

The Lord is a Man of War, The God of Love and Peace: The Association Debate, Philadelphia 1747-1748

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The formation of the Association, Pennsylvania's first volunteer militia, has been the subject of much historical interest. Much of this attention is due to its founder, Benjamin Franklin. However, this unique Association would be noteworthy even without this affiliation with a great man. Pennsylvania was the only colony that had to decide whether to form a volunteer militia, since all the other colonies required military training. A political entity whose legislative body was dominated by pacifists, Pennsylvania's situation was unparalleled in the mainland American colonies and the world to date, even until the present day. Quaker legislators refused to provide Pennsylvania with a military force to defend the colony in King George's War (1744-1748). Nevertheless, the colony of Pennsylvania organized and equipped a substantial military force without the assistance of the government. Further, the formation of the Association led to an unprecedented debate over the justification for war and the obligation of the state toward its citizens.

Quaker Pennsylvania may have had a unique political situation but the solution to this quandary, a voluntary militia, and the contention over this organization was typically American. Volunteer military units are as fundamental to the American military tradition as the compulsory militia. Further, the American people have always had an ambiguous view of the need to maintain and use military force and have a long tradition of friction over this subject. One inspiration for this reinterpretation of the Association is Michael Zuckerman's contention that the Middle Atlantic region, which included Pennsylvania, was more representative than either the South or New England, of what America would become due to its ethno-religious diversity and the political pluralism required to resolve dilemmas created by this heterogeneity.¹

Neither the Association nor this debate would have even been necessary if the British Empire had not been at war. By the close of 1747, the British government had been fighting the Spanish since 1739 and the French since 1744. Unlike the other colonies, particularly those in New England, Pennsylvania was unaffected until the summer of 1747. Then privateers began taking ships and attacking settlements on the Delaware River. The threat to Philadelphia, if not to the whole colony, was real. Philadelphia's prosperity was based on commerce. Philadelphians had always relied on the "Length and Difficulty of our Bay & River," for their security; however, now "our Enemies in all probability are but too acquainted with both." The Provincial Council attributed this familiarity to "Enemies coming into the Port of Philadelphia

under the sanction of flags of truce." The Council then recounted an incident that illustrated this vulnerability. "Some English Men . . . some of whom we have been inform'd have formerly dwelt in this City . . . had the boldness to come up in a Pilot Boat within about eighteen Miles of the Town of New Castle, that there plunder'd two Plantations, bound & abused the Owner of one of them & wounded his Wife with a Muskett ball, carrying off Negroes & Effects to a considerable value." The Council implored the colonial Assembly to act. "The Boldness of our Enemies and the Knowledge they have gain'd of our Bay and River, gives us great Reason to apprehend an Attack on this City unless some Provision be speedily made to discourage them from the attempt or to disappoint them in it." The Council believed that these privateers would "continue their Depredations in the Spring." However, the Assembly refused to act and justified this inaction in a letter to the Council. "The Plundering of the two Families in New Castle County is indeed an Instance of the Boldness of our Enemies, but we think it will be difficult, if not impossible, to prevent such Accidents; the Length of the Bay and River & the scatteringness of the Settlements below, must ever, while thus circumstanc'd, render them liable to Depredations." The only defensive measure approved by the Assembly was to ban pilots from bringing enemy vessels into Philadelphia, even under a flag of truce. The Assembly offered their wish that "As to any Enterprize intended against the City, we hope there is no Danger."²

The other mainland British colonies were similarly threatened by King George's War. However, every other colony had a compulsory militia force for defense their against invasions. Massachusetts in particular was, as always, at the forefront of military activities in colonial America. In 1745 a Massachusetts force had captured Louisbourg, a vital fortification in French Canada, the "most brilliant achievement by the American colonies in the pre-revolutionary era." Expeditionary forces, such as those to Louisburg, were largely composed of volunteers drawn from the militia units. When efforts to procure recruits failed, some individuals were drafted for service from the militia. These men were usually the more marginal members of the community, paupers, vagabonds or laborers without land. The militia provided home defense when needed and acted as a source of training and recruitment for members of provincial units while volunteers did much of the real fighting.³

Since pacifist Quakers won the Pennsylvania elections in October 1747, and continued to dominate the Assembly, no such military effort was envisioned in Pennsylvania. Besides having a pacifist legislature, Pennsylvania's response to the war was inhibited by a vacuum in the executive branch. In May 1747, Governor Thomas left the colony upon the death of the proprietor John Penn. Anthony Palmer, head of the Council, was acting governor. The new proprietor, Thomas Penn, lived in England and did not act promptly to appoint a new governor and so the Council had to deal with the crisis on its own.⁴

With the government paralyzed by pacifism and lack of executive leadership, an unofficial response to Philadelphia's defenselessness was needed. Into the breach stepped Benjamin Franklin with a solution to what appeared an insoluble problem. In November 1747, Franklin published a pamphlet called *Plain Truth*, which dramatized the threat to Philadelphia to mobilize the population. Franklin claimed that since "the Enemy, no doubt, have been told, That the People of Pennsylvania are Quakers, and against all Defence," the best Philadelphia could hope for was

To fall under the Power of Commanders of King's Ships, able to controul the Mariners; and not into the hands of *licentious Privateers*. Who can, without the utmost Horror conceive the Miseries of the Latter! when your Persons, Fortunes, Wives, and Daughters, shall be subject to the wanton and unbridled Rage, Rapine, and Lust, of *Negroes, Molattoes*, and others, the vilest and most abandoned of Mankind.

Franklin contended that Pennsylvania had "60,000 Fighting Men, acquainted with Fire Arms many of them Hunters and Marksmen hardy and bold." He then proposed the formation of an Association, or voluntary militia, because these individuals need only "Order, Discipline and a few Canon" to defend the colony.⁵

As promised in *Plain Truth*, Franklin promptly presented a scheme for organizing this Association. Each volunteer pledged to provide himself "with a good Firelock, Cartouch Box, and at least twelve Charges of Powder and Ball, and as many of us as conveniently can, with a good Sword, Cutlass or Hangar, to be kept always in our respective Dwellings, in readiness, and good Order." Each company would consist of fifty to one hundred men with three officers, a captain, a lieutenant, and an ensign. As in most colonial militias, men would elect their officers who in turn would select their regimental commanders. Pennsylvania officers were only to serve for a year. The Associators would meet four times a year to train, which Franklin deemed "sufficient to keep what we have learnt in Memory; but more frequent Meetings may be necessary at first, till we are become expert in the discipline."⁶

Recruiting the Associators was initially a great success, or so Franklin's *Pennsylvania Gazette* reported. In Philadelphia one "Tuesday Evening upwards of Five Hundred Men of all Ranks subscribed their names; and as the Subscription is still going on briskly in all Parts of the town, 'tis not doubted but that in a few Days the number will exceed a Thousand, in this City only, exclusive of the neighbouring Towns and Country." The time and place of meetings for those interested in becoming Associators in Chester County were reported in the next edition.⁷

The *Gazette* also reported when the officers of this Association were commissioned. The county in which these officers served and their ranks were reported. This information is corroborated by the records of the *Minutes of the Provincial Council* that officially recorded these commissions. Both sources suggest this organization was very popular, particularly on the frontier and in New Castle County, which is today in Delaware. Overall, ten regiments containing 124 companies were formed.⁸ Besides the number of regiments and companies formed, this analysis reveals how quickly these units were constituted. The following table lists the months in 1747 in which these 10 regiments and 124 companies were raised.⁹

Month	Regiments	Companies raised
January	2	26
February		19
March	3	41
May	5	33
August		5
Totals ¹⁰	10	124

Although the naval threat was primarily directed against Philadelphia, much of the Association's strength was outside the city. The popularity of this organization throughout Pennsylvania is illustrated by the following table that shows the number of companies and regiments raised in each county.

County ¹¹	Number of regiments	Number of Companies
Philadelphia	2	20
Chester	2	26
Lancaster	3	32
New Castle	2	20
Bucks	1	19
Kent		7
Total	10	124

Though two regiments were formed in Philadelphia County, only one was from the city. The other was raised in the rural environs of Lower and Upper Merion.¹² Lancaster County, on the frontier, raised three regiments containing 32 companies and was a bastion of support for the Association. This support was not surprising, in January, 1746, the inhabitants of Lancaster

County had sent a message to the Assembly, "setting forth their Wants of Arms and Ammunition" and asking for "Provision of both as may enable them to defend themselves against any enemy that shall attempt to disturb them."¹³ The enthusiasm for the Association on the frontier may have been a precursor to another extralegal military action two decades later, the Paxton Boys.

Since most accounts of the Association focus on Franklin and the companies and regiments of Philadelphia, they neglect the Association in the other counties. In June 1748, the Association responded to an incursion by Spanish privateers in what was then Pennsylvania and is today Delaware. The privateers initially attacked New Castle, but were repulsed by artillery pieces recently acquired from Philadelphia. These privateers then attempted to land men at Elsinborough but also were turned back when they realized that armed men were ready to contest their landing. Naturally, the Associators of New Castle County responded to this attack. However, the *Gazette* reports that "many others, from Chester County, were also on their march to New Castle, but on hearing that the Enemy were gone, they return'd home." The difficulty of Chester's men in getting to Newcastle on time illustrates one of the weaknesses of the Association, geographical dispersion, which was shared with any militia of the colonial period. The *Gazette* admitted the difficulty of this type of military concentration. While the *Gazette* commented that "several of the County Regiments had generously expressed their Readiness to come to the Defence of this City on Occasion," this might be difficult since "no Provision was made by the Publik for their Subsistence in such Cases."¹⁴

The incident in New Castle, while illustrating one weakness of the Association, also manifested one of its most important accomplishments, the acquisition of artillery for coastal defense. In the end, the Association's provision of cannons to defend the city may have been more important than the infantry units raised. Acquisition of artillery was vital since the threat to Philadelphia was from the sea. Well-placed and trained batteries were one of the best ways to defend this port city. Since purchasing cannons did not lend itself to a voluntary effort, the Association petitioned the Assembly, in November 1747, to "erect one or more Batteries at the narrowest & most proper Places of the River." When this effort failed, it asked the proprietor for cannon. He was not, initially, sympathetic to this request. Thomas Penn was suspicious of the Associator movement. He believed that "calling the People together for their defence . . . will be esteemed greatly Criminal" as it occurred outside the scope of government. As for giving the colony artillery, he said that if a law was passed "establishing a Militia and erecting a Fort or Battery, we shall be very ready to show our Concern for the safety of the City by giving Cannon for such a Battery." However, Pennsylvania passed no such law. In December 1747, the Council appealed to the Governors of New York and Massachusetts for batteries.¹⁵

Franklin also helped solve the artillery problem. He proposed a lottery in which £20,000 worth of tickets would be sold and £17,000 given away in prizes, leaving £3,000 for the purchase of artillery. In January 1748, the *Gazette* reported that this lottery was going well and that, "Plank for the Platforms, and all other Materials, are preparing with all diligence, for erecting among the Batteries on the River below this town." By April, cannons had been obtained, not by purchase but on loan from the New York colony. An artillery company was formed in June 1748, to man these batteries. In September 1748, the first batteries purchased by the profits of the lottery were mounted. By November 1750, even the proprietor had become involved. Seeing the colony's efforts, he sent 14 cannons, all 18 pounders, to Philadelphia. The total number of guns defending the city was nearly 50 of various sizes—18, 24, and 32 pound artillery pieces. However, hostilities had ceased in August 1748.¹⁶

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Pennsylvania's response to its military dilemma was both singular and traditional. The unique aspect of the Association was the extent to which private citizens managed to organize and train a significant military force; its more conventional element was its use of volunteers and volunteer units to fulfill military requirements. Americans have often been reluctant to impose compulsory military service on their fellow citizens and have relied instead on volunteers to meet defense requirements.

One reason for this reluctance is that the means and ends of war have frequently been questioned. The formation of the Association ignited a community discussion of the religious and philosophical issues surrounding the maintenance of military forces for defensive purposes that reflects this ambiguity. Among the religious issues was God's approbation or condemnation of war and the extent to which the province should rely on divine providence rather than human effort to protect itself. The philosophical issues concerned the duty of "Magistrates," the rulers of the state, to their citizens and the duty of these men to their own consciences. This type of debate occurred again in American history. Virtually all wars, including World War II before Pearl Harbor, prompted similar debates on the wisdom of American involvement, reflecting a similar lack of consensus on war and the preparation for war.¹⁷

Historians who have chronicled this controversy focus attention on Gilbert Tennent's sermons supporting the Association and military preparedness. In one of the most extensive treatments of the subject, Robert L. Davidson's *War Comes to Quaker Pennsylvania*, only Tennent's sermons are cited.¹⁸ This attention may be justified by both Tennent's notoriety and the popularity of his sermons,

one of which was issued in two editions. However, the most famous reply to this sermon, written by a Quaker, John Smith, was also issued in two editions.¹⁹ These tracts represent only part of a wide-ranging debate on this issue. Samuel Smith and Benjamin Gilbert wrote treatises opposed to military preparations. William Currie wrote in their favor. An anonymous debater also joined this dispute. This controversy is encompassed in eleven separate English language publications listed in Evan's *American Imprints*. Since these works often consciously responded to each other, they collectively represent one community's discussion of a vital issue, the legitimacy, or lack thereof, for war and military preparations.²⁰

These works primarily focus on justifying their respective positions through religion. Sometimes, they address such broad theological issues as the applicability of Old Testament morality after the coming of the Messiah and in others cases narrow questions of Biblical exegesis, such as meaning of certain New Testament injunctions against violence. While these arguments represent a valuable window on the religious sensibilities of this time, another part of this debate may be even more interesting to modern scholars. All these works also address the obligation of the state to defend its citizens. The state is personified through the "magistrate." However, this term had another, more narrow meaning in the context of colonial Pennsylvania—the Quaker legislature. This debate foreshadowed the ultimate demise of "Friends" rule in colonial Pennsylvania, for here were magistrates who failed in their duty: they were forced out of office eight years later because of their unwillingness to defend the colony.

Apart from the ultimate fate of Quaker rule it is vital to understand the religious basis of this debate. Whether military preparations based on the criteria of the Bible and Christian theology were acceptable was the most critical issue to the individuals involved. The possible exception, perhaps, to the person who started this dispute, Benjamin Franklin.

The importance of using religious analogies and justifications in these types of debates is illustrated by the fact that even the enlightened Deist, Franklin, felt compelled to utilize biblical comparisons to sell his ideas to his compatriots. In *Plain Truth*, Franklin related a story found in the Book of Judges. "That the *children of Dan sent of their Family five men from their coasts to spie out the land . . . And they came to . . . Laish and saw the people that were therein, how the dwelt CARELESS after the Manner of the Zidonians, Quiet and Secure. They thought themselves secure, no doubt: and as they never had been disturbed, vainly imagined that they never should.*" Six hundred Danites conquered "60,000 unarmed and undisciplined: men of Laish. *And they smote them with the Edge of the Sword, and burnt the City with Fire: and there was no DELIVERER, because it was far from Zidon.*" However, Franklin's arguments were not confined to religious analogy. In another recurrent theme in this

debate, Franklin addressed the obligation of the government to its citizens. "That *Protection* is as truly due from the Government to the People, as *Obedience* from the People to the Government; and that if on account of their religious Scruples, they themselves could not act for our Defence, yet they might retire, relinquish their Power for a Season."²¹

One of the first volleys in this debate was Samuel Smith's *Necessary Truth* written to refute Franklin's *Plain Truth*. Smith spends much of this document refuting the specific applicability of the story of Laish to Pennsylvania in the 1740s. He agrees that according to the Bible, "The People of *Laish*, . . . *Dwelt careless, after the Manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure, and there was no Magistrate in the Land that might put them to Shame in any Thing.*" He contends that this carelessness does not necessarily mean that they were unarmed. "Arms and Ammunition and a feasible Posture of Defence, have a natural tendency to buoy up the Mind with a presumptuous Dependency upon them," and it is that which "make the people careless and secure." However, if "GOD *be retained in your Knowledge*, you stand but too fair Chance to be left to yourselves." While this type of discussion may seem unimportant in our secular era, the sheer volume of biblical exegesis that occurred during this debate manifests its importance to people at this time.²²

The next phase of this war of words was initiated by the sermons of Gilbert Tennent, the famous Presbyterian minister of the Great Awakening. He presented and published sermons to support the Association and encourage recruitment in December and January 1747/1748. Tennent focused primarily on the religious justifications for defensive war. He has three arguments. First and foremost, Tennent believed that "The Lord is a Man of War."²³ His basis for this belief is the Old Testament in which "much Blood [was] shed therein, by God's Direction and with his Approbation and Blessing." Tennent identifies three kinds of wars which are "approved of by God." First, "When undertaken for necessary *Defence* against unjust Invasion." Second, "When commenc'd for the *Recovery* of something of great Importance unjustly taken from us, which we can not do well without," and finally, "when undertaken by the *Magistrate*, for the *Punishment* of some great injury or wrong which much affects the Credit and Interest of a Nation or People."²⁴

Second, Tennent argues that defensive war "is agreeable to the Light and Law of Nature; and who is the Author thereof but God himself?" Those such as the Quakers "from wrong Apprehension of several Passages of Scripture, have scrupled it and have been thence induced to oppose themselves, to the Common Sense, Sentiments and Suffrage of Mankind." Though Tennent allows that Quaker opposition to war arose from "a Principle of Conscience (tho[mis]informed)" it "therefore should be rather pitied than envied, on Account of their unhappy Mistake, which in the present State of Things, is so exceedingly perilous and prejudicial to Society."²⁵

Tennent dissects the biblical basis for pacifism, what he terms the “wrong apprehension” of the Quakers, reinterpreting the meaning of such biblical injunctions against violence, such as to “turn the other cheek.” He reminds his listeners and readers of Christ’s approval of the Roman captain who asked Jesus to cure his sick servant. “Had not CHRIST a fair Opportunity to reprove this man for his military Station when he mentioned it to him . . . And yet he speaks not a Word of reprehension but grants the Petition.” Much of Tennent’s discourse is dominated by this type of Biblical analysis.²⁶

Though most of Tennent’s sermons concerned theological and biblical arguments, he too discusses the role of the Magistrate—the human representation of the authority of the state. A ruler “sometimes must use Force, in suppressing Tumults, and punishing Delinquents in his own Domains, and among his proper Subjects, else all Order and Government must cease, and the wildest *Anarchy* ensue: why then may he not use Force, when easier Methods avail not, in protecting them from the Insults of others?” In an even stronger statement, Tennent questions the ability of society to survive if the state fails to recognize this duty. “Now unless Injustice be punished by the Magistrate, *he bears the sword in vain*, a final Period is put to the Comforts of society, all Property becomes precarious . . . civil Society disbands and terminates, and Men degenerate into Savage Beasts of Prey!”²⁷

The best-known reply to Tennent was written by John Smith, a prominent Quaker merchant and civic leader. One thousand copies of his *The Doctrine of Christianity as Held by the People Called Quakers, Vindicated* were printed at the end of January 1748. A second edition was issued in February. John Smith directly refutes Tennent and his interpretation of the Bible as illustrating a support for any type of war. Smith allows that “the Almighty is stiled by *Moses*, *A Man of War*, he is called by the Apostle *Paul*, . . . The *God of Love and Peace*.” John Smith refutes Tennent’s view that War “is a part of Moral and Natural law—created by God and thus approved by God.” Instead, Smith contends that “God created Man good, upright and holy; and had he continued in this state, there never would have been any War, and consequently no need of Self-Defence; but Man falling, thro’ Disobedience, his nature became corrupted, his faculties depraved, and the whole intellectual System disordered.” It was thus the fall of man in Genesis that “began shedding of Blood, and the Earth was early filled with Violence. This was the unhappy Consequence of Sin.” Smith hopes that Tennent does not believe that “God was the Author of Nature thus corrupted.”²⁸

In reply to Tennent’s contention that only defensive war can end injustice, he asks “is Self-defence then our only Barrier against Injustice and Violence? God forbid it should be esteemed so; miserable shall we be indeed when that is our State; and easily made a Prey of by insulting Enemies, whether we use our feeble Force or not: but there are many who depend and confide solely in

another barrier, *viz.* The Eternal and Beneficent Providence." He also answers Tennent's assertions about the duty of the magistrate. "Whenever the Magistrate is convinced that the Doctrines of Christ forbid War, it will be as much his duty, as any other Man's to render Obedience to those Doctrines."²⁹

Despite the popularity of this treatise, at least one aspect of Smith's argument reflects a certain lack of consistency. He argues that

The People called Quakers do not undertake to condemn our superiors engaging in War, in the present unhappy State of human Affairs; we rather think it probable, that as they have shewn a noble and Christian Disposition in granting Liberty and Protection to such as are of tenderness Consciences, it may please God to bless their Arms with Success . . . And agreeable to the Advice of the Apostle *Paul*, we find it our Duty to put up our prayers for Kings and them that are in Authority.³⁰

The Quakers, although they are opposed to fighting themselves, prudently refused to embark on opposition to the war itself—a stance which might have antagonized the British government and jeopardized their rule.³¹

The success of John Smith's pamphlet was manifest both in its second edition and the 183 page reply to it written by Tennent and published in April 1748. Tennent refutes Smith's argument virtually point by point. He castigates his statement that the Quakers support their magistrates in war. "If they justify their *Superiors engaging* in War, they cannot consistently condemn *Inferiors* that war under them seeing that *Princes* cannot War without *Soldiers*. . . . Now surely if they believed all War was unlawful they wouldn't, one would think, expect God's Blessing upon it."³²

While Tennent's refutation is mainly Biblical exegesis, he again returns to the realm of political theory and the responsibility of the magistrate. "Why doesn't our *Author* speak out his Mind plainly? Is it the *Magistrate's Duty* to protect his *Subjects* or not. If nay then this *Office* is a mere *Bubble*, which only deserves to be laugh'd at."³³ Further, Tennent asserts

That the *End* of *Civil Government* is to secure civil *Property* by Force and Compulsion, when Necessity requires; and hence the *Magistrate* is said to carry the *Sword*: if *Property* must be tamely given up to every unjust Invader the *End of Government* being destroyed, there is therefore no need of the *Mean*, and hence it follows, that *civil Government* is a *needless*, superfluous *Institution*, unless it be said that a *Mean* should be used without and *End*, or for nothing, which is absurd.³⁴

Tennent's views reflect the influence of John Locke's political philosophy and his idea that "the great and chief end therefore, of Mens uniting into Commonwealth, and putting themselves under Government, *is the Preservation of Property*."³⁵ This is an excellent example of how a principle figure of the "Great Awakening was affected by Enlightenment political theory.

If one admits to the need for civil government, Tennent believes, then one must accept that

Defensive War is necessarily included in the *Magistrate's* office, seeing that he, instead of submitting to the *Violence of Criminals*, *resists* and kills them, for the *Defence and Advantage* of the *Publik*: and what does *Defensive War* do more? The *Difference*, as to the Instruments of Death, in these two Cases, is but a *Circumstance* that does not affect the present Argument; for both Ways *Violence* is used: the Death of the Person is compassed; the *Substance* is the same and the *End* in View, is the same.³⁶

Tennent's comparison of the violence involved in defensive wars to the deadly force used by the magistrate to enforce the law is a particularly effective argument when directed at John Smith's pamphlet. While Smith was writing his missive against defensive war he was involved in the prosecution and execution of two burglars.³⁷

John Smith was not the only critic of the Association and military preparation. This was not the last volley in this discussion. An anonymous treatise attacked both Tennent's sermons and *Plain Truth*. The title of this work is twelve lines long, a typical length for many colonial works. It begins with this clause, *A Treatise Showing the Need We have to Rely on God as Sole Protector of this Province*. This author asserts that pacifist Pennsylvania has "been preserved from the barbarous and cruel Usage of the Natives of this Land, the Indians, whereas our neighboring Colonies have suffered deeply." The author attributes this good fortune to "peculiar Blessings of Providence whose Care has been continually over us, and has been the sole Protector of this province since the first Settlement of it, without the Aid of human Means or Policy." Further, the author contends that Pennsylvania has experienced God's favor and "Blessing for upwards of sixty Years." How can this province be compared to Laish and its "idolatrous people, who *Israel* Sword slew by the Determination of Heaven?"³⁸

Another attack on Tennent, published in November 1748, was written by Benjamin Gilbert, an author and miller. This was again primarily a theological tract. Gilbert argues that "the Dispensation of the *Jews* ended many hundreds Years ago, by the coming of the *Messiah*, and son of the most High God." The wars the Israelites fought were against "Peoples of other nations, Worshipers

of strange Gods, with whom the true *Israelites* could have no Fellowship." According to Gilbert, wars are not justified in the eighteenth century since "Wars at this time are begun when the corrupt Nature in Man lusts, and are carried on with the utmost Vigour, killing and destroying each other; and at that time bold in the Articles of their Faith to be Worshipers of the same God, each bearing the Name of Christian."³⁹

Gilbert's argument again returns to the duties of a magistrate. Gilbert compares the difference between executing criminals and killing an invader in war. He asserts that "considerable Time is before Trial allowed, and a good Space of Time after: which I presume, is in order that the languishing Criminal may have a feasible Opportunity to make some Preparation for Eternity . . . Now if this be a similar or Parallel with War, I am altogether ignorant which way." In some ways this was the most interesting reply to Tennent's work. This is ironic considering that Benjamin Gilbert would die due to an act of war in 1780. Captured by Indians after the fall of Niagara, he perished due to exposure to the elements."⁴⁰

Tennent was not the only voice for military preparedness in this debate. The writings of William Currie—an Anglican—may have been even stronger and more persuasive than Tennent's sermons. The small membership of the Church of England in Philadelphia at this time may have limited the influence of his arguments but not their power or sophistication. Currie entered this debate with a sermon on the fast day, January 7, 1748. Besides the specific statements supporting the fast and the Association, Currie asserts that "it seems almost equivalent to self-evident Truth that Protection is truly due from the Government to the People, as Obedience from the People to the Government." Currie contends that if this is true then they who are "intrusted with the Government of a People, and under any Pretence whatsoever, shall absolutely refuse to make any legal Provision for the Security and Defence of the Lives and Fortunes, when in the most imminent Danger, must certainly be out of the Way of their Duty, whatever they themselves may think."⁴¹

Currie further articulated the theological and political issues involved in this debate in a treatise published in June 1748. He does not spend pages on endless examples of biblical exegesis. Instead, he advances the principle that "here is nothing in Christianity that can amount to a Law prohibiting Defensive War under the Gospel; therefore it cannot be unlawful for Christians . . . to defend themselves against a foreign Enemy." Currie advances the idea that "whatsoever binds Christians as an universal, standing Law, must be clearly revealed as such, and laid down in Scripture in such evident Terms, as all who have their senses exercised therein, may discern it to have been the Will of Christ that it should perpetually oblige all Christians." Currie can find no explicit prohibition against defensive war and self defense in the New Testament. Therefore,

A Defensive War, undertaken by lawful Authority with no other View but to defend the innocent Lives and Liberties of the whole Community, when this cannot be done by any other Means, was ever consonant to the Law of Nature, and repugnant to no positive Law of God, under the Old Testament; and therefore it cannot be unlawful under the New, unless an express positive Law of Christ can be produc'd prohibiting all Sorts of War under the Gospel.

If nothing in the Gospel expressly prohibits self-defense, then the Magistrate's responsibility to defend his people is absolute. Currie argues that "if this cannot, at some times, be done, without opposing Force to Force, I would ask . . . how that Man can be said to do his Duty, or act a consistent Part who undertaking the Office of a Magistrate is bound in Conscience to deny that to the Publik which at times is the most valuable and necessary End of his Office." Finally, Currie articulates the inexorable logic of this position.

Whenever a Man is convinced that the Doctrines of Christ forbid Defensive War, it will be his indispensable Duty to refuse the Office of a Magistrate (at least to act in the legislative Part of Government whose Province is to concert proper measure for the Defence of the Publik) leaving this Office to those, who can comply with all the Ends of it with a safe conscience.

This is exactly what pacifist Quakers in the Pennsylvania assembly would do one decade later—resign their posts under joint pressure of a frontier invasion and public clamor for a defense.⁴²

While this particular debate ended when the war did in 1748, it re-emerged less than ten years later with the advent of the French and Indian War. It was this conflict which forced the Quaker "magistrates" out of office. This was not, however, the end of debates over wars and preparations for wars. Similar debates occurred in the Revolution, the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War, the Civil War, the Spanish-American war, the Filipino insurrection, World Wars I and II, Korea, and recently the Vietnam War. Many of these debates were caused by the religious, political, and ethnic diversity characteristic of both colonial Pennsylvania and the United States. Perhaps diversity has inhibited America's ability to achieve a consensus on military issues. Failure to agree on these issues may explain America's preference for volunteers in peacetime and initially in wartime, turning to coercion only as wars escalate. Pennsylvania's recognition that the best solution for a lack of consensus on critical military issues was to rely on the free will of its citizens is a uniquely American solution. It supports Zuckerman's contention that the history of the Middle-Atlantic region prefigures the history of America.

Notes

1. See Michael Zuckerman, *Friends and Neighbors: Group Life in America's First Plural Society* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), 3-16. Sally Griffith provides another interpretation of Franklin's efforts to organize the Association. She contends the Association is an early example of a notion that would become pervasive in nineteenth and twentieth century American town and cities, "boosterism." "Order Discipline and a Few Cannons: Benjamin Franklin, The Association, and the Rhetoric and Practice of Boosterism," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 116 (April 1992): 131-155. Further, Gary Nash argues that the Associators "became a symbol in Philadelphia of artisan strength and unity . . . that raised the consciousness of the laboring people." *The Union Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 232.
2. *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg: Theo Fenn & Co., 1851) v: 98, 99, 102, 124, 125, 126. Hereafter cited as *MPC*.
3. Allan R. Millet and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 34-35. For more information on the compulsory militia see Russell F. Weigley, *The History of the United States Army* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), and Fred Anderson, *A People's Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).
4. Joseph J. Kelley Jr., *Pennsylvania: the Colonial Years, 1681-1776* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1980), 247-248.
5. Leonard W. Labaree, ed. *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961) 3:196-202.
6. *Ibid.*, 206-210. In the remarks that explained officer tenure, Franklin implies that these positions would be rotated after each one year term. Franklin asserts that this is "contrary to the modern Practice; but the wonderful Success of the Old Romans proves it absolutely right." The idea of rotating officers demonstrated his lack of understanding of the problem of training officers who were basically civilians and could only devote a limited amount of time to military activities. In these circumstances, long service was the only way to develop martial proficiency. The classical analogy was also incorrect: Romans were professional soldiers, Associators were amateurs. A more appropriate classical analogy would have been to the Greek Hoplites, who were also militia men.
7. *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia), 26 November 1747, 3 December 1747.
8. The total number of companies and regiments in the Association was not directly recorded in the Council minutes, but can be obtained by an analysis of information found in these records. The Council signed commissions for officers elected by the Association. The county from which these officers were appointed is listed with their names and ranks. Since each company required a captain, a lieutenant, and an ensign, the appointment of individuals to all three of these ranks from a specific county suggests that a company was formed in that location at that time. The total number of Associators belonging to these companies and regiments was not recorded in any of the documents examined for this paper. The number of men enlisted in the Association is also not recorded. This can be estimated, however, based on the mandated size of companies. Each company had between 50 and 100 men, which translates into 124 companies with at least 6,200 men and perhaps as many as 12,400 Associators. Since the Philadelphia regiment was, according to the *Gazette*, April 16, 1748, composed of at least 1,000 men in ten companies, then the higher figure could be more accurate than the lower.
9. According to the *Pennsylvania Gazette* of 1 March 1748, 53 companies had been formed as of this edition. This figure does not reflect either the number of officers reported as commissioned in either this newspaper or in the *Minutes of the Provincial Council*; see table for this figure.
10. Information on the number of units formed in each month is found in the *MPC*. For the month of January see pages, 174-175, 185-186, February, 193-194, March, 209-210, May, 247-248 and August, 325. According to the *Gazette* some of these units recognized by the Provincial Council in May and August may

have been formed at an earlier date. However, a comparison of the lists of officers who had received commissions listed in this paper and those officially documented in the *Minutes of the Provincial Council* reveal that the *Gazette's* lists were not entirely accurate. Though the vast majority of commissions listed in the *MPC* were announced in the *Gazette*, some were not. For the purposes of this examination the *Minutes* will be considered the final word on the Association because of its official status.

11. Information on officers commissioned in Philadelphia County may be found in the *MPC* 174-175, 193, 209, Chester County, 185, 186, 210, 247, 325, Lancaster County, 194, 210, 247, New Castle County 194, 210, 248, 325, Bucks County 193, 209, 247 and Kent County, 248, 325.

12. *Gazette*, 3 December 1747.

13. *MPC*, 26.

14. See *Gazette*, 16 April 1748, 2 June 1748, 23 June 1748. The fact that infantry units of the Association responded to this attack is not recorded in secondary sources addressing this organization. Kelley's *Pennsylvania in the Colonial Years*, 257, discusses the use of artillery during this incident and Robert L. Davidson's *War Comes to Quaker Pennsylvania 1682-1756* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957) includes a chapter on this organization but does not discuss this incident. The most complete account of this event is found Leon de Valinger, Jr. *Colonial Military Organization in Delaware 1638-1776* (Wilmington: Delaware Tercentenary Commission, 1938), 41-42. The geographical dispersion of Associator units may be illustrated by examining the time it would take the three regiments in Lancaster County to reach Philadelphia city. According to a map of early Pennsylvania, the direct road from Lancaster city to Philadelphia (the same route as present-day Highway 30) is 75 miles. Assuming a march of 20 miles a day, a rigorous pace for seasoned soldiers of that era and unduly optimistic for an untrained militia, it would take four days, after completion of a muster, to arrive at Philadelphia.

15. *MPC*, 158, 240.

16. *Gazette*, 19 January 1748, 16 April 1748, 1 September 1748, 15 November 1750; *MPC*, 267.

17. For an overview of American's opposition to previous wars see Russell F. Weigley, "Dissent in Wars" in Alexander DeConde ed.

Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy: Studies of the Principal Movements and Ideas (New York: Charles Schribner's Sons, 1978), 1: 253-266. This article has an excellent bibliography that covers dissent in virtually all of America's wars.

18. Davidson, *War Comes to Quaker Pennsylvania 1682-1756*, 60 and Kelley, *Pennsylvania: The Colonial Years*, 256. See also Sally Schwartz's "A Mixed Multitude: The Struggle for Toleration in Colonial Pennsylvania," (New York: New York University Press, 1986) 179-180 which cites Tennent's sermons, John Smith's reply, and an unnamed Anglican curate's sermons, which may be William Curries' fast day sermon of 7 January 1748 or that of the Reverend Mr. Jenny which is referenced in the *Gazette* of 12 December 1748.

19. John Smith, *The Doctrine of Christianity, as Held by the People Called Quakers, Vindicated: in Answer to Gilbert Tennent's Sermon on the Lawfulness of War* (Philadelphia: Franklin and Hall, 1748), (Evans 6239). The pacifist argument in this debate is chronicled by Peter Brock in *Pacifism in the United States: From the Colonial Era to the First World War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).

20. All of the original sermons and treatises cited in this paper are from Clifford K. Shipton, ed. *Early American Imprints 1639-1800*, (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1959). All Evans numbers for these documents are cited in parentheses.

21. Labaree, 192-93, Franklin reinforced the religious argument in a letter he wrote to his own newspaper that was published, without attribution, in the *Gazette*. Franklin contended that "All they that take the sword, shall perish with the Sword," cannot be understood in an absolute literal Sense, as to Individuals; it being evident that all Men who have taken the Sword have not perished by the Sword." *Gazette*, 29 December 1747. This letter was published separately as, Anonymous, *Mr. Franklin, The Absolute and Obvious Necessity of Self Defence, in the Present Juncture, etc.* (Philadelphia: Franklin and Hall, 1748.) (Evans 6194). See J. A. Leo Lemay *The Canon of Benjamin Franklin 1722-1776: New Attributions and Reconsideration* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1986), 111-113 for attribution of this anonymous letter.

22. Samuel Smith, *Necessary Truth: Or Seasonable Considerations for the Inhabitants of*

- the City of Philadelphia, and the Province of Pennsylvania. In Relation to the Pamphlet Call'd Plain Truth; and Two Other Writers in the Newspapers (Philadelphia: William Bradford, 1748), 4, 10 (Evans 6241).
23. Gilbert Tennent, *The Late Association for Defense Further Encourag'd or the Consistency of Defensive WAR, with True Christianity* (Philadelphia: William Bradford, 1748), 2 (Evans 6246).
24. Gilbert Tennent, *The Late Association for Defense Further Encourag'd or the Lawfulness of Defensive WAR* (Philadelphia: William Bradford, 1748), 6-7 (Evans 6244).
25. *Ibid.*, 11.
26. *Ibid.*, 21, 29.
27. *Ibid.*, 17, 19.
28. See Frederick B. Tolles, "A Literary Quaker: John Smith of Burlington and Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 65 (July 1941): 305-306 and John Smith, *Doctrine*, 5, 8-9.
29. *Ibid.*, 17-18, 22.
30. *Ibid.*, 22-23.
31. In May 1748, John Smith led an effort to raise funds for the President of the Provincial Council to use for "emergency situations," presumably defensive measures. He ceased these efforts on the advice of "elderly friends." For an account of this effort and more on Quaker efforts to serve both Caesar and God, see Hermann Wellenreuther. "The Political Dilemma of the Quakers in Pennsylvania, 1681-1748," in *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 94 (April, 1970): 135-172.
32. Gilbert Tennent, *The Late Association for Defence Farther Encouraged: or Defensive Warfare Defended: and its Consistency with True Christianity Represented. In a Reply to some exception Against War, in a Late Composure, Intituled, The Doctrine of Christianity, As Held by the People Called Quakers, Vindicated* (Philadelphia: Franklin and Hall, 1748), 69-70, (Evans 6247). Hereafter cited as *Tennent's Reply*.
33. *Ibid.*, 69.
34. *Ibid.*, 110.
35. John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 369.
36. *Tennent's Reply*, 110.
37. Smith discusses the events surrounding his pamphlet concerning the Association in *Hannah Logan's Courtship: A True Narrative*, Albert Cook Myers ed. (Philadelphia: Ferris & Leach Publishers, 1904). This chronicle, written in diary form, mentions the trial of "three Villains for a Burglary & Robbery of the widow Cox at my Accusing." The next entry records that these men were sentenced to death. Less than one month later, in December 1747, Smith records the execution of two of these "wretches" and the pardoning of the third. See page 122-123, 127 of Smith's *Narrative*.
38. Anonymous, *A Treatise Shewing the Need We Have to Rely on God as Sole Protector of the Province; And the reasons of Man Degenerating from his State of Purity, and the Means Whereby He may be Re-Established Again . . .* (Philadelphia, Armbrister, 1748), 2 (Evans 6254).
39. James G. Wilson and John Fiske, *Appletons' Cyclopedia of American Biography*, vol. 2 (New York: Appleton and Co., 1888), 644. Hereafter cited as *Appletons'*. Benjamin Gilbert, *Truth Vindicated, and the Doctrine of Darkness Manifested; Occasioned by the Reading of Gilbert Tennent's Latest Composure, Intituled, Defensive War Defended, Dedicated to the Service of the Christian Reader* (Philadelphia: Printed for the author by Franklin and Hall, 1748), 13, 30, 31 (Evans 6148).
40. Gilbert, 16; *Appletons'*, 644.
41. William Currie, *A Sermon Preached in Radnor Church, on Thursday, the 7th of January, 1747. Being the Day Appointed by the President and Council of the Province of Pennsylvania, to be Observed in General Fast. By a Presbyter of the Church of England* (Philadelphia: Franklin and Hall, 1748), 11 (Evans 6119).
42. William Currie, *A Treatise on the Lawfulness of Defensive War. In Two Parts*, (Philadelphia: Franklin and Hall, 1748), v, 4, 16, 79, 80 (Evans 6120).