for not being “well disposed to our Establishment.”<sup>11</sup> But it was the potential impact of Henley’s apparent relativism that most disturbed Nicholas:

[L]et all Men, think and speak and preach as they will, or rather, as they *can*; instead of that Uniformity of Doctrine, which our Church has hitherto been blessed with, what a Babel of Religions should we have amongst us?<sup>12</sup>

This question was likely directed not just against the latitudinarian parson but his supporters in the Assembly as well. Nicholas next warned “Hoadleianus” (Gwatkin) that if the Assembly adopted his “scheme,” the colony “should give a general Invitation to every People under the Sun” who claimed belief in a supreme being and promised to conduct themselves with moral restraint.<sup>13</sup> The editorial war between Henley and Nicholas (and their surrogates) went on for over two years, each accusing the other of malicious libel and slander. The episode is remarkable for its causticity as well as for the irony that a layman was defending his church against a socio-political and theological assault from two of its priests.

But were Henley’s and Gwatkin’s statements honest calls for toleration? Henley had been under the tutelage of at least two latitudinarians while at Cambridge. One of them,

the Rev. John Jebb, was later dismissed from the ministry for his Unitarian leanings. The published version of Henley's 1772 sermon before the House of Burgesses was dedicated to Jebb, whose plight Henley likened to the persecution of Galileo. The dedication and introduction to the sermon made clear Henley's disdain for narrow-minded thinking. He decried humanity's "fondness for systems" and condemned the guardians of these systems as "[t]oo inert to examine whether they be right; too haughty to confess it, should they find themselves wrong." Historian Rhys Isaac is inclined to believe that Henley's liberalism was, for the most part, sincere. But as Henley craved notoriety, his propensity for polemics could have been motivated partly by conceit.<sup>14</sup> The more orthodox and less combative Gwatkin urged tolerance for more practical reasons.

Neither Henley nor Gwatkin advocated disestablishment. Henley argued for religious toleration from a theoretical standpoint; besides ruffling a few feathers, he offered no workable solution to Virginia's socio-religious predicament. However, both Henley and Gwatkin's liberalism influenced at least some of their students and colleagues. Indeed, Gwatkin was accused of "sedulously instilling into the tender minds of his pupils the poisonous and sophistical doctrines of dissent."<sup>15</sup> The future first bishop of Virginia's Episcopal Church, the Rev. James Madison (1749-1812), was a student, and later, colleague of Gwatkin and Henley at William and Mary. He served as professor of natural philosophy and mathematics at the college for two years before his ordination in 1775. Madison's keynote speech at the 1772 anniversary celebration of the founding of the college was dedicated to Samuel Henley. Madison acknowledged that the idea of religious toleration had been "a Source of endless Apprehensions" in the colony. He disentangled the connection between civil and religious affairs in the manner of his

mentor, arguing that the jurisdiction of a civil magistrate “extends only to civil Concerns” and that “[i]n vain it is urged, that the free Exercise of Opinions will have the same pernicious Tendency in religious Societies as in political, since the same Reason which argues the Non-toleration of the one, evinces the Justice of the other.”<sup>16</sup> These open calls for religious toleration suggest that there were at least some influential clergymen concentrated at the college who might have been agreeable to some form of limited toleration for religious dissenters.

In addition to latitudinarian clamor for tolerance, the Established Church had developed from within its own ranks a New Light strain of evangelism that began in England with the revivalist preaching of George Whitefield (1714-1770) and the Wesley brothers. While Whitefield had been hard at work in the colonies during the first Great Awakening, John Wesley’s “Methodist” missionaries were not dispatched to America until 1769. Methodist itinerants soon fanned out from their bases in the middle colonies dispensing their Anglicized version of New Light theology. Like the nonconformist New Lights, they gleaned the bulk of their followers from the lower classes. The early Methodist evangelizers were sure to advertise their allegiance to the Established Church and to insist they were acting only in an auxiliary capacity. In fact, most of the itinerants were lay preachers and therefore attended services and received communion in Anglican churches. However, the itinerancy and extemporaneous preaching style of the Methodist preachers appeared eerily similar to the New Side Presbyterians and Separate Baptists; hence the majority of Virginia’s Anglican clergy remained wary of and sometimes hostile to the interlopers.<sup>17</sup>

Very few of Virginia's Anglican clerics elected to mimic their New Light rivals. Yet it seemed clear to the Rev. Devereux Jarratt (1733-1801) of Bath Parish that the "cold and unedifying" preaching style of his Anglican brethren did not resonate with most parishioners, especially the less educated. In an effort to make the Anglican religious experience more personal, Jarratt assumed the emotional, intimate approach of the New Light preachers he had first encountered as a young man. Jarratt's conversion plan was typical New Light: salvation gained through admission of sin, acknowledgment of guilt and hopelessness, the necessity of divine absolution, and finally, acceptance of the redemptive power of faith in Christ. An aura of humility, coupled with regular visitations to the homes of his parishioners, yielded Jarratt converts as well as adulation among the laity. A hint of self-righteousness, in addition to preaching unsolicited sermons in neighboring parishes, made Jarratt enemies among his fellow parsons.<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, Jarratt's disregard for ecclesiastical protocol, his imitative New Light approach, and his success made him somewhat of a pariah. Jarratt was often barred from sharing Anglican pulpits in other parishes (ostensibly for breeching etiquette), and he was disparaged interchangeably as an "enthusiast, fanatic, visionary, dissenter, Presbyterian, [and] madman." He was also charged with violating his ordination oaths and sometimes threatened with prosecution and expulsion.<sup>19</sup>

Jarratt parried the Separate Baptist onslaught within his own parish, although he admittedly was unable to thwart Baptist gains in most adjoining parishes. With the aid of the Rev. Archibald McRoberts (1748?-1787?), Jarratt launched a successful Anglican counter-revival centered in Dinwiddie County, which was well underway by the time the first Methodist preachers arrived in Virginia in early 1772. The Methodist itinerants soon

joined the revival and incorporated it as their own. When the pace of the southern Anglican/Methodist revival peaked in 1776, its supporters in Virginia numbered well over two thousand.<sup>20</sup>

Methodism presented a splendid opportunity for Virginia's Anglicans to co-opt the dissenter movement at a time when the Church desperately needed more vitality and less institutionalism. Devereux Jarratt and Archibald McRoberts were hopeful that Methodism was the vehicle to accomplish this. Methodists had at least the unofficial blessing of the Church of England, and their preachers (ordained or not) were never required to obtain licenses or register their meetings. Methodist preacher Joseph Pilmore (1739-1825) reported that Anglican clergymen treated him cordially and had invited him to preach during his visit to Williamsburg in the summer of 1772.<sup>21</sup> Yet, to its detriment, the Virginia Church grudgingly tolerated but never supported the Methodist itinerants with any coordinated policy. Thus the Church lost a chance to undermine nonconformist charges of clerical apathy and social detachment.

The decision of leading American Methodists to formally break with the Church of England after the Revolution dealt a severe blow to what was left of the Established Church in Virginia. Parliament's refusal to permit the consecration of American Episcopal bishops, coupled with an acute shortage of ordained priests, may have forced the issue. But the colonial Church lost a sizable portion of its membership to the Methodists. Jarratt and McRoberts, both greatly encouraged by the arrival of the Methodists, had taken at face value their professed loyalty to the Church of England. They later expressed regret for having assisted them. In 1779, McRoberts left the Established Church to join the Presbyterians after concluding that "revival...will never

commence in the church...that owes all its authority to an act of the legislature, and not to the word of God.” Jarratt was left to incur the wrath of those Methodists opposed to the schism as well as many of his parishioners and fellow parsons.<sup>22</sup>

In the middle of the Anglican/Methodist revival in 1774, a three-part article appeared in the *Virginia Gazette* under the pseudonym “A Catholic Christian,” which presented the most poignant critique of the Anglican Church during the period. The writer opened by asking readers to “search for the cause of that prevailing ignorance and impiety among the bulk of the people, that bold spirit of infidelity that has seized the minds of the fashionable and opulent, and that defection from the established religion so much complained of in many parts of the colony.”<sup>23</sup> He immediately answered his own question, concluding that the tribulation of the Church is “owing chiefly and originally to the indolence and irregularities of the clergy,” and as a consequence, scoffers would be justified in claiming that the “whole system of [Christian] revelation [is] a contrivance to serve the purposes of government” and to enrich a “mercenary” priesthood. The writer insisted that an abundance of “useless ministers” have forced parishioners to abandon Anglicanism in favor of the well-intentioned dissenter preachers, who gain followers chiefly as a result of their pious example. In the view of “Catholic Christian,” Anglican ministers must also lead by example, for as a “wicked layman is a blemish to the church... a worthless clergyman is a foul cancer in its very face.”<sup>24</sup>

The writer then offered several recommendations for the betterment of Virginia’s clergy. Among his major points, “Catholic Christian” urged each minister to conduct services with more verve and feeling rather than with the perfunctory “dull and languid tone” and “awkward and irreverent attitude...which divine service is often performed.”

He cautioned parsons “never [to] lose sight of the great doctrines of [C]hristianity,” and to remain grounded in the simple message of salvation through faith. The author then warned his fellow churchmen to avoid “refined philosophic disquisitions” that only “gratify the curiosity of the speculative.” He emphasized the teaching of catechism, the instruction of children, and pastoral home visitation as important elements of an effective ministry.<sup>25</sup>

Part two of “Catholic Christian’s” diatribe appeared the following week. He first attributed all claims of parishioner satisfaction with the Anglican clergy’s performance to plain ignorance. He then compared the inefficacy of priests to the faithlessness and treachery of turncoat military officers, and he interjected many retributive biblical passages to remind Virginia’s parsons of the terrible fate that awaits traitors to a just God if there is not a “speedy change of conduct.” On this basis, the writer asked (prophetically) if anyone could “blame the legislature if they should withdraw their supporting hand from under you, since you so egregiously pervert the power and privileges they have granted you” all while “fattening on the substance of your neglected parishioners?” Indeed, “Catholic Christian” suggested that if clerical stipends were ever withheld, men who can “talk of death, Hell, judgment, and damnation, without the least emotion or discomposure,” would suddenly erupt into “ferment and flame” over lost income.<sup>26</sup>

The writer lamented that it was “undeniable that the dissenters are making [their] way into every part of the colony, and gaining strength daily,” but he counseled that it would be “impolitic, as well as unchristian, to oppose them with the sword of the magistrate.” Yet who could really fault the dissenters? In a devastating passage, “Catholic Christian”

declared that “[e]very good man, who reads his bible, and enquires into the laws of the [C]hurch, must inevitably become your adversary,” and thus “you are forced to look upon him as your dangerous foe.” The author expressed hope that “this declining [C]hurch may revive, and recover its original purity, dignity, and splendor.” The final part, addressed to vestrymen, was printed a week later. Here “Catholic Christian” continued with his central theme of pastoral hypocrisy and condemned the clergy’s sense of entitlement. He thus advised the highest caution regarding the selection of ministers, conceding that it would be unjust for vestries “to levy unnecessary taxes on the people to gratify men who plainly show they care nothing for them.”<sup>27</sup>

Based on his decrial of the established clergy as well as his penetrating analysis of the state of Virginia’s Church it is likely that “Catholic Christian” was a high-ranking layman. Yet his detailed recommendations for ministerial reform, his deep sense of personal umbrage and exasperation, and his liberal use of Scripture also raises the possibility that “Catholic Christian” was an Anglican clergyman.<sup>28</sup> In either case, “Catholic Christian” was probably too late—calls for reform and tolerance were now being drowned out by calls for independence.

The American Revolution was the decisive event that pushed the colonial Anglican Church to the brink of disintegration. In the absence of an American episcopate, the colonial Anglican ministry was left without a central, authoritative voice with which to coordinate official policy. Because a majority of Anglican parsons remained loyal to the crown, and at least one in four left the colonies, the war dissolved what little leadership and cohesion existed before the Declaration of Independence. Internal dissension over the Church’s role amidst the political convulsions had been brewing long before

Lexington and Concord, and as historian Nancy Rhoden remarks, “[a]rguably, no other group of individuals during the revolutionary period faced more contradictory demands of conscience, duty, and allegiance” than the Anglican clergy.<sup>29</sup>

It would be inaccurate to categorize Anglican clerics of the revolutionary period as exclusively loyalist or patriot since individual parsons reacted differently to events as they unfolded (a few ministers changed sides). Rhoden calculates that of the three-hundred or so Anglican clergymen in the colonies from 1775-1783, approximately 39 percent maintained their loyalty and 28 percent became patriots. She places the remaining one-third in a “neutral” category.<sup>30</sup>

Ministerial neutrality in the context of the Revolution refers to those Anglican clergymen who did not take a public stand for either side, but instead opted to keep a low profile and to continue with their pastoral responsibilities. It is difficult to gauge the mindset of the churchmen who avoided the fray. Yet ministers who chose to serve quietly in their parishes could at least maintain a sense of fidelity to their oaths. Personal safety may have been a consideration, though neutrality did not always guarantee parsons immunity from violence. Patriots in some quarters equated neutrality with Toryism, and a few ministers of the neutral persuasion were physically assaulted and/or had property destroyed. Most neutrals, however, managed to survive the Revolution unscathed. Rhoden argues that ministerial neutrality was significant in that it hastened the withdrawal of the Anglican clergy from political concerns (“depoliticization”), and as a result, helped promote disestablishment.<sup>31</sup>

Anglican churchmen who remained loyal had compelling reasons for doing so, the inviolability of their ordination oaths to the king and liturgy being the most persuasive.

Loyalist apologists, moreover, argued that it was unjust and unchristian to engage in civil disobedience against legitimate authority and were fearful that a republican triumph would subordinate the Church of England to the mercy of dissenters, especially in areas where the Established Church was a minority denomination. Many loyalists complained that the entire affair was an exercise in unnecessary fratricide. Anglican Church historian David Holmes explains that loyal Anglican priests were more likely to be found in areas where the Church was weak; hence Loyalist ministers were more concentrated in the northern and middle colonies than in the South. Holmes also notes that Tory sentiment ran higher among foreign-born ministers, those working at the behest of the SPG, and those who had adamantly championed American episcopacy.<sup>32</sup> The majority of Methodist leaders returned to Britain at the beginning of the Revolution, and John Wesley's declaration of Methodist loyalty placed the society's remaining members in political limbo. The growth of Methodism in the colonies slowed during and immediately after the war, although a majority of adherents in Virginia either joined the patriots or remained neutral.<sup>33</sup>

As had the disputants during the bishop controversy, loyalist and patriot clergyman engaged in a bitter inter-colonial pamphlet war, with each side invoking scriptural admonitions to support their positions. Among the most prolific of all the Tory propagandists were conservative Anglican ministers, including Thomas Bradbury Chandler of New Jersey, future American Episcopal bishop Samuel Seabury and Charles Inglis of New York, and Jonathan Boucher of Maryland.

Chandler pronounced obedience to civil authority the moral duty of all Christians and also considered it foolish for colonists to challenge British military power. He regarded

the Church of England as a bulwark against “republican zealots,” who he believed to be mostly Congregational “bigots of New-England.” He warned that if republicans gained control of colonial governments, no Anglican would be safe from their resentment and intolerance; all other denominations would be in similar jeopardy.<sup>34</sup>

According to Seabury, the Apostle Peter’s exhortation to “[s]ubmit yourselves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord’s Sake” obliged Christians to peaceably yield to authority, “whether it be to the King as supreme; or unto Governors as unto them that are sent by him for the Punishment of Evil-doers...” He argued that the British sovereign, as “*Vicegerent* of God,” ruled by divine right and that those in rebellion were not only dishonoring the king, but also God, the Church of England, the Christian community, and their fellow citizens. Seabury charged that the violation of the divine order “by Congresses, Committees and Banditties of armed Men” had brought about “the most horrid Oppression and Tyranny, and fill[s] the Country with Confusion, Rapine, Destruction, Slaughter and Blood!”<sup>35</sup>

Articulate but unpersuasive, Loyalist ministers were fighting against the tide of public opinion. To the contrary, Tory propaganda had the net effect of proclaiming the Church guilty by association. And because the patriots gained control over most of the colonial newspapers, they won the public relations battle. Tory propagandists were therefore more dependent on pamphlets and broadsides which had smaller circulation.<sup>36</sup>

Patriot ministers countered Tory scriptural reproofs with their own to support the notion of a “just war”—the right and duty of Christians to fight tyranny and oppression. In a December 1775 sermon to the Virginia Convention, the Rev. David Griffith (1742-1789) conceded that human government was divinely sanctioned. But he argued that

when temporal powers violate God's will and become destructive to the public welfare, it becomes the responsibility of Christians to oppose injustice in the example of the Apostles Peter and Paul.<sup>37</sup>

In July 1776 the Assembly of Virginia, operating under a new constitution, ordered all prayers and references to the king omitted from the Church litany and daily communion services.<sup>38</sup> In May 1777 the Assembly ordered all free male inhabitants sixteen years and older (including clergy) to swear an oath of allegiance to the new state.<sup>39</sup> Nearly half of the more than one hundred Anglican priests in Virginia openly supported the Revolution; a high percentage of these patriot churchmen were personally connected to leading members of the gentry through marriage or in other ways. Twenty-four Virginia ministers served on committees of safety and eighteen became legislative or continental army chaplains (James Madison served briefly as chaplain to the new House of Delegates). Five others became army officers, including Charles Mynn Thurston (1738-1812) and the "Fighting Parson," John Peter Gabriel Muhlenburg (1747-1807), who attained the rank of major-general. Two ministers volunteered as army surgeons.<sup>40</sup>

Approximately 20 percent of the Virginia clergy were committed loyalists or at least maintained loyalist sympathies. Over three-quarters of these parsons were foreign-born and about 15 percent became political exiles. For all their enlightened notions, both Henley and Gwatkin returned to England as Tories in 1775. Most of Virginia's Tory-leaning ministers resigned from their pulpits to live quietly in their glebes or private homes. Others left the state and returned after the war.<sup>41</sup> With the exceptions of John Agnew and Christopher MacRae, no other Tory ministers in Virginia were physically attacked. Agnew was briefly imprisoned in Williamsburg, but was later evacuated to

England. MacRae was beaten by a group of young hoodlums who were subsequently prosecuted and fined. He continued with his parish ministry for the rest of the war.<sup>42</sup>

The Anglican Church in Virginia should have built a cache of good will based on the high number of its patriot ministers who were deeply committed to the Revolution. Unfortunately, the colony had effectively severed its connection with the Church of England, and therefore, its supply of new ministers. By 1778, Virginia parishes suffered from a near 30-percent vacancy rate as a result of Tory flight and normal attrition. The commissary post disappeared after the Declaration of Independence, and Virginia's Church was essentially leaderless for the next decade.<sup>43</sup> Equally important is that Anglican clerics were outdone by their nonconformist rivals. The nearly thirty Presbyterian ministers were almost unanimous in their support of the Revolution, and many served on committees of safety and as chaplains and soldiers. Likewise, the one hundred or so Baptist preachers were overwhelmingly in support of the patriot cause (a few were conscientious objectors).<sup>44</sup>

Meanwhile, the Assembly was greeted with more letters of protest when it reconvened in May 1774 and the supplications continued to pour in for the next two years. The initial petitions did not demand much beyond lifting restrictions on itinerancy and nighttime meetings, and none called for disestablishment. The most cogent petition was submitted from the Presbyterians in Hanover County in June 1775. They endorsed the preamble to the 1772 toleration bill as "agreeable to what we desire," but suggested that the overall bill was in need of "alterations and amendments as will render it more agreeable to the principles of impartial liberty and sound policy." The Presbyterians reminded the Assembly of Gov. William Gooch's promise of religious toleration from four decades

earlier, and of the hardships they had endured settling the colony's frontier. Like the Baptists, the Hanover Presbyterians objected to restrictions on itinerancy and night meetings. More importantly, they regarded any government interference relative to the communion or baptism of slaves as contrary to the Gospel's "Great Commission." But the Presbyterians were "so confidently persuaded of the liberal sentiments of this house, that...we shall never be reduced to the necessity of disobeying the laws of our Country." The petitioners admitted that their ultimate objective was an "unlimited impartial Toleration [bill]," but for now "fear[ed] we should transgress upon the patience of the house."<sup>45</sup>

Article 16 of Virginia's new Declaration of Rights stated that "all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience." Approved in June 1776, the declaration was the blood in the water that drew a swarm of petitions demanding Assembly adherence to the spirit of its own law.<sup>46</sup> When the new constitutional Assembly gathered in the fall of 1776, dissenter petitions—one possibly containing over ten thousand signatures—now demanded an immediate end to establishment.<sup>47</sup> Many Virginia elites urged tolerance in the name of unity, and indeed, a few of the dissenter petitions insinuated a quid pro quo: disestablishment as recompense for support of the Revolution.<sup>48</sup> In an article in the *Virginia Gazette* entitled "Queries on the Subject of Religious Establishments," the writer (possibly Thomas Jefferson) asked whether "[a]t a time when the salvation of our country confessedly depends on the aid and exertions of every party, does not policy loudly forbid an irritating refusal to the reasonable demands of thousands of valuable citizens?" An anonymous religious skeptic was more to the point and agreed that calls for disestablishment were in one sense valid

in that “each [theist] should be foolish in his own way, without contributing to the folly of others.” Yet the writer acknowledged that the Established Church, as an arm of government, best served to maintain “some restraint on systems more noxious than its own.”<sup>49</sup>

Shell-shocked and leaderless, the Established clergy were helpless to prevent moves toward disestablishment. The Church now had few stalwart defenders in the legislature apart from Edmund Pendleton (Speaker of the House of Delegates), and a minority of the members of the Committee for Religion, including Carter Braxton (chair) and Robert Carter Nicholas. Thomas Jefferson led a faction of Assemblymen determined to end establishment. If it was any consolation to the Church, a group of Methodists offered a tepid protest to the Assembly in defense of the Church of England (to which they still claimed allegiance). Without elaboration, the Methodists warned of grave consequences should establishment be abolished.<sup>50</sup>

Anglican clergymen (and laymen) launched a volley of petitions and editorials in support of establishment during the final months of 1776. The earliest compositions were more confrontational but gradually assumed a conciliatory tone as the Assembly moved closer to enacting partial disestablishment. An editorial in the *Gazette* by “A Member of the Established Church” strongly intimated that nonconformists championed independence from ulterior motives. It was the churchman’s contention that the Established clergy supported rebellion “at the risk of losing livings, while the [dissenters] were tempted with the prospect of creeping into them.” The parson warned dissenters not to count on the “meek and disinterested disposition” of the Anglicans; trouble would ensue if there was any effort to “deprive men of what they have always enjoyed.” It was

his hope that the Assembly took this prophecy into consideration. The parson's central arguments for maintaining establishment rang familiar: the Church was a pillar of social stability and the best means from which to propagate Christianity in its most "orthodox," "apostolical," and "rational" form; the Church recruited its priests from "men of abilities...accustomed to think and reason;" the "harangues of fanaticks" would trump the "most sensible discourses of sober-minded rational men." The churchman conceded that a compulsory levy in support of a state church was "repugnant to liberty," yet necessary for the common good.<sup>51</sup>

A "considerable number" of unidentified Anglican clerics petitioned the Assembly on behalf of themselves. Pathetic and hollow, the petition essentially charged the new Virginia government with breach of contract and threatened certain impoverishment for men who by "the nature of their education...are precluded from gaining a tolerable subsistence in any other way of life." The ministers argued that peace and stability as well as "true piety and virtue" had prevailed during the 150-year history of Virginia's Church. They also claimed (disingenuously) that the Church had consistently maintained a "mild and tolerating spirit" toward nonconformists and that there had never been any attempt to "restrain them in the exercise of their religion." In the overstatement of the period, the clergymen warned of "much confusion" and probable "civil commotions" if the Church were disestablished. The ministers requested the Assembly to delay implementing any legislation until the "general sentiments of the good people of this commonwealth can be collected."<sup>52</sup>

Collect them they did—a 260-signature petition from Charles City County which was printed in the *Gazette* in December 1776. This petition focused mostly on the "dismal

consequences” of the “subversive” doctrine of dissenting preachers, such as the growing “disobedience and insolence” among slaves. The Anglicans of Charles City County claimed that they desired “a well regulated toleration established,” but only if most of the restrictions of the 1772 toleration proposal were kept in place.<sup>53</sup> Too little too late, in early December the Assembly voted to suspend clerical salaries (for one year), and to exempt nonconformists from “all levies, taxes, and impositions whatever, towards supporting and maintaining the said church...and its ministers,” effective January 1, 1777. The issue of general assessment was deferred to a “future assembly,” and the clergy were still entitled to use of their glebes, churches, and associated buildings. But for all practical purposes, Virginia’s Church was disestablished.<sup>54</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

The Established Church had accumulated a host of problems when it entered the decade of the 1770s. Still reeling from the episcopacy debacle and low public opinion, the Church was under intense pressure from nonconformist sects and their enlightened supporters in the Assembly to give ground on the issue of religious toleration. Resistance to change, however, was not uniform among all Establishment clergymen, and in fact, concomitant calls for toleration and reform did emerge from within the ranks of Virginia's Anglican ministry. An opportunity to enact some form of limited toleration was possible, especially in the wake of the bishop controversy in 1772 and during the first Virginia Convention in 1774. But an inherently weak and distracted Church leadership lacked the foresight to work with its allies in the legislature, and instead chose to engage in petty battles over remuneration and ecclesiastical authority.

The Revolution greatly strengthened the hand of the dissenters and their allies. The governor's dismissal of the Assembly made any legislative action difficult and placating dissenters out of military necessity prompted concessions on the socio-religious front. The loss of the commissary post, in addition to the Tory exiles, only exacerbated clerical disorder and preempted whatever chance the Church had to preclude disestablishment.

For some Church historians, the obvious problem was the lack of a resident bishop. It is conceivable that a bishop may have been able to effectively steer a middle course toward neutrality and thus relieve the burden from individual ministers of having to choose sides. Perhaps Tory (and latitudinarian) ministers like Samuel Henley and Thomas Gwatkin might have remained in their posts. But it is doubtful that a bishopric

would have lessened either the revolutionary zeal or the loyalist commitment of many foreign-born ministers. Most likely, a resident loyalist bishop would have served as a lightning rod for public scorn. Moreover, running a Tory bishop out of the colony may have delayed the appointment of bishops to the future American Episcopal Church. The claim of some clergymen that the Church had never worked to thwart dissenters was disingenuous since the Church had the luxury of vestries and county courts to do their dirty work. And when the dissenters gained the legislative upper hand, the opportunity for the Church to meet them half way had passed.

## NOTES

### CHAPTER ONE

1. Until the mid-1780s the Church of England in Virginia was also referred to as the Church by Law Established, the Established Church, and the Church of Virginia. George J. Cleaveland, "The Church of Virginia Established and Disestablished," in *Up From Independence: The Episcopal Church in Virginia*, ed. Brewster S. Ford and Harold S. Sniffen (Orange, VA: Interdiocesan Bicentennial Committee of the Virginias, 1976), 23; H. J. Eckenrode, *Separation of Church and State in Virginia: A Study in the Development of the Revolution* (1910; repr., New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 6-8; David L. Holmes, *A Brief History of the Episcopal Church* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993), 37.

2. Holmes, *A Brief History*, 45.

3. Holmes, *A Brief History*, 29, 45. The colonies where the Church of England was established included: Virginia (1619), Maryland (1702), South Carolina (1706), Georgia (1758), North Carolina (1765), and at least nominally in and around New York City (1693). Elizabeth H. Davidson, *The Establishment of the English Church in Continental American Colonies*, Historical Papers of the Trinity College Historical Society 20 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1936), 41-45, 50-52, 63-64, 67-69; A. S. Thomas "A Sketch of the History of the Church in South Carolina," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 4, no.1 (March 1935): 5; Nancy L. Rhoden, *Revolutionary Anglicanism: The Colonial Church of England Clergy during the American Revolution* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 29. Technically, King's College and the College of Philadelphia were nondenominational. Frederick V. Mills, Sr., *Bishops By Ballot: An Eighteenth-Century Ecclesiastical Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 20, 36-37.

4. James P. Walsh, "'Black Cotted Raskolls': Anti-Anglican Criticism in Colonial Virginia," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 88, no.1 (January 1980): 26; John K. Nelson, *A Blessed Company: Parishes, Parsons, and Parishioners in Anglican Virginia, 1690-1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 3; Holmes, *A Brief History*, 21, 28-35.

5. In Virginia, white inhabitants per parish averaged 1,615 in 1730 and 2,820 in 1770. Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 21.

6. Philip Alexander Bruce, *Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century: An Inquiry into the Religious, Moral, Educational, Legal, Military, and Political Condition of the People*, 2 vols. (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1910), 1:55-61. John Nelson uses the term "parish-county" to describe the local government in colonial Virginia. Civil administration was the prevue of the county government while

religious affairs were mostly handled by the parish vestry. However, their functions (and membership) frequently overlapped. Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 13-15, 20-21.

7. William Waller Hening, *The Statutes at Large; Being A Collection of all the Laws of Virginia, From the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619*, 13 vols. (1810-1823; repr., Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1969), 1:123, 2:48, 3:360, 5:225-26. Estimates as to regular church attendance in colonial Virginia vary widely among scholars. See Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 241-46, and Dell Upton, *Holy Things and Profane: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), 184-89.

8. Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 242-44.

9. Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 120; Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 242-43. See also, *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773-1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion*, ed. Hunter Dickinson Farish (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg, 1943), 38-39, 220, and *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt* (1806; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1969), 21-23, 83-85, 92-93, 102. David Holmes cautions against approaching Jarratt's autobiography uncritically. See David L. Holmes, "Devereux Jarrett: A Letter and a Reevaluation," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 47, no.1 (March 1978): 37-49.

10. David L. Holmes, "The Episcopal Church and the American Revolution," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 47, no.3 (September 1978): 268-69, 288-91; Nancy L. Rhoden, *Revolutionary Anglicanism*, 1, 19. Even with three divinity schools operating by 1754 the number of Anglican ministers in the colonies barely kept pace with population growth. See Rhoden, *Revolutionary Anglicanism*, 28-30.

11. Technically, only a bishop could dismiss an inducted minister and only Edmund Gibson, bishop of London from 1723 to 1748, received a royal commission (1728) granting him ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the American colonies. Although dismissal authority had been delegated to the commissaries, Gibson's commission was not reissued to his successors and thereafter such power remained a point of contention between Virginia's civil and ecclesiastical authorities. See G. MacLaren Brydon, "New Light Upon the History of the Church in Colonial Virginia," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 10, no.2 (June 1941): 87-88; Joan R. Gundersen, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia, 1723-1766: A Study of A Social Class* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989), 2-4, 216; Dan M. Hockman, "Commissary William Dawson and the Anglican Church in Virginia, 1743-1752," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 54, no.2 (June 1985): 125-27.

12. Cleaveland, "The Church of Virginia Established and Disestablished," 25; George MacLaren Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church and The Political Conditions Under Which It Grew*, 2 vols. (Richmond and Philadelphia: Virginia Historical Society, 1947-52),

1:229-31, 280, 284-88, 324; Hockman, "Commissary William Dawson," 125-28, 138-39; Mills, *Bishops By Ballot*, 32; Richard Bland, *To the Clergy of Virginia* (Williamsburg: 1773?), 2.

13. Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 1:91-93; Hening, *Statutes at Large*, 1:240-43, 2:30. John Nelson estimates that the parish levy in colonial Virginia averaged thirty-five pounds of tobacco per tithable but that this figure varied considerably from parish to parish. Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 43-44.

14. After the incorporation of a new parish and the initial election of the vestry, unplanned vacancies could thereafter be filled by internal vote, and in this way, vestries could be self-perpetuating. The Assembly had the authority to dissolve vestries, but this rarely occurred until the second half of the eighteenth century when the Assembly approved a little more than half of the forty-five petitions demanding vestry dissolution. The vast majority of these cases stemmed from complaints over fiscal mismanagement. See Paul K. Longmore, "From Supplicants to Constituents: Petitioning by Virginia Parishioners, 1701-1775," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 103, no.4 (October 1995): 412, 428; Bruce, *Institutional History*, 1:62-64, 66-67, 70, 73-75; Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 37-40; Hening, *Statutes at Large*, 1:290-91, 2:25, 44-45, 396, 7:132, 245-46, 301-2; Mills, *Bishops By Ballot*, 93.

15. The colonial governor acted as temporal head of the church (ordinary) in lieu of a colonial bishop, and as the king's representative. Governors had the right to examine the credentials of priests arriving for duty in the colony, to admit (collate) ministers to parishes and induct them for permanent tenure, and to endorse candidates for ordination. Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 1:98-99, 102, 227, 358n49; Bruce, *Institutional History*, 1:63-64, 131, 135-39; Henry Hartwell, James Blair, and Edward Chilton, *The Present State of Virginia, and the College*, ed. Hunter Dickinson Farish (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1964), 66-67; Thomas J. Wertenbaker, "The Attempt to Reform the Church of Colonial Virginia," *Sewanee Review* 25, no.3 (July 1917): 266, 275-76; Arthur Pierce Middleton, "The Colonial Virginia Parish," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 40, no.4 (December 1971): 436-37; Hockman, "Commissary William Dawson," 141-43; Mr. [William] Dawson to the Bishop of London, July 15, 1751, in William Stevens Perry, ed., *Papers Relating to the History of the Church, A.D. 1650-1776* ([Geneva, NY?]: privately printed, 1870), 378; Governor [Robert] Dinwiddie to the Bishop of London, December 10, 1752, *Ibid.*, 399-401. Nelson points out that in the fifty years prior to the Revolution, the typical Virginia parson served more than twelve years at a single parish, and therefore, the majority of ministers were de facto permanently tenured. See Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 131-32. See also Joan Rezner Gundersen, "The Myth of the Independent Virginia Vestry," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 44, no.2 (June 1975): 133-41, and Gundersen, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia*, 2, 5-6, 45.

16. Robert B. Semple, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Virginia* (Richmond: Pitt and Dickinson, 1894), 43.

17. [William] Meade, *Old Churches, Ministers and Families of Virginia*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1857), 1:14-16; Wertenbaker, "The Attempt to Reform the Church," 281; Mr. [John] Lang to the Bishop of London, February 7, 1726, Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church*, 347; Hening, *Statutes at Large*, 1:158; The Rev. Bartholomew Yeates [Sr.] to the Bishop of London, July 23, 1726, Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church*, 350-51.

18. Rhoden, *Revolutionary Anglicanism*, 31-32; Governor [Robert] Dinwiddie to the Bishop of London, September 12, 1757, Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church*, 455.

19. James Blair to Bishop of London, January 15, 1734, *Fulham Palace Manuscripts*, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation microfilm collection. Even the Bishop of London confessed that "[o]f those who are sent from hence, a great part are the Scotch or Irish, who can get no employment at home, and enter into the service more out of necessity than choice." Bishop Edmund Gibson to the Rev. Philip Doddridge, quoted in William Henry Foote, *Sketches of Virginia Historical and Biographical* (Philadelphia: William S. Martien, 1850), 147-48.

20. Gundersen, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia*, 141-42; Mr. [John] Lang to the Bishop of London, February 7, 1726, Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church*, 347.

21. Holmes, *A Brief History*, 43; Gundersen, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia*, 119-21, 125-26, 132, 142. Nelson generally concurs with Gundersen's conclusions. See Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 155. See also Brydon, "New Light Upon the History of the Church," 69-103. By comparison, only 3 percent of Congregational clergymen between 1680 and 1740 were found guilty of misconduct. See Patricia U. Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 71; Hening, *Statutes at Large*, 1:242; Mr. [William] Dawson to the Bishop of London, July 15, 1751, Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church*, 377-78.

22. Some scholars argue that the Rev. John Clayton (1656/7-1725), rector of James City Parish from 1684-1686, was the first colonial commissary. See Sara B. Bearss, ed., *Dictionary of Virginia Biography*, vol. 3 (Richmond: Library of Virginia, 2006), s.v. "Clayton, John." Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 1:232, 273, 275, 281, 287-88, 324; Samuel Clyde McCulloch, "James Blair's Plan of 1699 to Reform the Clergy of Virginia," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 4, no.1 (January 1947): 71; Gundersen, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia*, 5, 15. The commissary post and the college presidency became linked in custom though never officially. These posts were often shared by two clergymen by the mid-eighteenth century.

23. Gundersen, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia*, 15, 18; Hening, *Statutes at Large*, 4:204-8.

24. Francis L. Hawks, *Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of the United States of America*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1836-39), 1:73; Bruce, *Institutional History*, 1:129-30. Blair's 1690 reform proposal would have established ecclesiastical courts with the power to prosecute laypersons as well as dissenters. Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 1:231-32, 281-87.

25. Hening, *Statutes at Large*, 3:289, 6:327. As a disciplinarian Blair was cautious, even while holding a royal commission from Bishop Gibson. He infrequently held visitations (clerical investigations) and managed to remove a few irregular parsons. Blair normally handled minor infractions with only verbal or written admonishment. The Council heard serious cases of misconduct but most often deferred punishment to the commissary, and in this way, Blair used the Council in lieu of ecclesiastical courts. The Rev. William Dawson convened one ecclesiastical court during his tenure. Gundersen, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia*, 123-26, 132-33; Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 1:229-30, 323-24, 353; Mr. [James] Blair to the Bishop of London, February 10, 1723, Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church*, 250; *Ibid.*, May 13, 1724, 252-53; *Ibid.*, November 18, 1714, 130-31. See also Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 157-58.

26. Mr. [James] Blair to the Bishop of London, February 10, 1723, Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church*, 250.

27. Hartwell, *The Present State of Virginia*, 67; Mr. [James] Blair to the Bishop of London, February 10, 1723, Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church*, 250; Gundersen, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia*, 132. An average of about one in five parishes was absent a minister during Blair's tenure, although the vacancy rate steadily improved under his leadership. Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 1:241n2. See also Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 387n25.

28. McCulloch, "James Blair's Plan of 1699," 75, 78-84. Blair's reform plan would have replaced a set per annum salary with one based on a tax per poll within each parish.

29. Wertenbaker, "The Attempt to Reform the Church," 267, 271-73; Walsh, "Black Cotted Raskolls," 33; Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church* 1:348-53; Gundersen, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia*, 15, 132-34.

30. Rhoden, *Revolutionary Anglicanism*, 3; Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 138-39; Arthur Pierce Middleton, "The Colonial Virginia Parson," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 26, no.3 (July 1969): 427.

31. Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 144-45; Walsh, "Black Cotted Raskolls," 22; Dr. [James] Blair, "A Memorial Concerning Sir Edmund Andros, Governor of Virginia," [1697], Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church*, 15.

32. Mr. [William] Kay to the Bishop of London, June 14, 1752, Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church*, 389; "The Ministers also are most miserably handled by

their Plebeian Junto's, the Vestries;" quoted from a 1667 letter of the Rev. Godwyn to Gov. William Berkeley later published in, Morgan Godwyn, *The Negro's and Indians Advocate, Suing for their Admission into the Church...* (London: 1680), 168.

33. Mr. [William] Kay to the Bishop of London, June 14, 1752, Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church*, 389, 390-91; Hockman, "Commissary William Dawson," 145.

34. Hockman, "Commissary William Dawson," 145-48. James Walsh argues that if foreign-born clergymen in Virginia had instead been natives, they would have "developed a sense of deference" toward the gentry from childhood; Walsh, "Black Cotted Raskolls," 31.

35. The size of the glebe was set at a minimum of two hundred acres in 1727. The minister was responsible for the maintenance of the glebe. Hening, *Statutes at Large*, 2:30, 45, 3:152, 4:206-8, 6:88-90; The Rev. Hugh Jones, "Present State of Virginia," (1724) in Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 1:401; Bruce, *Institutional History*, 1:159, 161, 165; Gundersen, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia*, 6-7; Middleton, "The Colonial Virginia Parish," 440; Jonathan Boucher, *Reminiscences of an American Loyalist, 1738-1789*, ed. Jonathan Bouchier (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1967), 41, 48.

36. Rhoden, *Revolutionary Anglicanism*, 3; Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 48-49.

37. Bruce, *Institutional History*, 1:177-85.

38. Gundersen, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia*, 88-97.

39. The "Act for the support of the Clergy" of 1748/9 and a subsequent amendment strengthened the rights of uninducted ministers to the benefits of their parish. It reaffirmed the vestries' right of presentation, but also mandated a one year time limit. See Hening, *Statutes at Large*, 6:88-90, 6:568-69; Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 2:119, 288-96; Gundersen, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia*, 204-7. The rate of two-pence per pound of tobacco was actually better than average. Mr. [Thomas] Dawson to the Bishop of London, February 25, 1756, Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church*, 448.

40. The Clergy of Virginia to the Bishop of London, November 29, 1755, Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church*, 434-40 (quotations 434, 436); Mr. [Thomas] Dawson to the Bishop of London, February 25, 1756, *Ibid.*, 447-48; Gundersen, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia*, 204-7; Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 2:289, 296-98.

41. Hening, *Statutes at Large*, 7: 240-41. James Blair summoned at least four conventions early in his tenure, but during a conference in 1719 his authority was openly challenged by some clergymen and Blair never convened another general assembly with the exception of a ceremonial occasion in 1727. Blair's successors expressed reservations

about summoning conventions on the grounds that they lacked the authority, despite the precedent set by Blair. Blair's immediate replacement, William Dawson (1743-1752), called only one convention in 1746. Dawson's brother and successor, Thomas Dawson (1752-1761) summoned only one convention prior to the Parsons' Cause as part of an effort to assist the widows and children of deceased ministers when they lost access to a glebe; Gundersen, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia*, 22-25, 207-8; Eckenrode, *Separation of Church and State*, 18-19; Hockman, "Commissary William Dawson," 138-41; Mr. [Thomas] Dawson to the Bishop of London, March 11, 1754, Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church*, 410; Mr. [William] Robinson to the Bishop of London, May 23, 1765, *Ibid.*, 505.

42. Thomas Dawson's second convention in November 1759 essentially ratified the actions of John Camm's earlier assembly (though unaware of Camm's success in London). The actual number of ministers attending either of these meetings is uncertain. Approximately 35 of a possible 76 clergymen attended the first meeting. Gundersen, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia*, 208-9; Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 2:297-98, 301-2; Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 146. Camm engaged Landon Carter and Richard Bland in a long editorial war over the legality of the Two-Penny acts after the General Court denied Camm's appeal for restitution.

43. Mr. [William] Robinson to the Bishop of London, [1763], Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church*, 486; Rhys Isaac, "Religion and Authority: Problems of the Anglican Establishment in Virginia in the Era of the Great Awakening and the Parsons' Cause," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 30, no.1 (January 1973):12-13, 16-17; Gundersen, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia*, 206; Charles Campbell, *History of the Colony and Ancient Dominion of Virginia* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1860), 513; [Landon Carter], *A Letter to the Right Reverend Father in God, The Lord-B[isho]p of L[ondo]n...* ([Williamsburg: 1759?]), 6.

44. Richard Bland, *A Letter to the Clergy of Virginia...* (Williamsburg: 1760), 5.

45. Mills, *Bishops By Ballot*, 33, 35-36, 42-44, 46. Johnson anticipated that three American bishops would be necessary, while Chandler thought two would be adequate.

46. Thomas Bradbury Chandler, *An Appeal to the Public, in Behalf of the Church of England in America* (New York: 1767), 2, 112-13.

47. *Ibid.*, 3-12, 16-25, 27, 34-35, 97, 107-8.

48. *Ibid.*, 29, 31-32, 90, 117.

49. Mills, *Bishops By Ballot*, 44-45; Gundersen, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia*, 216-18; Rhoden, *Revolutionary Anglicanism*, 41-42.

50. *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon), May 9, 1771. The Rev. James Horrocks served as Virginia commissary from 1768-1771.

51. Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 2:342, 349; Gundersen, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia*, 219-20.

52. George William Pilcher, "The Pamphlet War on the Proposed Virginia Anglican Episcopate, 1767-1775," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 30, no.4 (December 1961): 268-69.

53. Mills, *Bishops By Ballot*, 104-106; Richard Bland to Thomas Adams, August 1, 1771, in "Virginia in 1771," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 6, no.2 (October 1898): 130-32; *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon), May 20, 1773 (supplement).

54. Bland to Adams, 131, 132.

55. [Samuel Auchmuty et al.], *An Address from the Clergy of New-York and New-Jersey, to the Episcopalians in Virginia...* (New York: 1771), 5-8. Gwatkin did not let the censure from his New York and New Jersey brethren go unanswered. Gwatkin sent them a copy of his (and Henley's) original editorial opposing the Horrocks petition and then proceeded to explain Virginia's unique relationship between its civil administrators and clerics. Gwatkin condemned the presumptuousness of the critics, declaring that "your Ignorance of the Constitution of this Province may admit of some Excuse, but your sinister Endeavours to overturn the Constitution of our Church is unpardonable." In a postscript to the letter, Gwatkin explained that neither he nor Henley were opposed to American bishops per se, but rather most concerned about the impracticality of such a plan, and because "Civil Establishment of Religion" might lead to the "Destruction of the Rights and Liberties of other Christian Communities." Thomas Gwatkin, *A Letter to the Clergy of New York and New Jersey, Occasioned by an Address to the Episcopalians in Virginia* (Williamsburg: 1772), 6-14, (27). In January 1772, acting commissary William Willie summoned yet another convention in a desperate effort to persuade Virginia's clergy to support a colonial bishopric. It is doubtful the convention ever took place. Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 2:352-53.

56. Gundersen, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia*, 256, 258; E. Alfred Jones "Two Professors of William and Mary College," *William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine*, 1<sup>st</sup> ser., 26, no.4 (April 1918): 221, 223, 226-27; Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 184-185n, 216, 223.

57. *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon), June 6, 1771.

58. *Ibid.*, June 13, 1771; Rhoden, *Revolutionary Anglicanism*, 41-42.

59. *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon), July 18, 1771.

60. Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 2:355-57, 209-10. The Rev. Samuel Seabury was consecrated bishop by the Scottish Episcopal Church because in 1784 Parliament outlawed the consecration of any nominee who refused to take the oath of allegiance.

61. Stephen A. Marini, "Religion, Politics, and Ratification," in *Religion in a Revolutionary Age*, ed. Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 190; John Frederick Woolverton, *Colonial Anglicanism in North America* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), 28-29, 242n36.

62. Bruce, *Institutional History*, 1:222-25, 247-48.

63. Hening, *Statutes at Large*, 1:532-33, 2:180-82.

64. Persons "dissenting from the [C]hurch of England" were exempted from mandatory attendance penalties provided they attended at least one of their own religious services every two months. Nevertheless, penalties were imposed on any person raised in the Christian tradition who later denied the divine inspiration of the Old and New Testaments, rejected the Christian Trinity, or became an atheist or polytheist. Hening, *Statutes at Large*, 3:168-69, 171; Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 2:546.

65. Bruce, *Institutional History*, 1:240-41, 250-51.

66. *Ibid.*, 259-61; Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 1:119-21; Hening, *Statutes at Large*, 1:241, 277, 311-12, 341-42.

67. Eckenrode, *Separation of Church and State*, 34; Bruce, *Institutional History*, 1:262; Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 2:68, 72-73; Henry R. McIlwaine, *The Struggle of Protestant Dissenters for Religious Toleration in Virginia*, Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science 12 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1894), 37, 40.

68. Charles F. James, *Documentary History of the Struggle for Religious Liberty in Virginia* (1900; repr., New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 23. In 1714, the Assembly extended a similar welcome (and a seven-year tax exemption) to settlers of the German Reformed Church. See H. R. McIlwaine and John Pendleton Kennedy, eds., *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1712-1714, 1715, 1718, 1720-1722, 1723-1726*, 13 vols. (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1905-1915), 90, hereafter cited as JHB.

69. Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 2:45, 71, 117-24, 127-28; McIlwaine, *The Struggle of Protestant Dissenters*, 40-42; Mr. [William] Dawson to the Bishop of London, August 16, 1751, Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church*, 380. In 1759, the Assembly barred dissenters from serving as vestrymen. Dissenters could continue as vestrymen only in parishes where the number of Anglican vestrymen was less than seven. See Hening, *Statutes at Large*, 7:302-3.

70. McIlwaine, *The Struggle of Protestant Dissenters*, 44-47, 52-54; Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 2:158-60; Wesley M. Gewehr, *The Great Awakening in Virginia, 1740-1790* (1930; repr., Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1965), 59-61.

71. McIlwaine, *The Struggle of Protestant Dissenters*, 47-52; Campbell, *History of the Colony*, 441-42. Old Side ministers of the Presbyterian Synod of Philadelphia disavowed any connection to the New Side evangelicals.

72. McIlwaine, *The Struggle of Protestant Dissenters*, 53-57; The Reverend Mr. Sam[uel] Davies to Dr. [Philip] Doddridge, October 2, 1750, Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church*, 370-71; Bishop of London to Rev. Dr. [Philip] Doddridge, May 11, 1751, *Ibid.*, 372. The Lords Commissioners of Trade apparently agreed with Davies' interpretation of the Toleration Act and they advised the Council to move cautiously. Mr. [William] Dawson to the Bishop of London, August 16, 1751, *Ibid.*, 379-80.

73. H. R. McIlwaine, Wilmer L. Hall, and Benjamin J. Hillman, eds., *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, 6 vols. (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1925-1966) 5:421; Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 152, 173; Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 2:168-69. In 1751, several Anglican clergymen drafted a petition demanding the Assembly enforce a 1662 law that permitted the governor or Council to "suspend and silence" any person "pretending himself a Minister" on the basis that since the New Siders had been expelled from the Presbyterian Synod of Philadelphia, "they have no just claim to that character." The petition was shelved when key members of the Assembly advised that the Toleration Act precluded such action. Mr. [William] Dawson to Bishop of London, August 16, 1751, Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church*, 379-83; Hening, *Statutes at Large*, 2:46.

74. Semple, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists*, 11-14.

75. Gewehr, *The Great Awakening in Virginia*, 109-16, 128-35; Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 173-77; *Virginia Gazette* (Dixon and Hunter), October 11, 1776.

76. *Virginia Gazette* (Dixon and Hunter), December 13, 1776.

77. Gewehr, *The Great Awakening in Virginia*, 128-33; James Maury, *To Christians of every Denomination among us, especially those of the Established Church, An Address...* (Annapolis: Anne Catharine Green, 1771), 6-9, 13-16, 23-25, 28-29, 32, 41, 44 (quotations 9, 14, 32). Maury's address was published posthumously.

78. Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 164-66, 170-77; Gewehr, *The Great Awakening in Virginia*, 117-35; Semple, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists*, 20, 29-42; William Taylor Thom, *The Struggle for Religious Freedom in Virginia: The Baptists*, Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political

Science 18 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1900), 15-30. Thom surmises that at least thirty-four Separate Baptist preachers were imprisoned between 1768 and 1775 and he estimates the number of all Baptists in Virginia in the fall of 1774 at “over five thousand.” By comparison, there were only fourteen Regular Baptist congregations in Virginia in 1774, and over 150 Anglican.

79. Holmes, *A Brief History*, 39-40, 49; Peter W. Williams, *America's Religions: From Their Origins to the Twenty-First Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 150-53; David L. Holmes, *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 39-51, 62, 65-66, 68, 81-83, 87, 92, 98; Anonymous, to Bishop of London, February 1, 1754, Perry, *Papers Relating to the History of the Church*, 408.

80. Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, ed. William Peden (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1955), 159.

## CHAPTER TWO

1. As late as 1775, nearly half the members of the Assembly were active vestrymen. Frederick V. Mills, Sr., *Bishops By Ballot: An Eighteenth-Century Ecclesiastical Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 93; Paul K. Longmore, “‘All Matters and Things Relating to Religion and Morality’: The Virginia Burgesses’ Committee for Religion, 1769 to 1775,” *Journal of Church and State* 38, no.4 (Autumn 1996): 777, 781-83; H. R. McIlwaine and John Pendleton Kennedy, eds., *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1766-1769*, 13 vols. (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1905-1915), 190, 205, 252, hereafter cited as JHB. From 1769-1772 the Assembly approved 7 of the 11 petitions for parish restructuring. See Paul K. Longmore, “From Supplicants to Constituents: Petitioning by Virginia Parishioners, 1701-1775,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 103, no.4 (October 1995): 440n65, 441. Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, and George Washington would later serve on the Committee for Religion.

2. *JHB 1770-1772*, 275.

3. Longmore, “All Matters and Things,” 788-89.

4. *JHB 1770-1772*, 160-61, 182-83, 185-86, 188; *Virginia Gazette* (Rind), March 26, 1772.

5. *Virginia Gazette* (Rind), March 26, 1772. The new toleration bill kept in place the “Test” oath forswearing the doctrine of transubstantiation.

6. William Taylor Thom, *The Struggle for Religious Freedom in Virginia: The Baptists*, Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science 18 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1900), 46.

7. S[amuel] Henley, *The Distinct Claims of Government and Religion, Considered in a Sermon Preached Before the Honourable House of Burgesses, at Williamsburg, in Virginia, March 1, 1772* (London, 1772), 4-16 (quotations 11, 16).

8. *Virginia Gazette* (Rind), March 5, 1772; *Ibid.*, June 10, 1773; Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 221.

9. Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 217-18, 220-27, 230-34; *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon), May 20, 1773 (supplement). The Rev. John Bracken served as rector of Bruton Parish for forty-five years. Bracken would eventually lash out at Samuel Henley for his endless “Cavil and Abuse,” charging that Henley was misleading readers through “affected Sarcasms, paltry Witticisms, and misplaced Ridicule,” piled on top of a “long Labyrinth of Sophistry.” *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon), February 17, 1774.

10. *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon), May 13, 1773.

11. *Ibid.*, May 20, 1773 (supplement). Nicholas produced numerous examples of Henley’s heterodoxy and even named witnesses in an article published a year later. *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon), February 24, 1774.

12. *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon), June 3, 1773.

13. *Virginia Gazette* (Rind), June 10, 1773.

14. Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 185n, 217-19, 222, 235-37; Henley, *The Distinct Claims of Government and Religion*, “Dedication” and “Advertisement” (not paginated). Henley’s “cross examination” of Nicholas’s (and Richard Bland’s) implied charge of heresy was remarkable in that Henley admitted only that he “stand[s] *unconvicted*” based on the anecdotal and scriptural evidence presented. He closed with an appeal for faith grounded upon reason and a “diversity of opinion” instead of a uniform belief system “kept together by the bond of superstition, arrogance, and hypocrisy.” S[amuel] Henley, *A Candid Refutation of the Heresy Imputed by RO. C. Nicholas Esquire to the Reverend S. Henley* (Williamsburg: 1774), 2, 67-68, 71. Henley and Thomas Jefferson resumed correspondence after the Revolution.

15. *Virginia Gazette* (Pickney), May 25, 1775.

16. The Rev. David Griffith was elected the first bishop of Virginia in 1786 but he was never consecrated. Edward Lewis Goodwin, *The Colonial Church in Virginia* (Milwaukee: Morehouse Publishing, 1927), 128-30; J[ames] Madison, *An Oration, In Commemoration of the Founders of William and Mary College, Delivered on the Anniversary of its Foundation, August 15, 1772* (Williamsburg, 1772), 9-10.

17. John Wesley (1703-1791) served as an SPG missionary in Georgia from 1735-1738. William Warren Sweet, *Methodism in American History* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1933), 13-15, 32-34, 59, 62-63, 66; Wesley M. Gewehr, *The Great Awakening in Virginia, 1740-1790* (1930; repr., Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1965), 146-47; Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 260-61; *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, (1806; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1969), 108, 110. David Holmes cautions against evaluating Jarratt's autobiography uncritically. See David L. Holmes, "Devereux Jarratt: A Letter and a Reevaluation," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 47, no.1 (March 1978): 37-49. George Whitefield made three brief visits to Virginia and Commissary James Blair invited him to preach at Bruton Parish Church in December 1739. His influence on Virginia's Church is difficult to assess. See George MacLaren Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church and The Political Conditions Under Which It Grew*, 2 vols. (Richmond and Philadelphia: Virginia Historical Society, 1947-52), 2:145-46, 148-49.

18. *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 9, 28-29, 50-51, 56-58, 84-96 (quotation 56). Jarratt heard both John Wesley and George Whitefield preach while in London for ordination. He gained "little edification" from either man. Jarratt was received as minister of Bath Parish, Dinwiddie County in August 1763. *Ibid.*, 73, 81. Besides Jarratt and the Rev. Archibald McRoberts, Joan Gundersen identifies eight other colonial Virginia Anglican ministers with possible evangelical leanings. See Joan R. Gundersen, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia, 1723-1766: A Study of A Social Class* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989), 194-98.

19. *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 86, 96-99, 122-23, 131-32 (quotation 86); Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 2:198-99, 251.

20. *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 100-101, 105-6, 107-10; [Devereux Jarratt], *A Brief Narrative of the Revival of Religion in Virginia*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: R. Hawes, 1779), 5-13, 21-26; Gewehr, *The Great Awakening in Virginia*, 140-49; *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences, Annually Held in America, From 1773 to 1794, Inclusive* (Philadelphia, 1795), 18, 46. There were approximately four thousand Methodists in Virginia by 1781.

21. *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 107; [Jarratt], *A Brief Narrative*, 26, and Thomas Rankin's supplement 27-35; Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 2:200; Gewehr, *The Great Awakening in Virginia*, 138-39, 147; *The Journal of Joseph Pilmore, Methodist Itinerant*, ed. Frederick E. Maser and Howard T. Maag (Philadelphia: Message Publishing, 1969), 151, 242-43. Pilmore left the Methodists in 1785 to become a deacon in the American Protestant Episcopal Church. He was ordained by Bishop Samuel Seabury.

22. Peter W. Williams, *America's Religions: From Their Origins to the Twenty-First Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 138-39; Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 2:209-13, 216-17; *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 107-11, 115-24,

130-31, 147-49, 156-57 (quotation 147); Jarratt was uncomfortable with parishioners expressing too much “enthusiasm” during services and prayer meetings. See [Jarratt], *A Brief Narrative*, 5-6, 12, 15, 22. The annual colonial Methodist conference of 1782 recognized Jarratt “for his kind and friendly services.” See *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences*, 55. Leading Methodists, however, would later attack Jarratt for his critique of the Methodist schism and for his lack of abolitionist zeal. See *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt, Rector of Bath Parish, Dinwiddie County, Virginia* (Baltimore: Warner and Hanna, 1806), 83-84.

23. *Virginia Gazette* (Rind), September 8, 1774.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., September 15, 1774.

27. Ibid.; Ibid., September, 22, 1774.

28. It is possible that “A Catholic Christian” was Devereux Jarratt. In a similar vein as “Catholic Christian,” Jarratt pleaded for more emotion in the pulpit and disparaged the uninspiring, “cool, dispassionate manner” of the typical Anglican sermon delivery. He also emphasized the importance of instructing children in Church catechism, and recommended pastoral home visitation as an effective way to reinforce the Gospel message of salvation. Jarratt denounced theological disputation, and he professed to have a “catholic spirit” toward persons of other denominations. Jarratt was in Williamsburg in May 1774 to attend a clerical convention during which he claimed other ministers had mistreated him. He also recollected overhearing discussions whereby clergymen denigrated fundamental Christian doctrine. The indignant, self-righteous tone of “A Catholic Christian” is reminiscent of passages in Jarratt’s autobiography and is familiar to a sermon he preached at a clerical convention in Richmond. If “Catholic Christian” was Jarratt, his contempt for those parsons overly concerned with their standard of living would be somewhat hypocritical. See *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt* (reprint ed.), 16, 21, 56, 59, 89-92, 103, 106, 131 (quotations 89, 106), [Jarratt], *A Brief Narrative*, 3-5, 8, 14, 23, 26, and “Ministerial Fidelity and Perseverance: A Sermon Preached Before the Convention...,” in Devereux Jarratt, *Sermons on Various and Important Subjects, In Practical Divinity, Adapted to the Plainest Capacities, and Suited to the Family and Closet*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Johnston and Justice, 1793), 1:23-24, 26-27, 32-34, 48-50, 60-61.

29. Nancy L. Rhoden, *Revolutionary Anglicanism: The Colonial Church of England Clergy during the American Revolution* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 1, 7, 103.

30. David L. Holmes, "The Episcopal Church and the American Revolution," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 47, no.3 (September 1978): 282-83; Otto Lohrenz, "The Virginia Clergy and the American Revolution, 1774-1799." (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 1970), iv; Rhoden, *Revolutionary Anglicanism*, 89.
31. Rhoden, *Revolutionary Anglicanism*, 90, 94-95, 101-2, 104-5, 111, 114-15; Holmes, "The Episcopal Church," 264-65, 271-72, 276.
32. Mark A. Noll, *Christians in the American Revolution* (1977; repr., Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2006), 107; Holmes, "The Episcopal Church," 265-74; Rhoden, *Revolutionary Anglicanism*, 84-85. Nancy Rhoden calculates that during the years 1775-1783 about 75 percent of the Anglican clergy in the northern and middle colonies were loyalists compared with only 25 percent in the south. Rhoden, *Revolutionary Anglicanism*, 89.
33. Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 2:202-5.
34. [Thomas Bradbury Chandler], *A Friendly Address to All Reasonable Americans, on the Subject Our Political Confusions...* (New York, 1774), 5-6, 26-27, 49, 51.
35. Samuel Seabury, *St. Peter's Exhortation to fear God and honor the King, Explained and inculcated: In a Discourse Addressed to His Majesty's Provincial Troops...* (New York: 1777), 5-6, 16, 19; 1 Peter 2:13-14 (King James Version).
36. Philip Davidson, *Propaganda and the American Revolution, 1763-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 209, 216, 226.
37. David Griffith, *Passive Obedience Considered: In a Sermon Preached at Williamsburg, December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1775* (Williamsburg: 1776), 6, 11, 15-16, 18, 21-22; Acts 4:16-26; 22:22-30; 25:1-12.
38. *Virginia Gazette* (Dixon and Hunter), July 20, 1776.
39. William Waller Hening, *The Statutes at Large; Being A Collection of all the Laws of Virginia, From the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619*, 13 vols. (1810-1823; repr., Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1969), 9:281-83.
40. Lohrenz, "The Virginia Clergy," 137, 163, 214-16; Rhoden, *Revolutionary Anglicanism*, 89; George J. Cleaveland, "The Church of Virginia Established and Disestablished," in *Up From Independence: The Episcopal Church in Virginia*, ed. Brewster S. Ford and Harold S. Sniffen (Orange, VA: Interdiocesan Bicentennial Committee of the Virginias, 1976), 36-38.

41. Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 2:415; Lohrenz, "The Virginia Clergy," 22, 24, 48, 54, 81-82, 102, 107; Rhoden, *Revolutionary Anglicanism*, 89, 103; Cleaveland, "The Church of Virginia Established and Disestablished," 32-35.

42. Lohrenz, "The Virginia Clergy," 27, 53, 67-68, 78-79, 104; [William] Meade, *Old Churches, Ministers and Families of Virginia*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1857), 2:35-36. Gwatkin refused to "draw up memorials in vindication of the proceedings of Congress" or renounce his ordination oaths and he was subsequently harassed by students at the college. Gwatkin served briefly as chaplain to (ex) Virginia Gov. Lord Dunmore before returning to England. He later petitioned the British government for reimbursement of property lost in Virginia. E. Alfred Jones "Two Professors of William and Mary College," *William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine*, 1<sup>st</sup> ser., 26, no.4 (April 1918): 222; "Journal of the Meetings of the President and Masters of William and Mary College," *William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine*, 1<sup>st</sup> ser., 14, no.4 (April 1906): 244-45.

43. Rhoden, *Revolutionary Anglicanism*, 103; Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 2:366, 417. In 1777, Camm was removed as president of the college and replaced by James Madison. Camm resided in York County until his death in 1779.

44. Lohrenz, "The Virginia Clergy," 221, 247, 251, 253.

45. *JHB 1773-1776*, 92, 189; Library of Congress, "Early Virginia Religious Petitions," Library of Congress American Memory website, <http://memory.loc.gov>; Charles F. James, *Documentary History of the Struggle for Religious Liberty in Virginia* (1900; repr., New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 42-47. See also *Virginia Gazette* (Pickney), August 31, 1775.

46. Hening, *Statutes at Large*, 9:111-12. The clause "free exercise" in article 16 of the Declaration of Rights was inserted chiefly at the insistence of James Madison. See Daniel L. Dreisbach, "George Mason's Pursuit of Religious Liberty in Revolutionary Virginia," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 108, no.1 (2000): 12-16.

47. *Journal of the House of Delegates of Virginia* (Williamsburg: Alexander Purdie, 1776), 9, 19-20, 27-28, 32-33, 40, 64-65, hereafter cited as *JHD 1776*; William Fristoe, *A Concise History of the Kectocon Baptist Association...* (Staunton, [VA]: William Gilman Lyford, 1808), 91.

48. *JHD 1776*, 19-20, 32. See also the Baptist petition from Prince William County dated May 19, 1776, Library of Congress, "Early Virginia Religious Petitions." In August 1775, the Virginia Convention permitted dissenting chaplains in the colonial army to conduct religious services without restrictions. The continued recruitment of dissenters certainly influenced the later decisions of the Assembly. See James, *Documentary History*, 52-55.

49. *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie), November 08, 1776; *Ibid.*, December 13, 1776.

50. *JHD* 1776, 9, 40; James, *Documentary History*, 80-81.

51. *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie), November 01, 1776.

52. *JHD* 1776, 62, 64.

53. *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie), December 06, 1776.

54. Hening, *Statutes at Large*, 9:164-66. The Assembly suspended the 1748/9 “Act for the support of the Clergy” until the end of the next session of the Assembly. Parish levies for clerical salaries were permanently suspended in 1779 and Thomas Jefferson’s goal of complete religious freedom was realized in January 1786. *Ibid.*, 10:197-98, 12:84-86.

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