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Barry Levis

Rollins College, Blevis@Rollins.edu

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“Wild Mobs, to Mad Sedition Prone”: Preaching the American Revolution

R. Barry Levis

While clergy in other denominations certainly preached about the conflicts between the American colonies and Great Britain, this paper will be focusing solely on the colonial clergy of the Church of England. Some significant differences existed between the Anglican clergy and other denominations. First, they had not come to the colonies because of perceived religious persecution. They were clergy of the Established Church whose supreme governor was the king. Secondly, unlike other clergy, they had taken an ordination oath of allegiance to the crown, which many high churchmen regarded as sacrosanct.

The Church of England in the American colonies was really not a single institution. Because no local bishop governed the church in America, falling as it did under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of London, the clergy tended to have differing loyalties. Especially in the southern colonies, local vestries ruled the clergy because they controlled their stipends; therefore, the clergy followed the lead of the local squirearchy and suppressed their personal views regarding independence. The New England Anglican clergy were equally in a difficult position. Midst the hostility of Puritanism and the Sons of Liberty, they seemed like an alien element. For that reason, they did not speak out either in defense of the Revolution or against it. Only in the Mid-Atlantic colonies did an often-vigorous debate take place which involved Anglican clergy who either preached about the Revolution or, when public sermons proved too dangerous, published pamphlets—often anonymously—regarding colonial grievances. The stance they took was almost always related to how they saw themselves with regard to the colonies.

In order to understand the opinions of these clergymen regarding the Revolution, we will primarily examine the sermons they preached about it. Nevertheless, several clergymen in this study also published remarks concerning current events published anonymously. Obviously, clergy opposed to independence feared that they risked their lives from too many public pronouncements from the pulpit. Throughout this clash, when clergymen found they could not safely preach without possible physical harm, they often turned to print literature. Clearly, preachers thought nothing about commenting on political events from the pulpit—no separation of church and state yet existed—so that the pamphlet became just an extension of the pulpit by safer means. Anonymity provided the obvious difference: they could be far more strident than in public pronouncements. Several of the clergymen examined here utilized this same method of self-protection. None would have spoken so freely from the pulpit as they did in their pamphlets. Moreover, their language was far more secular than in their sermons, since they did not feel the need to couch their sentiments in religious terms (although one must admit that even their sermons were not always typically religious in tone or content).

Many of the Anglican clergy were missionaries from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel; they had been sent from Britain in an effort to convert the “heathen” Presbyterians.¹

¹ Thomas Bradbury Chandler, *An Appeal to the Public, in behalf of the Church of England in America* (New York: James Parker, 1767), 65-6. This was often seen as the primary goal of the missionaries from the SPG, although Chandler counters that suggestion: “The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, although notwithstanding they have been abused in this Country by many petulant tongues, and some petulant Pens, on this Account, the

Therefore their loyalties generally rested with the mother country, and as a result they all left the colonies once hostilities had broken out. The few who remained were generally those who had actually been born in the colonies, although that did not necessarily mean that they supported independence. The other significant difference is that the clergy in the south were generally low church. To the North the clergy, including the missionaries, were high churchmen loyal to the crown.² Nevertheless, the most important factor in the decision to remain in the new United States really depended on the individual clergyman's view of oaths.

Preaching in the South

Most Anglican clergy in the South remained quiet about the conflict. One English traveler had little flattering to say about Southerners' level of enthusiasm:

The southern colonies have so many inherent causes of weakness, that they never can possess any real strength. The climate operates very powerfully upon them, and renders them indolent, inactive, and unenterprising; this is visible in every line of their character. I myself have been a spectator, and it is not an uncommon sight of a man in the vigour of life, lying upon a couch and a female slave standing over him, wafting off the flies, and fanning him, while he took his repose.³

Another observer claimed "Whatever might be the case with the peoples of the North, those of the Middle and Southern Provinces were certainly not remarkable for taking much interest in the concerns of religion.... The Southern Clergy, and in particular those of the Church of England, were, almost without an opinion" and became "in some degree subservient to insurgency."⁴

One clergyman, however, did have strong views about the Revolution and expressed them forcefully. Jonathan Boucher, rector of St. Barnabas Church in Maryland, faced rough treatment at the hands of the mob, as the result of his provocativeness in both his actions and preaching. His troubles began when he refused to subscribe to a number of associations which he regarded as "very unnecessary, unwise, and unjust." As a result, he "soon became a marked man" and although he comported himself "with all possible temper and even caution, I daily met with insults, indignities, and injuries." At length, enemies complained about his alleged hostility to America before the Provincial Committee sitting in Annapolis. He claimed a militia of two hundred men took him before the committee; but in the end he was acquitted, although thereafter his friends urged him to leave the colony.⁵ He refused.

A few Sundays later, a group of disgruntled congregants walked out during his sermon when he recommended peaceableness.

Conversion of Heathens as not their *primary* and original Object...this worthy Society, have most assiduously and vigorously attempted, so far as their more immediate Duty would admit of it, the Conversion of the Indians in the neighbourhood of our Settlements."

² Frederick V. Mills, *Bishops by Ballots: An Eighteenth-Century Ecclesiastical Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 134-7.

³ Andrew Burnaby, *Travels through the Middle Settlements in North America, in the Years 1759 and 1760: With Observations upon the State of the Colonies* (London: T. Payne, 1775), 197-8.

⁴ Jonathan Boucher, preface to *A View of the Causes and Consequences of the American Revolution, in Thirteen Discourses, Preached in North America between the Years 1763 and 1775, with an Historical Preface* (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1797), xlvi-ii.

⁵ Boucher, *Reminiscences of an American Loyalist, 1738-1789: Being the Autobiography of the Rev'd Jonathan Boucher, Rector of Annapolis in Maryland and afterwards Vicar of Epsom, Surry, England* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1925), 106-8.

This was a signal to the people to consider every sermon of mine as hostile to the views and interests of America; and accordingly I never after went into a pulpit without something very disagreeable happening. I received sundry messages and letters threatening me with the most fatal consequences if I did not desist from preaching at all but preaching what should be agreeable to the friends of America.⁶

Boucher responded in sermons "in which I uniformly and resolutely declared that I never would suffer any merely human authority to intimidate me from performing what in my conscience I believed and knew to be my duty to God and His church." As a result Boucher entered the pulpit each Sunday armed, "having given notice that if any man, or body of men, could possibly be so lost to all sense of decency and propriety as to attempt really to do what had been long threatened, that is, to drag me out of my own pulpit, I should think myself justified before God and man in repelling violence by violence."⁷ Soon after these events, Boucher's new curate preached a sermon supporting the notion of absolute monarchy.⁸ Again Boucher found himself under attack. A man named Spriggs threatened him, and later a gang surrounded him. Boucher saw only one way to save his life. "This was by seizing Spriggs, as I immediately did, by the collar, and with my cocked pistol in the other hand, assuring him that if any violence was offered to me I would instantly blow his brains out, as I most certainly would have done." He walked with Spriggs to his horse, while the gang played the Rogues' March until he rode away.⁹

Boucher's July 1775 sermon "On Civil Liberty, Passive Obedience and Nonresistance" occasioned his subsequent troubles that prompted him to arm himself for the next six months.¹⁰ The sermon, a response to Jacob Duchè, rector of Christ Church in Philadelphia, had as its text Galatians 5:1.¹¹ He began the sermon with a stout defense of the right of clergy to comment on politics.¹² He then turned to the political arguments swirling about him. First he argues that God is not concerned about what form government takes and that the calls for liberty are of no concern to the Divine. "The word *liberty*, as meaning civil liberty, does not, I believe, occur in all the Scriptures."¹³ Instead, "The doctrines of the Gospel make no manner of alteration in the nature or form of Civil Government; but enforce afresh, upon all Christians, that obedience which is due to the respective Constitutions of every nation in which they may happen to live." The government might be democratic or tyrannical: "this is not the concern of the Gospel. It's [sic] single object,

⁶ Ibid., 113.

⁷ Ibid. Boucher assured his readers that he was not normally a man of violence. After all, he prided himself on how well he treated his slaves (96-7).

⁸ Ibid., 120. The curate probably reacted, Boucher suspected, to a sermon by Benjamin Hoadly.

⁹ Ibid., 123. Later Boucher would castigate Edmund Burke for making a distinction between the American and French Revolutions, the former being legitimate and the latter a disaster, which he claimed suffered from "a fatal inconsistency" (Preface, xv [note].)

¹⁰ Patricia U. Bonomi, *Under Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 208; William H. Nelson, *The American Tory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 107-8.

¹¹ Boucher, *View of the Causes and Consequences*, 495. It seems ironic that he thought Duchè a "pernicious and dangerous" man, considering Duchè's own eventual flight from Pennsylvania (496).

¹² Ibid., 501. "That I am persevering in the pursuit of this unpopular course, I readily own; yet I feel I want spirits to enter on any such discussions with those persons among us, who, settling controverted points with their hands rather than with their tongues, demonstrate with tar and feathers, fetch arguments from prisons, and confute by confiscation and exile" (502).

¹³ Ibid., 505. Any italics used in this paper are from the original.

with respect to these public duties, is to enjoin obedience to the laws of every country, in every kind or form of government.”¹⁴

Therefore, calls for liberty were entirely misplaced:

True liberty, then, is a liberty to do every thing that is right. And the being restrained from doing any thing that is wrong. So far from our having a right to do every thing that we please, under a notion of liberty, liberty itself is limited and confined—but limited and confined only by laws which are at the same time both it’s [sic] foundation and it’s [sic] support. It can, however, hardly be necessary to inform you, that ideas and notions respecting liberty, very different from these, are daily suggested in the speeches and writings of the times; and also that some opinions on the subject of government at large, which appear to me to be particularly loose and dangerous....¹⁵

He then provided an unequivocal defense of the notion of passive obedience. Clearly those who had read the Whig propaganda arising from the Glorious Revolution would have taken particular umbrage to these assertions. “All government, whether lodged in one or in many, is, in it’s [sic] nature, absolute and irresistible.” Therefore, “every man who is a subject must necessarily owe to the government under which he lives an obedience either active or passive: active, where the duty enjoined may be performed without offending God: and passive, (that is to say, patiently to submit to the penalties annexed to disobedience) where that which is commanded by man is forbidden by God.”¹⁶ He argued that his listeners could only have learned of British oppression from hearsay since they certainly did not experience anything directly.¹⁷

Boucher also published a series of remarks against the current events. Unlike his sermons, he published anonymously, obviously concerned that he risked his life from too many public pronouncements from the pulpit. Although he turned more frequently to anonymous pamphlets because of continued threats, he nevertheless presented a consistent message. In his letter to the southern deputies in the Continental Congress published in *Rivington's Gazette*, he rebuffed the resolves of Congress rejecting the right of Parliament to impose internal taxes. If the breach continued, he foresaw civil war, “the evils of which alone infinitely surpass all our other political grievances, even if those were as great as our patriots describe them.”¹⁸ He also warned that the Northern delegates desired to replace the stability of British rule with “a wild Republic of mad Independents.” To the southern Anglicans he admonished, “Now, have you no suspicions that your fellow-patriots from the North mediate a Reformation, as they call it, in Church as well as in State? They must disregard their own principles, and be inconsistent with themselves, if they do not.”¹⁹

¹⁴ Ibid., 506. “If it be less indulgent and less liberal than in reason it ought to be, still it is our duty not to disturb and destroy the peace of the community by becoming refractory and rebellious subjects, and [resisting the ordinances of God]. However humiliating such acquiescence may seem to men of warm and eager minds, the wisdom of God in having made it our duty is manifest” (508).

¹⁵Ibid., 511.

¹⁶Ibid., 545-6.

¹⁷Ibid., 554. He mockingly wrote, “if you think the duty of threepence a pound upon tea, laid by the British Parliament, a grievance, it is your duty to instruct your members to take all the constitutional means in their power to obtain redress: if those means fail of success, you cannot but be sorry and grieved; but you will better bear your disappointment, by being able to reflect that it was not owing to any misconduct of your own” (559).

¹⁸ Boucher, *Reminiscences of an American Loyalist*, 131.

¹⁹Ibid., 133.

In his *Letter from a Virginian to the Continental Congress*, he (with obvious tongue in cheek, a technique he probably would not have used in a sermon) praised the quality of the men sent to the Congress although he pointed out that they had not been selected by any constitutionally established group. He warned them that they might "find the Movement of the Passions a more easy and agreeable Exercise than the Drudgery of sober and dispassionate Enquiry." Political pamphlets and newspapers "are the shallow and turbid Sources from whence they devise their Notions of Government, as if a political Problem was to be solved as clearly as a Mathematical one; and as if a bold Assertion amounted to a Demonstration."²⁰ He pointed to the irony that "from this parliamentary Authority, they never wish'd until of late, to be emancipated, but would rather have fled to it for Protection, from the arbitrary Encroachments of a James, or a Charles, armed with the Usurpations, and Abuses, of privy Seals, Benevolences, Proclamations, Star Chambers and High Commission Courts..."²¹ He described how well off the colonists really were compared to others. Yet,

the Passions of such Men, agitated by false Principles, and mistaken Zeal, are more dangerous to the Repose of the World, than the Frenzy of the most dissolute, and abandon'd Slaves. You will surely beware how you inflame the Minds of such honest deluded Citizens, or the Time may come, perhaps it is not very distant, that you will wish, when it will be too late, to calm the Storm you have raised, and will tremble every Moment, lest it burst on your own Heads.²²

Following his defense of passive obedience, Boucher found himself forbidden to preach from the pulpit at St. Barnabas. He therefore decided the time for his departure had come. He preached his farewell sermon from the Lower Church in the Parish of Queen Anne, using Nehemiah 6:10-11 as his text.²³ He asked his listeners to "judge...whether my Sermon does really contain any doctrines unworthy of a Christian minister to teach, or of a Christian congregation to hear: as has been asserted by those rude men who, with as little respect to decorum and good manners, as to religion and piety, occasioned the uproar last Thursday."²⁴ He felt that in the end his stance would be vindicated. "[M]uch does it concern those who direct these tribunals to remember that though they may destroy those persons who maintain the truth, yet can they not finally destroy truth itself: in attempting it, they may find to their cost, that they *fight against God*."²⁵ Nevertheless, he predicted dark days ahead. "Such *days of evil* awaiting us, as may well make *Men's heart fail them in fear*. For, whilst I think it right to put you on your guard against exaggerating danger, tis no less my duty to warn you not to fall into the opposite extreme, and to

²⁰ Jonathan Boucher, *Letter from a Virginian, to the Members of Congress to be Held at Philadelphia, on the First of September, 1774* ([Philadelphia]: [Henry Miller], 1774), 6-7. He also made a jibe at those who would spend an inordinate amount of time discussing the State of Nature.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

²² *Ibid.*, 16.

²³ "Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee. And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in."

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 562. "That for one party to persecute another, merely because of a difference of opinion, is a crime that is much aggravated by the reflection, that there is no temptation to the commission of it, but such as a generous mind must abhor. A good cause should disdain the aid of so unworthy an ally as Persecution...." (577).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 579.

under-rate it.”²⁶ He then announced the purpose of his sermon. “If I am to credit some surmises, which have been kindly whispered in my ear...that, unless I will forbear to pray for the King, you are to hear me neither pray nor preach any longer.” While he found the threats troubling, they did not deter him.

Entertaining all due respect for my ordination vows, I am firm in my resolution, whilst I pray in public at all, to conform to the unmutated Liturgy of my Church.... I will continue to *pray for the King and all that are in authority under him....* Inclination, as well as duty, confirms me in this purpose. *As long as I live*, therefore, yea, whilst *I have my being*, will I, with Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, proclaim, *God save the King!*²⁷

The *Pennsylvania Gazette* announced that on July 21, 1777, the library and other household items belonging to Jonathan Boucher would be auctioned.²⁸ Boucher was in fact quite correct. Other than himself, all of the other Anglican clergy from Maryland south remained remarkably quiet.

Preaching in Pennsylvania

Generally speaking, the Philadelphia clergy supported the revolutionary effort, at least at the beginning. Therefore, they preached openly about their support for the cause and did not have to resort to pamphlets. Born in Philadelphia and son of its one-time mayor, Jacob Duchè, rector of Christ Church and St. Peter’s in Philadelphia, at first enthusiastically espoused the Revolution.²⁹ In 1774, when the Continental Congress asked him to preach, he prayed God would enlighten King George “in preserving to a free people their undoubted birth-rights as men, and as Britons!” He also asked God to remove all those “who would seek to...gratify their own licentious desires at the expense of his subjects!”³⁰ Although God did not dictate any particular type of government, “yet the benevolent spirit of that gospel” opposed any form that does not have “the common good of mankind for its end and aim.”³¹ Rulers are “the Servants of the Public” and appointed for no other purpose than to be “a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well....” When this system is perverted, the scriptures “call upon the Man, the Citizen, the Christian of such a community to stand fast in that Liberty.”³² Although Paul enjoined us to submit to every lawful authority, “surely a submission to the unrighteous ordinances of unrighteous men, cannot be ‘for

²⁶ Ibid., 581-2.

²⁷ Ibid., 587-8. Nevertheless, he concluded with obvious bitterness, “I confess to you, there is something particularly ungrateful to my feelings, in being thus outlawed, and driven away from a country where I have so long lived with credit and comfort. When I but little deserved it, I experienced patronage and protection: it was only when I came to render the best offices in my power to your country that I met with the worst returns. For these efforts to do good, I have been attacked openly, and undermined secretly: ruined by the enemies of government, without being either pitied or praised by it’s [sic] friends.” (594-5).

²⁸ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 18 June 1777, 1.

²⁹ *Story and Humphreys’s Pennsylvania Mercury and Universal Advertiser*, 29 September 1775, 3; Letter from Bishop Terrick to wardens and vestry of Christ Church confirming Duchè’s election as rector, in *The Fulham Papers in the Lambeth Palace Library: American Colonial Section Calendar and Indexes*, ed. William Manross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 118.

³⁰ Jacob Duchè, *The Duty of Standing Fast in our Spiritual and Temporal Liberties: A Sermon Preached in Christ-Church, July 7th. Before the First Battalion of the City and Liberties of Philadelphia and Now Published at their Request* (Philadelphia: James Humphreys, 1775), ii. He used Galatians 5:1 as his text: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

³¹ Ibid., 12.

³² Ibid., 13.

the Lord's sake...."³³ He protested the abuses of the mother country: "Britain or rather some degenerate sons of Britain, and enemies of our common Liberty, still persist in embracing a delusion...."³⁴ He dedicated the printed sermon to George Washington, which *The Pennsylvania Journal* called a "very excellent discourse."³⁵

A week later, Duchè again preached before the Continental Congress, this time making no reference to the political controversies but delivering a panegyric to American accomplishments. For instance, he discussed the remarkable transformation brought to America. "The untutor'd savage roamed the wood, like a beast of prey, stranger to the comforts and advantages of mental culture, involved in Pagan darkness, with scarcely one ray of heavenly truth to irradiate the gloom of nature..... Such was the dark and dreary prospect, when Providence conducted our Forefathers to this new world."³⁶ For his services, the Congress elected him its first chaplain, and he willingly removed references to the king in the Book of Common Prayer following independence.³⁷ Yet although he supported the colonial grievances, Duchè stopped short of fully espousing independence.

When the British took possession of Philadelphia in 1777, he was imprisoned for his earlier pronouncements. At that point, he wrote an open letter to George Washington repudiating his earlier stance. "You are perfectly acquainted with the part I have taken in this present unhappy context." Yet he protested that he had never supported "an armed opposition." The movement toward resistance, however, "soon became too strong for my feeble efforts to resist." Against his better judgment, he was encouraged to preach "a sermon to one of the city battalions. I was pressed to publish this sermon, and reluctantly consented."³⁸ He claimed in the sermon he made clear that he did not support independence. He alleged he had continued to pray for the royal family, although threatened with violence. Finally, he expressed surprise when John Hancock asked him to serve as chaplain for the Congress which he agreed to, he maintained, to help protect the church. When it became clear to him that the Congress would accept nothing less than independence, however, he resigned his position, "and from that time, as far as my safety would permit, I have been uniformly opposed to all their measures."³⁹ Finally, he averred that the most "distinguished gentlemen" have removed themselves from the congress: "these are not the men, whom you engaged to serve. These are not the men, that America has chosen to represent them now."⁴⁰ He urged Washington to call for an immediate cease fire, claiming the cause was hopeless.

Although initially supportive of the colonial cause, in the end he fled to England.⁴¹ What apparently finally altered his position was the Declaration of Independence. Nevertheless, his open letter to Washington contains a good deal of mendacity. In April 1778, *The Pennsylvania Ledger* reported that Duchè was bound for London.⁴² In 1779, "sundry household goods" were auctioned, "late the property of the Rev. Mr. Duchè, now confiscated to the State...."⁴³

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 18-19.

³⁵ *The Pennsylvania Journal*, 12 July 1775, 3.

³⁶ Jacob Duchè, *The American Vine* (Philadelphia: James Humphreys, 1775), 17. He used Psalm 80:15 as his text: "And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself."

³⁷ Deborah Mathias Gough, *Christ Church, Philadelphia: The Nation's Church in a Changing City* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 138.

³⁸ *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 13 December 1777, 579.

³⁹ It should be noted that he remained chaplain for many months after July 1776, only later resigning his position.

⁴⁰ *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 13 December 1777, 580-81.

⁴¹ Mills, *Bishops by Ballots*, 152.

⁴² *Pennsylvania Ledger*, 8 April 1778, 3. Safe on the ship *Britannia*.

⁴³ *The Pennsylvania Packet*, 20 April 1779, 4.

Thomas Coombe, another Philadelphia native, at first strongly defended colonial liberties. Duchè's assistant at Christ Church, Coombe preached a sermon fully in support of colonial rights. He observed that his listeners were called upon as a "young rising State" to defend freedom by "open force."⁴⁴ He challenged his congregation: "if we be patriots...and anxious for a renewal of those golden days of concord which we once enjoyed—if we hope to stand our ground against that great multitude which cometh against us to enslave and bear [sic] us down...;—we must be zealous to maintain a deep and commanding sense of [God's] providence in government."⁴⁵ He concluded by observing "You are already convinced, that gratitude to God for his blessings is best realized by a manly defence of them..."⁴⁶ Ironically, then, Coombe, whom many regarded as a stalwart patriot, in the end could not bring himself to take the new oaths because they violated those he had previously taken to the crown. While he could fight for colonial rights, violating his sworn oath proved too much. Therefore, in 1778 after the British had abandoned Philadelphia, Coombe requested permission to go to England.⁴⁷

William Smith, Anglican priest, noted philosopher, and Provost of the College of Philadelphia—later to become the University of Pennsylvania—was circumspect about his views on American independence. He strongly defended colonial rights but became uneasy with calls for independence.⁴⁸ Before the outbreak of controversy, Smith clearly declared his support for British rule. In a 1757 sermon at Christ Church, he boasted, "Happy for us, we rejoice under milder influences! Our gracious Sovereign, thro' a long and prosperous reign, has never, in any instance, offered Violence to the rights of his subjects; nor permitted it in his servants."⁴⁹ As tensions between Britain and the colonies rose in 1775, however, Smith declared his support for colonial rights in another sermon at Christ Church. In the preface to the printed sermon, he yearned for the "Halcyon-days of harmony" and claimed he spoke for his fellow citizens "that the thought of an independence upon the Parent-country, or the least licentious opposition to its just interests, is

⁴⁴Thomas Coombe, *A Sermon Preached before the Congregation of Christ Church and St. Peter's Philadelphia on Thursday, July 20, 1775, Being the Day Recommended by the Honourable Continental Congress for the General Fast Throughout the Twelve United Colonies of North-America* (Philadelphia: John Dunlap, 1775), 8. Preaching on a day of fasting called by the continental Congress he used 2 Chronicles 20:11-13 on July 20, 1775 at Christ Church. ("Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee. And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.") Coombe was not a surprise defender of colonial rights since he once served as chaplain to the Marquis of Rockingham, an outspoken colonial supporter and author of the repeal of the Stamp Act in 1766.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 11-12. He particularly expressed concern about his city. "O Philadelphia, dear native city! There was a time, when thou were not more distinguished by the opulence and elegance of the improvements, than by the comeliness of thy inward structure! But now, thy inhabitants, like those of ancient Babylon, dwell carelessly in their habitations, thy masters of families have ceased to offer up their morning and evening sacrifice of prayer and praise, thy young men have far exceeded the bounds of decent and honourable amusement, and scarce are to be found, of either sex, seeing the general corruption..." (13).

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁷ Deborah Mathias Gough, *Christ Church, Philadelphia*, 140.

⁴⁸ Mills, *Bishops by Ballots*, 178.

⁴⁹ William Smith, *A Christian Soldier's Duty, the Lawfulness and Dignity of his Office, and the Importance of the Protestant Cause in the British Colonies, Stated and Explained: A Sermon Preached April 5, 1757 in Christ-Church, Philadelphia, to the First Battalion of his Majesty's Royal American Regiment, at the Request of their Colonel and Officers* (Philadelphia: James Chattin, 1757), 9. He used Luke 3:14 as his text on April 5, 1757. ("And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages")

utterly foreign to their thoughts...."⁵⁰ Nevertheless, in the sermon that concerned the construction of a rival altar that split the tribes of Israel,⁵¹ he compared the development of American institutions to the second altar, claiming that they in no way reduced the honor due the Mother Country. "What *high altars* have we built to alarm our British Israel: and why have the congregations of our brethren gathered themselves together against us? Why do their embattled hosts already cover our plains? Will they not examine our case, and listen to our plea?"⁵²

He noted that the British government claimed that the colonies had "departed from our former line of duty, and *refused* our homage at that great *altar* of British empire." The colonists' unwillingness to bend to "unconstitutional exactions, violated rights and mutilated charters" is "the strongest evidence of our veneration" to the false altar. The colonists, he claimed had been accused of "worship[ing] *idols*, instead of the true *divinity*."⁵³

Although seemingly supportive of the colonists' position, he did have qualms. He lamented the suffering that would result from the conflict: "great and deep distress about to pervade every corner of our land! These are melancholy prospects; and therefore you will feel with me the difficulties I now labor under."⁵⁴ Nevertheless, he despaired that no resolution could be found. "Is there no wisdom, no great and liberal plan of policy to re-unite its members, as the sole bulwark of liberty and Protestantism; rather than by their deadly strife to encrease the importance of those states that are foes to freedom, truth and harmony? To devise such a plan...is more glory than to hold lawless dominion over all the nations on the face of the earth!"⁵⁵ Although he wished this could be the case, it was not.

He then attacked the doctrine of non-resistance and argued how the church stood up against tyranny in the past, clearly alluding to the seven bishops' protest against King James II.⁵⁶ Yet the message was mixed. On the one hand, he supported the cause, but on the other he continued to hope for reconciliation. "You are now engaged in one of the grandest struggles to which freemen can be called. You are contending for what you conceive to be your constitutional rights, and for a final settlement of the terms upon which this country may be perpetually united to the Parent State."⁵⁷ This ambivalence caused some to consider him untrustworthy, even worse a hypocrite. His calls for moderation were unwelcomed as was his unwillingness to encourage the clergy to become partisan.⁵⁸ Others strongly suspected him, incorrectly, of penning a reply to Thomas Paine,

⁵⁰ William Smith, *A Sermon on the Present Situation of American Affairs Preached in Christ-Church, June 23, 1775 at the Request of the Officers of the Third Battalion of the City of Philadelphia and the District of Southwark* (Philadelphia: James Humphreys, 1775), ii. He preached on Joshua 22:22 on June 23, 1775. ("The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, he knoweth, and Israel he shall know; if it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the LORD, [save us not this day,]")

⁵¹ "They proceeded to reason with their brethren; and tell then that, so far from intending a separation either in government or religion, this altar was build with a direct contrary purpose." *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 12. "Whatever *American altars* we have built, far from intending to dishonour, have been raised with the express view to perpetuate the name and glory of that sacred altar, and feat of empire and liberty, which we left behind us, and wish to remain eternal, among our brethren, in the parent land!"

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁵⁸ William Smith to Bishop Terrick of London, 8 July 1775, William Manross, *The Fulham Papers in the Lambeth Palace Library: American Colonial Section Calendar and Indexes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 117.

entitled *Plain Truth*.⁵⁹ As a result of those suspicions, the government of Pennsylvania refused to appoint him head of the new State University of Pennsylvania, and instead he moved to Maryland to become founding president of Washington College. Yet he remained in America and eventually returned to Pennsylvania.

One Philadelphia clergyman unabashedly supported the Revolution. Also born in Philadelphia, William White, Duchè's successor at Christ Church, clearly accepted the outcome of the revolution and served as chaplain to the Continental Congress after Duchè's desertion. No sermons exist either in manuscript or print version of the sermons he preached during this period. Before the first convention of the newly created Episcopal Church, however, he proclaimed his belief that the Church should have no role in the affairs of government:

And here it may be proper to observe, that however high the claims of this spiritual community, they are not such as interfere with the rights of sovereignty, or with the duties of citizens and subjects. The holy scriptures have founded no temporal dominion on the dispensation of grace; nor erected any ecclesiastical authority that is to dictate to the civil. On the contrary, they beautifully harmonize with all the righteous views of government; and support the sanctions of law, with the more powerful sanctions of religion.⁶⁰

Yet even White acknowledged his debt to the English church: "a church which indeed makes no claim of jurisdiction here, but will we hope for ever retain our gratitude for past benefits, and among them for this, the greatest of all, our having received the sacred legacy of divine truth uncorrupted through her hands."⁶¹ White would become first Bishop of the Diocese of Pennsylvania and first Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. He also served as chaplain to the United States Senate.

While most of the Philadelphia clergy initially supported the Revolution, although at times ambivalently, the clergy from rural districts remained predominantly loyalists. Unlike their Philadelphia counterparts supported by the local and often partisan vestries, these clergy were funded by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel; they never regarded themselves as colonials nor did most expect to make a long-term commitment to Pennsylvania.⁶² Typical of these clergy, Irish-born Thomas Barton confronted demands after the Declaration of Independence that clergy no longer pray for the king. William White went along because he did not feel that it impinged on Christian duties. William Smith and Jacob Duchè also conformed. Barton, however, could not, based on the article that said no clergy could alter the Prayer Book. He therefore closed his church, St. James, Lancaster, rather than comply.⁶³ Required to abjure his previous oath to the king, Barton packed his bags and returned to Ireland in 1778.⁶⁴ Although Barton did print some

⁵⁹ Mills, *Bishops by Ballots*, 178. Thomas R. Adams argues convincingly that the pamphlet was written instead by James Chalmers of Kent County, Maryland. (Thomas R. Adams, "The Authorship and Printing of Plain Truth by 'Candidus.'" *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 49 (1955): 230-48).

⁶⁰ William White, *A Sermon Delivered in Christ Church on the 21st Day of June, at the Opening of the Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in the States of New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and South-Carolina* (Philadelphia: Hall and Sellers, 1786), 5.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 28-9.

⁶² James P. Myers, Jr., *The Ordeal of Thomas Barton: Anglican Missionary in the Pennsylvania Backcountry, 1755-1780* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University, 2010), 134-5.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 136-8. Barton probably had been under severe strain since his wife (the sister of David Rittenhouse) had recently died (*Pennsylvania Packet*, 4 July 1774, 2).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 147. The last service was 23 June 1776.

of his earlier sermons, he left no record of what he told his parishioners about his feelings toward the rebellion.

Daniel Batwell, another English missionary from the SPG, preached a sermon in 1775 to Pennsylvania militiamen at York calling for reconciliation. Commenting on the violence in Massachusetts, he observed, "The present situation is the most distressing that could have happened to beings endued with humanity. It is most replete with anguish, than even with danger.... Can we avoid praying that hearts so framed might be permitted to meet in equal and honourable union: neither conquering nor conquered, but as free citizens of the same realm, intitled to the same rights and privileges."⁶⁵

He placed the blame of the conflict squarely on the shoulders of the British government. "But my duty in this sacred place leads me no further than to bewail the miseries brought upon this country by those fatal misconceptions that have gone forth on the other side of the Atlantick."⁶⁶ He emphatically did not impugn the king, however, for the crisis but "those, who wickedly stand between the throne and the subject...."⁶⁷ Nevertheless, he called for negotiation, observing, "if nothing more is designed, than what is professed: if to preserve our rights and privileges be the sole aim of the Continental Congress...; if no sparks of disloyalty, no desire of change, no intentions of removing the ancient land marks, lie concealed beneath the fair outside of public good; I say, if this be the case...then we have a good cause, and may expect the blessing of Heaven upon our endeavours."⁶⁸ Wishfully, he attributed to the Congress "the collected wisdom and the general voice of the people, [which] breathes a firm and manly, but yet a moderate and reconciling spirit...." In conclusion he prayed that God "will bless our rightful Sovereign King George the Third, and inspire him with wisdom to discern and pursue the true interest of all his subjects: That a speedy end may be put to the discord between Great-Britain and the American Colonies without further effusion of blood...."⁶⁹

Nonetheless, Batwell drew the line when it came to condemning the king in the Declaration; he could not tolerate independence from the king. Thus, he refused to remove prayers for the king in the liturgy. As a result, a mob dragged him from his horse, assaulted him with stones and dirt, and threw him into the river at York.⁷⁰ Later, another gang accosted him, incarcerating him in prison where he languished for many months. Once released in ill health, he returned to England where the crown awarded him a lucrative living in compensation.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Daniel Batwell, *A Sermon, Preached at York-town, before Captain Morgan's and Captain Price's Companies of Rifle-men, on Thursday, July 20, 1775. Being the Day Recommended by the Honourable Continental Congress for a General Fast Throughout the Twelve United Colonies of North America* (Philadelphia: John Dunlap, 1775), 11-12. He used 1 Kings, 8:40 as his text on July 20, 1775 ("That they may fear thee all the days that they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers.").

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 16-17. He continued, "For the blessing of legal, and equal Liberty we pray; and tho' our prayers are sincere, yet because of our tender attachment to our parent state, grief mixes with our devotions: For the same liberty our fellow citizens are to fight; and they will surely do it, with steady tho' reluctant courage---with hearts that wish to save, in the same moment that they are obliged to destroy."

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 19. "Remember that they mean to hazard every thing dear for the recovery of our rights, and the moment those are recovered to sheathe the sword."

⁷⁰ Myers, *Barton*, 138.

⁷¹ Cynthia Dubin Edelberg, *Jonathan Odell, Loyalist Poet of the American Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 174.

Preaching in New York

The Anglican clergy in New England, never popular, kept their heads down. Off to an inauspicious start, the first Anglican chapel in New England, King's Chapel was greeted by riots in 1686. Nevertheless, the number of parishes had grown in competition with the Congregationalists:

the religion of the church of England... seems to gain ground, and to become more fashionable every day. A church has been lately erected at Cambridge, within sight of the college; which has greatly alarmed the Congregationalists, who consider it as the most fatal stroke, that could possibly have been leveled at their religion. The building is elegant, and the minister of it (the reverend Mr. Apthorp) is a very amiable young man of shining parts, great learning, and pure and engaging manners.⁷²

Nothing was heard from East Apthorp, first rector of Christ Church, Cambridge, or any other Anglican priest, either in sermons or in print, about the revolution. Apthorp left for England before hostilities broke out. King's Chapel closed in 1776 with the onset of the Revolution and reopened as a Unitarian chapel at the end of the war.

In New York, on the other hand, none of the clergy supported independence, and most were outspoken critics. Although Anglicanism was the established church of the colony, most of the clergy were supplied by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.⁷³ As the rift between the colonies and the mother country swelled, William Smith, Jonathan Boucher, and Myles Cooper, president of King's College from 1763 to 1775, had agreed to work together "in joint action" to support the Anglican church, but Boucher, under pressure at home, backed out, as did Smith, because Philadelphia clergy supported the colonial cause. So it fell to New Yorkers to defend the church. Yet the circumstances in that colony, extremely hostile to loyalists, required clerical defenders of Britain to uphold their position anonymously rather than from the pulpit.

Cooper published a series of anonymous pamphlets opposed to independence. His *Friendly Address to all Reasonable Americans*, for instance, discussed the benefits that the colonists enjoyed and could continue to enjoy. "But a far different prospect, at this time, presents itself to view. The darkness of a rising tempest is beginning to overspread our land.... It is high time therefore to awaken the thoughtless to a sense of their danger, and to think of providing for our common safety."⁷⁴ Supporting the high church doctrine of passive obedience, he argued that it was a Christian duty to obey higher powers. "The ill consequences of open disrespect to government are so great, that no misconduct of the administration can justify or excuse it." The Christian must avoid civil disobedience and "to be *subject to the higher powers*, of whatever character, *for conscience's sake*. No tyrant was ever more despotic and cruel, than Nero...and yet to the government of this cruel and despotic tyrant, and his corrupt ministry, peaceable submission was enjoined by an Apostle." He admitted that, "Were the Americans actually in a state of

⁷² Burnaby, *Travels through the Middle Settlements*, 179. The house built by Apthorp now sits on the Harvard campus.

⁷³ "The established religion is that of the church of England, there being fixed churches in this province with stipends...annexed to each by law. The clergy are twelve in number who, exclusive of what they acquire by the establishment above-mentioned, or by contributions, receive, as missionaries from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 50 l. sterling each" (Ibid., 141).

⁷⁴ [Myles Cooper], *A Friendly Address to All Reasonable Americans, on the Subject of our Political Confusions: in which the Necessary Consequences of Violently Opposing the King's Troops, and of a General Non-importation are Fairly Stated* (New York: James Rivington, 1774), 4. Evans attributes the pamphlet to Cooper, although others identify the author as Thomas Bradbury Chandler, another New York Anglican priest.

oppression, it would shew their wisdom and prudence, to submit with patience to their present condition, rather than to provoke the power that oppresses them, without some fair prospect of obtaining relief," but the American colonists have the least grounds to complain.⁷⁵

He argued that the Tea Tax was certainly not onerous or illegal, but the agitators had swept up emotions to a fever pitch over it. "Now the rebellious Republicans, these hairbrained [sic] fanaticks, as mad and distracted as the Anabaptists of Munster, are the people whom the American Colonies wish to support!" He could not imagine why intelligent men could "*think* of espousing *such* a cause, and of *risking* every thing that is dear, *against such inexpressible odds*—in support of a scheme which all of us, but a few Presbyterians and Independents, in our hours of reflection, if we have any, must despise and abhor."⁷⁶

Cooper additionally published a poem on *The Patriots of North America*:

The Men deprav'd, who quit their Sphere,
Without Remorse, or Shame, or Fear,
And boldly rush, they know not where;
Seduc'd, alas! by fond Applause,
Of gaping Mobs, and loud Huzzas.
Unconscious all, of nobler Aim,
Than sordid Pelf, or vulgar Fame:
Men indefin'd, by any Rules,
Ambiguous Things, half Knaves, half Fools,
Whom God denied, the Talents great,
Requir'd to make a Knave, complete....⁷⁷

Wild Mobs, to mad Sedition prone,

⁷⁵ Ibid., 5-6.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 31.

⁷⁷ [Myles Cooper], *The Patriots of North-America: a Sketch. With Explanatory Notes* (New York: James Rivington, 1775), 3. Other examples of his wit and sarcasm include:

Struts like Punch "swears, and roars,
And calls his Betters, Rogues and Whores."
Like Morpheus, close the People's Eyes,
Vile, false, pernicious Doctrines preach,
Rebellion rank, and Treason teach,
Malignant o'er the Land they crawl,
And wither, blast, and poison all. (5)

Shall we applaud, this vagrant Crew,
Whose wretched Jargon, crude and new,
Whose Impudence, and Lies delude
The harmless, ign'rant Multitude:
To Varlets, weak, impure, unjust,
The Reins of Government, entrust.
Will Ragamuffins bold like these,
Protect our Freedom, Peace, or Ease?
Ah! Surely no, it cannot be,
These are false Sons of Liberty. (6)

And Liberty licentious grown,
Must make, the fatal Hour draw near,
Of civil Discord's wild Career,
Must cause, one general Anarchy,
Must end in Loss of Liberty: And this free Country soon become,
Like Carthage, Florence, Greece and Rome,
Unless some God, should interpose,
And save it, from domestic Foes.⁷⁸

His concluding judgment on the rebels, “Cowards when sober, bold when drunk...,”⁷⁹ would clearly not be suitable from the pulpit. Yet Cooper, under the shield that anonymity provided, could express his disdain far more directly and forcefully in print.

Not long after printing this piece, Cooper sailed for England on May 24, 1775.⁸⁰ Although no evidence exists that Cooper preached in the colonies about the revolution, he certainly did once he arrived in England. Speaking at the University of Oxford on December 13, 1777, using Psalm 7:9 as his text,⁸¹ he claimed that Britain

is a pattern to the World, of every religious, moral and political Accomplishment.... Our Civil Constitution, which is fair and beautiful in Theory, is admirably fitted for the Regulation of an orderly, if not for the Restraint of an unruly people. If it be wanting in Energy, the defect arises from principles that are friendly, I had almost said partial, to Liberty: And it must be granted, on all hands, that no subjects of any government are so free from arbitrary controll [sic], or enjoy such constitutional Rights, as the subjects of Britain.⁸²

Turning to the recent unpleasantness in the colonies, he claimed, “that which will go farthest in Excusing a Revolt, is the Tyranny of Rulers. But the Rebellion of our Colonies was planned and fomented, by its Leaders, without any Pretense of this nature. The Colonists were not in a state of Oppression; nor could they be made to *believe* that they were.” Rebels presented lists of “pretended” grievances. “Notwithstanding their Complaints,” he argued, “the Americans knew, and Most of them were willing to confess, That they were the happiest of all People.” He blamed those with republican spirits for the turmoil. “That these persons were persuaded to put themselves under the Direction both of ambitious and needy Adventurers; who, by raising a Storm, were in hopes of advancing their own Interests; – the former, by getting command of the Vessel; – the latter, by bearing plunder from the Wreck....” He cited—although not by name—the repeal of the Stamp

⁷⁸ Ibid., 12.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 15.

⁸⁰ “New York, May 29. On Wednesday last, Dr. Myles Cooper, President of the college of this city, sailed for Bristol in the Exeter, having remained for near two weeks before on Board the Kingfisher, commanded by Captain Montague, where he thought fit to shelter himself from the resentment of a people, who consider him as the writer of several pieces highly injurious to the liberties of America,----The Rev. Dr. Chandler, and the Rev. Mr. Cook, go passengers with him.” *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 1 June 1775.

⁸¹ “Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.”

⁸² Myles Cooper, *National Humiliation and Repentance Recommended, and the Causes of the Present Rebellion in America Assigned, in a Sermon Preached before the University of Oxford, on Friday, December 13, 1776 being the Day Appointed by Proclamation for a General Fast* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1777), 7.

Act as weakness of government "yielding to popular Clamours."⁸³ Despite efforts at reconciliation, "Alas! Rebellion is like the deaf adder, and regards not the voice of the charmer: it is ever obstinate, and will listen to no entreaties."⁸⁴ He observed that

even in those revolted Colonies there are still Thousands and Ten-thousands of his Majesty's Subjects, of inflexible Loyalty, who have been induced by no Menaces or Persecutions, to bow the knee to the BAAL of INDEPENDENCY.... In this number include a large Proposition of the men of Property, the Greater Part of the Members of the Church of England, and, in Several of the colonies, all its Clergy, without Exception.... These, from the Beginning, have been the objects of Republican Rage, and fanatic Malignity."⁸⁵

The next logical leader of the Anglican clergy in New York, Boston-born Samuel Auchmuty, rector of Trinity Church, grieved the revolutionary fervor in the colony. As British ships approached New York, he lamented, "I must own I was born among the saints and rebels, but it was my misfortune. Where are your Congresses now? What say Hancock, Adams, and all their rebellious followers? Are they still bold. I know not. We have lately been plagued with a rascally Whig Mob here, but they have effected nothing."⁸⁶ Once Washington had taken New York, Auchmuty resigned his position and retired to New Jersey, where he subsequently died. His body was brought back to New York and interred in St. Paul's churchyard. Thus, unlike a number of his fellows who opposed the revolution, he remained in America. He left no sermons behind to indicate that he had vocally opposed independence.

Charles Inglis replaced Auchmuty once British troops recaptured New York in 1777. Before he became rector, he had already produced a pamphlet opposed to the Revolution. Inglis, born in Donegal, Ireland, became the most successful propagandist, along with Samuel Seabury. They both published through James Rivington, who accepted material from both sides in order to be fair and balanced. Inglis wrote as a New York farmer and Seabury as a Winchester farmer.⁸⁷ When Paine produced *Common Sense*, Inglis hurriedly produced a counter-argument against what he called the "most artful, insidious and pernicious pamphlets [he] had ever met with." Paine availed himself of the passions of the times and "under the mask of friendship to America under the present calamitous situation of affairs, he gives vent to his own private resentment and ambition, and recommends a scheme which must infallibly prove ruinous."⁸⁸ Accusing Paine of treachery, Inglis argued that "the Author of the pamphlet, falsely and absurdly entitled *Common Sense*, is not only chargeable with a large portion of the above defects..., but also with the further design of rendering the British empire asunder. To accomplish his goal of creating an American Republic, "he would persuade the colonists to renounce their allegiance to our true and lawful liege sovereign King George III—plunge themselves into a tedious, bloody, and most expensive war with Great Britain—and risk their lives, liberties and property on the dubious event of that war."⁸⁹ The

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

⁸⁶ "Dr. Auchmuty's Letter to Capt. Montresor, Chief Engineer at Boston," *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 27 May 1775, 218. The letter was dated 19 April 1775 from New York.

⁸⁷ William H. Nelson, *The American Tory*, 73-4.

⁸⁸ [Charles Inglis], *The True Interest of Americans Impartially Stated, in Certain Strictures on a Pamphlet Intituled Common Sense by an American* (Philadelphia: James Humphreys, 1776), v-vi. Inglis found no common sense but "common *phrenzy*" and suggested the pamphlet would "soon sink in oblivion."

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

remainder of the pamphlet consisted of a detailed refutation of Paine's arguments and a list of reasons that the colonies should remain loyal to Great Britain.

Soon after his arrival at New York, Washington planned to attend Trinity Church; on the morning before the service began, one of his generals called at the Rector's house and left word that "he came to inform the Rector that General Washington would be at Church, and would be glad if the violent prayers for the King and Royal Family were omitted." This message was brought to Inglis, and he paid no heed to it. On seeing the General not long after, he remonstrated against the unreasonableness of his request and told him, "that it was in his power to shut up their Churches, but by no means in his power to make the Clergy depart from their duty."⁹⁰

On another Sunday large numbers of rebel troops entered the church carrying muskets and banging drums. Although many feared that when Inglis got to the prayers for the crown they might shoot him, they threatened but refrained. Thereafter the vestry consented to shut up both Trinity Church and St. Paul's Chapel. When a general asked Inglis for the keys so that they could conduct their own services, he refused and left for Long Island. Later when General Howe took New York, Inglis returned to find his home had been looted.⁹¹

Inglis apparently preached against the Revolution once the British had gained control of New York, although the sermons themselves are no longer extant. One contributor to the *Independent Gazetteer* complained that Inglis by "forgetting, or stifling through bigotry and resentment, the divine precepts of your mission, you, at an early period of our struggle, took a very active and vindictive part against your country—besides the many false and scurrilous pieces you write ...in conjunction with your brother apostates Cooper and Vardil..." The writer claimed that in one sermon Inglis "expressly and explicitly called on the British grenadiers, to 'cut the Gordian knot,' or in other words, the throats, all who were opposed to the high-church government you laboured to establish."⁹²

Once the war ended, Inglis left New York for England. Before leaving he preached a final sermon to his congregation at Trinity. "Through the disposal of an All-wise Providence, you will soon be under new Rulers, and a new Government. When this [sic] situated, let me admonish you to shew the same fidelity that you shewed to your former Government." He continued, "it is the duty of Christians to be subject to, and obey the civil power, not only for wrath but conscience sake..."; he assumed because they had followed their consciences in the past, "I flatter myself that you will continue the same line of conduct." He persisted in his loyalty to the king: "yet, were I to remain here, and transfer my allegiance to the new Government; I do assure you I would serve and support that Government with the same fidelity, that I served the Government under which I have hitherto lived." This duty was required of all Christians, "and on no other principle can any Government or society subsist."⁹³ After a short period in London, Inglis returned to North America, becoming first bishop of Nova Scotia.

Samuel Seabury, born and educated in Connecticut, was perhaps the most significant of those New Yorkers⁹⁴ who opposed the Revolution, if for no other reason than that he remained in America after the Revolution. His criticism took the form not only of pamphlets published

⁹⁰ *Pennsylvania Journal*, 2 July 1783, 2. From a letter sent by Anglican missionaries to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel quoted in *Lloyd's Evening Post* on 2 June 1777.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* Auchmuty found that his house had been sacked as well.

⁹² *Independent Gazetteer*, 23 August 1783, 2.

⁹³ Quoted in [Charles Inglis], *Remarks on a Late Pamphlet, Entitled, A Vindication of Governor Parr, and his Counsel, &c. By a Consistent Loyalist* (London: J. Stockdale, [1784]), 39-40.

⁹⁴ Although he spent much of his life in Connecticut, during the time of the revolutionary fervor he served as rector of St. Peter's Westchester.

anonymously, but several sermons in which he openly attacked those who supported independence. In 1774, Seabury began his campaign against opponents of British rule. "Does not every peddler in politics, who calls himself a *son of liberty*, take the license of censuring and condemning the conduct of the *King*, the *Lords*, and the *Commons*, the supreme sovereign authority of the whole British Empire? Blush then at your own effrontery, in endeavouring to intimidate your countrymen from exercising this Right with regard to the Congress."⁹⁵ He challenged the claims that the British government had usurped colonial rights. "The right of colonists to exercise a legislative power, is no natural right. They derive it...from the indulgence or grant of the parent state.... To talk of being liege subjects to King George, while we disavow the authority of parliament is another piece of whiggish nonsense."⁹⁶ He reviewed the charters of various colonies to show that they did not have the power that the Continental Congress claimed for them. His opponents had argued that the charters acknowledged no right of Parliament over the colonies. With a twinkle in his own eye, he rejoined, "A person diseased with the jaundice sees no colour but yellow. Party heat, the fever of liberty, may for any thing I know, vitiate the mind, as much as jaundice does the eyes."⁹⁷

In a second pamphlet of 1774, addressed to the New York delegation to the Continental Congress, he wondered if they expected Congress to try to breach the divide or "revile and trample on the authority of Parliament, and make our breach with the parent state a thousand times more irreparable than it was before?" He claimed the actions of Congress "all tend, under cover of strong and lamentable cries about liberty, and the rights of Englishmen, to degrade and contravene the authority of the British parliament over the British dominions.... Not a word of peace and reconciliation, --- not even a soothing expression: --- No concessions are offered on our part, --- nor even a possibility of their treating with us left."⁹⁸

Positing that the delegates were unrepresentative of the opinion of New Yorkers and had not been approved by the New York assembly, he suggested that they instead attempted to twist public opinion in their direction:

Noise and blustering may make you appear of some consequence in a tavern or ale-house: Loud cries of liberty may catch the ignorant, and beguile the unwary: *Tar and feathers* may silence the pusillanimous: But if you would rise into real dignity, and merit the esteem of your fellow subjects, in settling the present distracted state of our country, you must obtain a knowledge of the first principles at least, of civil government; from *them* you must deduct your reasonings; to *them* you must conform your conduct.⁹⁹

Finally, he argued that the arguments of the Congress were illogical. "To talk of submission to the *King* of Great-Britain, while we disclaim submission to the Parliament of Great-Britain, is idle and ridiculous. It is a distinction made by the American Republicans to serve their own

⁹⁵ [Samuel Seabury], *A View of the Controversy between Great Britain and her Colonies: Including a Mode of Determining their Present Disputes, Finally and Effectively: and of Preventing all Future Contentions in a Letter to the Author of a Full Vindication of the Measures of Congress, from the Calumnies of their Enemies*. By A. W. Farmer (New York: James Rivington, 1774), 6.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁹⁸ [Samuel Seabury], *The Congress Canvassed or an Examination into the Conduct of the Delegates, at their Grand Convention, Held in Philadelphia, Sept. 1, 1774, Addressed to the Merchants of New-York* by A. W. Farmer ([New York]: [James Rivington], 1774), 5.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

rebellious purposes, ---- a gilding with which they have enclosed the pill of sedition, to entice the unwary colonists to swallow it the more readily down....”¹⁰⁰

Immediately after the Congress recessed, Seabury hit the presses again, this time castigating the Congress for dissolving without any attempt to bring about peace.¹⁰¹ Seabury identified himself as a farmer whose interests coincided with other farmers of New York. If the non-import and export agreements were to be enforced, he foresaw “clamours, discord, confusion, mobs, riots, insurrections, rebellions, in Great-Britain, Ireland, and the West Indies.” The agreements sought to bring chaos to Britain and Ireland and West Indies, although not to the North American colonies. “Shall we then revenge ourselves upon them? Shall we endeavour to starve them into a compliance with our humours? Shall we, without any provocation, tempt or force them, into riots and insurrections, which must be attended with the ruin of many---probably with the death of some of them?”¹⁰² He foresaw that the embargoes would also hurt the colonists because they would be unable to procure essential goods from other sources.¹⁰³ He also argued that the colonists would not be able to sell their own goods, especially if the British navy established a blockade.¹⁰⁴ “But without selling your produce, you can neither pay the one, nor the other; the consequence will be that after a while, a process of law will be commenced against you, and your farms must be sold by execution; and then you will have to pay not only principle [sic] and interest, but Sheriffs fees, Lawyers fees, and a long list of *et ceteras*.”¹⁰⁵ He concluded by pledging that “Anarchy and Confusion, Violence and Oppression, distress my country; and I must, and *will* speak. Though the open violation of the laws may escape punishment, through the pusillanimity of the magistrates, he shall feel the lash of my pen: and he shall feel it again and again, till remorse shall sting his guilty conscience, and shame cover his opprobrious head.”¹⁰⁶

A fourth pamphlet followed shortly thereafter, again castigating the New York representatives to the Congress and by extension the entire Congress. “When not even the *appearance* of decency is regarded? When nothing seems to be consulted, but how to perplex, irritate, and affront, the *British Monarchy, Parliament, Nation and King*? When every scheme that tends to *peace*, is branded with *ignominy*; as being the machinations of slavery! When nothing is called Freedom but Sedition! Nothing Liberty but Rebellion!”¹⁰⁷ The arguments reproduced those of his earlier pamphlets although the number of italicized words increased significantly.

Once the British had gained control of New York, Seabury felt free to speak openly from the pulpit about his views. Preaching before British troops in 1777 using 1 Peter 2:17 as his text,¹⁰⁸ he like the other preachers defended obligations to those in authority: “all Men owe to the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 26.

¹⁰¹ [Samuel Seabury], *Free Thoughts on the Proceedings of the Continental Congress, Held at Philadelphia Sept. 5, 1774: Wherein Their Errors are Exhibited, Their Reasonings Confuted, and Their Fatal Tendency of Their Non-importation, Non-consumption Measures, are Laid Open to the Plainest Understandings: and the Only Means Pointed Out for Preserving and Securing our Present Happy Constitution: in a Letter to the Farmers and Other Inhabitants of North America in General and to Those of the Province of New-York in Particular by a Farmer* ([New York]: [James Rivington], 1774) , 3.

¹⁰² Ibid., 5.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 17.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. (Apostrophes lacking in original.)

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 21-22.

¹⁰⁷ [Samuel Seabury], *An Alarm to the Legislature of the Province of New-York, Occasioned by the Present Disturbances, in North America: Addressed to the Honourable Representatives in the General Assembly Convened* (New York: James Rivington, 1775), 3-4.

¹⁰⁸ “Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.”

Government under which God's Providence hath placed them...due and peaceable Submission to that Authority under which they live; whether it be exercised by Kings as Supreme, or by Governors sent by them, and acting by their Authority...."¹⁰⁹ Suggesting that the colonists were antinomians, "[t]hese Cautions and Injunctions had become highly necessary, to wipe off those Aspersions and ill Impressions which *the Ignorance of foolish Men* had brought upon the Christian Religion, by pretending that their Christian Liberty set them free from their Subjection to civil Government:—That they were Children of God, and were not to be kept in Thralldom by the Ordinances of Men."¹¹⁰ It became necessary, he argued, "to discountenance and discourage every Sentiment that was unfriendly to Order and good Government, that no unjust Suspicions might lie against the Christian Religion upon that Account."¹¹¹ Some, he said, believed that they could judge the conduct of those put in authority over them. "But are we always competent Judges of the good or evil Conduct of those whom God's Providence hath placed over us? Is it certain that every Thing is *right* that *we* think *right*; Do not our Passions and Prejudices ofen [sic] mislead us in Judgment we form of Men in public Stations?"¹¹² If civil government is instituted by God, "how real must be their Crime, how atrocious their Wickedness, who, in Contempt of every Obligation, have excited, and still support and carry on, the present Rebellion against the legal Government of the British Empire to which they belonged!"¹¹³ He claimed that they had once lived comfortably and at peace under the authority of the king. Yet now,

[h]ow we have been oppressed and harassed by Congresses, Committees and Bandities of armed Men, none of you can be ignorant. The cruel Efforts of their lawless Tyranny many of you yet feel in the Distress of your Families, the Destruction of your Property, the Imprisonment of your Friends, and the Banishment of your Persons from your formerly peaceful and quiet Dwellings.---These are the *proper*, the *genuine* Fruits of Rebellion, no wonder then that God should so earnestly, so strongly inculcate upon us Obedience to civil Government....¹¹⁴

He argued that the rebellion is totally unjustified. "The Pretenses also for this Rebellion were frivolous and groundless.—*Great-Britain* asked nothing unreasonable, nothing but what a good Subject would have given unasked."¹¹⁵ Note that he is not endorsing passive obedience here. He argued that the rebellion was totally unjustified, not necessarily sinful. "The present Rebellion therefore is founded in *Impiety*, *Ingratitude* and *Falsehood*, and is supported by Injustice, Oppression, Cruelty and Tyranny."¹¹⁶

A few weeks later, Seabury preached on Brotherly Love using Psalm 33:1.¹¹⁷ Most of the sermon dealt with that topic until the end, when he interjected the zinger:

¹⁰⁹ 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 in Camp at King's Bridge on Sunday the 28th Sept. 1777* (New York: H. Gaine, 1777), 5-6.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 11.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ "Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright."

The royal psalmist, the author of the text, had from his own experience a perfect knowledge of the fatal tendency of indulging the bitterness of malice and revenge: He had been persecuted by Saul with the most implacable fury. He had seen and felt the evil effects of discord and contention: he had long viewed, and lamented over his country torn to pieces with party and faction and languishing under all the horrors and distresses of civil war....¹¹⁸

His allusion to “discord and contention” would have been very clear to his audience. Shortly thereafter, he received appointment as chaplain to one of the royal regiments.

Once the British had pulled out of New York, Seabury retreated to Long Island and eventually moved to Connecticut. He never fled the colonies, however, and became first bishop of Connecticut.¹¹⁹ Throughout all of his writings and sermons, he never brought up the inviolability of oaths taken to the king which those of his colleagues had cited to defend their decision to quit the former colonies and return to the Mother country, nor did he emphasize the notion of passive obedience.

Another Anglican priest who could not speak from the pulpit about his views on the Revolution but certainly spoke his mind in pamphlets was Thomas Bradbury Chandler, rector of St. John's Church, Elizabethtown, New Jersey, and a missionary from the SPG. In 1774 he published the *American Querist*, in which he posed a series of one hundred questions without answers, but of course the answers were obvious. For instance, he had wondered, “Whether the *Sons of liberty* have ever *willingly* allowed to others the liberty of thinking and acting for themselves; and whether any other liberty than that of doing as *they* shall direct, is to be expected during their administration?”¹²⁰ The last question asked, “Whether it be not a matter both of worldly wisdom and indispensable Christian duty, in every *American*, to *fear the Lord and the King, and to meddle not with them that are given to change?*”¹²¹

In his pamphlet critiquing the Continental Congress in 1775, Chandler pointed out that the Congress had warned Quebec about losing freedom of the press when in fact the Congress had done the same to those who criticized their actions. “[E]ven *the Sons of Liberty*, of the lower and more illiberal classes, are perpetually running counter to the sentiments of the *Congress* in striving to intimidate writers, and printers, and readers, and speakers, and thinkers, on the side of the government.”¹²² He argued that the acts of Congress were illegal, that the representatives went well beyond their respective charges.¹²³ He then claimed that the Congress had usurped powers, that “an *American House of Lords* is in agitation; in which the members must have the same rights, privileges and honours, which the *English constitution* has given to the members of the House of Lords in the Mother Country.” He claimed that they sought to be independent of the crown as well as from the people who elected them. Suggesting that they sought a perpetual tyranny, he claimed that they required to “continue for life: and according to the English constitution, their rights and

¹¹⁸ Samuel Seabury, *A Discourse on Brotherly Love, Preached before the Honorable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons, of Zion Lodge at St. Paul's Chapel on the Festival of St. John the Baptist, One Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy-seven* (New York: Hugh Gaine, 1777), 16.

¹¹⁹ Scottish Bishops consecrated him along with William White of Pennsylvania and Samuel Provoost of New York. English bishops had refused because the three would not take the oath of Supremacy.

¹²⁰ Thomas Bradbury Chandler, *An American Querist: or, Some Questions Proposed Relative to the Present Disputes Between Great Britain, and Her Colonies. By a North-American* (New York: James Rivington, 1774), 27.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹²² [Thomas Bradbury Chandler], *What Think Ye of the Congress Now? Or, an Inquiry, How Far Americans are Bound to Abide and Execute the Decisions of the Late Congress?* (New York: James Rivington, 1775), 4.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 8.

titles must descend to their heirs, lawfully begotten, and from them again, to their heirs, forever and ever."¹²⁴ Like other missionaries from the SPG, Chandler fled the colony at the outbreak of hostilities.¹²⁵

Whenever possible, these Anglican clergy presented their views about the Revolution and independence in the way they felt most accustomed, through sermons from the pulpit. Both opponents and supporters of colonial rights forcefully expressed their views in this way. Some clergy, however, did not always have that means available, those clergy who opposed the Revolution in areas where it had strong support. They had to resort to pamphlets to communicate their views without fear of bodily injury. Those pamphlets often expressed the sentiments that they would have presented from the pulpit, but often in stronger terms using satire or barbed wit, not usually considered appropriate for the pulpit. One does get the sense that Myles Cooper and Samuel Seabury, for instance, both enjoyed writing those pamphlets without the usual restraints and decorum of a sermon.

Conclusion: Depart or Remain?

Place of birth seems to have had a significant influence in the decision to leave or remain in America. Those clergy associated with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel had come to the colonies to fill vacant positions in often rural parishes. They had not been born in America, and their loyalties never deserted Britain. The oaths to remain loyal to the king taken at ordination appear to be the sticking point with many of these foreign-born clergymen. The other major stumbling block stemmed from commands to alter the language of the Book of Common Prayer. Some of these clergy were vehemently unsympathetic to the colonists' cause, in particular Jonathan Boucher, Charles Inglis, and Myles Cooper. A few of the clergy associated with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, on the other hand, were more or less sympathetic to the colonists, including Daniel Batwell and Thomas Bradbury Chandler. Nevertheless, they decided to leave in the end because they could not accept the new loyalty oath or alterations in the Prayer Book. Clearly they had not formed a strong enough attachment to America to overcome these objections.

Being born in America, however, did not always guarantee support of the Revolution. Thomas Coombe deserted the country of his birth during the Revolution. Only William White, William Smith, Samuel Auchmuty, and Samuel Seabury overcame any reservations in this regard. White sturdily supported the Revolution, and Smith more tepidly. On the other hand, Auchmuty and Seabury tremendously opposed the rebels' position—Seabury virulently so in both sermons and pamphlets—but nevertheless both remained. It seems, however, their ties to America, the place of their birth, overcame their scruples, although in Auchmuty's case it might have just been plain lethargy. Seabury's attack on the Revolution even exceeded Myles Cooper's condemnations; yet he died in the place of his birth, Connecticut. Although both Auchmuty and Seabury had strong reservations about the loyalty oaths and alterations in the prayer book, they did not seem strong enough to incite them to follow others to Britain. Jacob Duchè presents something of an enigma since his actions seem totally at odds with his letter to George Washington. For instance, he crossed out the prayers to the king in his own Prayer Book. Perhaps his stay in a British prison changed his tune.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹²⁵ Chandler did eventually return to New Jersey, accepting the invitation of his former congregation to return as its rector. His daughter had remained in New Jersey, and the offer allowed him to reunite with her. Suffering from cancer, he was unable to take up his duties. He remained in the rectory, however, and died there in 1790.