

## “OUR GOD, AND OUR GUNS”

### RELIGION AND POLITICS ON THE REVOLUTIONARY FRONTIER

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**ABSTRACT:** This article explores religion and politics on Pennsylvania’s revolutionary frontier through two key events, the Paxton Riots and the Whiskey Rebellion. The author argues religion shaped frontiersmen’s understanding of the proper role of government and provided justification for resistance and extralegal action. Moreover, the understanding of government promoted by religious leaders and frontier peoples presented an image of civil society and government at odds with the scholarly literature that often presents frontiersmen as antigovernment “proto-Lockeans,” prizing personal independence and individual rights. The words and actions of ministers, the Paxton Boys, and Whiskey Rebels adhered to a man in society, public welfare vision of government that set a high standard for the role of government in society and provided justification to both regulate and resist government when it failed to meet that standard. These events also demonstrate the continuity of a frontier political logic shaping events in the pre- and post-independence eras.

**KEYWORDS:** Religion and politics, Revolutionary era, Paxton Boys, Whiskey Rebellion, public welfare, Lazarus Stewart, Reverend John Elder, Herman Husband

Lying in his tavern bed in Westmoreland County, William Graham, a frightened excise collector, woke up in a start as a shadowy and masked figure claiming to be Beelzebub beckoned him to come forward to meet a “legion of devils.” That night, Graham suffered all the mischief frontiersmen could muster as a group of angry citizens made him stomp on his “Commission and all papers relating to his office” while he “imprecated curses on himself.” If that did not humiliate Graham enough, they broke his new pistols, “cut off one-half of his hair, queued the other side,” and “cut the cock off his hat . . . so as to render his queue most conspicuous.”<sup>1</sup> Using similar biblical and violent imagery, a crude 1792 anti-excise political cartoon depicts an exciseman

taking commands from the horned beast of Revelations who seeks to “take thee to thy master” Satan. While locals wait in the background with tar and feathers, the same exciseman hangs by a noose over a whiskey barrel (fig. 1).<sup>2</sup>

Thirty years and a revolution earlier, a group of frontiersmen known as the Paxton Boys used similar biblical allusions, deeming a religious mission of their massacring peaceful Native Americans and a rebellious march on the colonial government in Philadelphia. According to one contemporary, the Paxton Boys declared “Scriptures a Duty for Exterpating the Heathen from ye Face of the Earth.”<sup>73</sup> Another witness to the events exclaimed the Paxton Boys called their mission a “holy war” to “fulfill the command given to Joshua with the most scrupulous exactness.” They were, he averred, “children of Promise or Saints Militant.”<sup>74</sup> Even the ringleader of the gang, Lazarus Stewart, argued that he and the men he commanded looked only to “our God, and our guns.”<sup>75</sup>

These accounts demonstrate a crucial combination of religion and politics pervading the early American frontier. In popular depictions and actions, the horned beast, cloven-hooves, Satan and all his minions stood on the side of self-interest, graft, and corruption, those “burdensome Drones to the community,” facing the “providential” cleansing of self-professed Godly patriots.<sup>6</sup>



**FIGURE 1** Anonymous, "An Exciseman" 1792. Courtesy of the Philadelphia History Museum at the Atwater Kent.

As Whiskey Rebels proclaimed in 1794, they acted as “glorious instruments in the hands of Providence.”<sup>7</sup>

Such a religious connection should not be all that surprising. As historian Carl Bridenbaugh wrote in 1962, “no understanding of the eighteenth century is possible” without “the religious theme.” He argued it was “part of their daily existence.”<sup>8</sup> While historians since Bridenbaugh have reconstructed much of the religious landscape of early America, many climactic events have been plucked from their religious milieus and presented as entirely secular. Even the quintessential book on the Whiskey Rebellion, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* by Thomas Slaughter (who deemed it “the most important incident of the nation’s first quarter-century under the Constitution”), hardly mentions religion. Slaughter manages some passing references to the “irreligiosity, immorality, and dirtiness” of frontier peoples, characteristics often ascribed them by biased outsiders and taken at almost face value by some historians.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, literature on the Paxton Boys has focused on the secular and illegal nature of the uprising.<sup>10</sup> Yet, religion was central to the everyday lives of people in early America. Due to the work of historian Marjoleine Kars, we now know that religion served as the glue of frontier communities. It informed frontier political philosophies and made it possible for people to “break loose together” during the Regulator rebellion in North Carolina.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Brendan McConville’s work on early New Jersey demonstrates the primacy of religion in that colony’s land riots.<sup>12</sup> That comparable rebellions in Pennsylvania, deriving from similar circumstances and communities, were devoid of religious influence now seems rather spurious.

Part of the problem lies in the sources themselves. As is well known, not many ordinary people mobilizing in these uprisings left behind personal accounts. Much of our understanding of these events comes from some of the rebel leaders, government officials, and spectators. In order to get at the place of religion in these uprisings, then, it is necessary to reconstruct the religious context of participants’ everyday lives and unearth the thoughts and ideas of the religious leaders to which they looked for guidance.<sup>13</sup> Of all the preachers who served important roles in the rebellions, of which there were many, John Elder and Herman Husband stand out.<sup>14</sup> Both men were prominent local leaders, knew and guided the people who mobilized, and provided key ideas that shaped those resistance efforts.<sup>15</sup>

Such a focus does not merely demonstrate that religion was important, but also revises our understanding of frontier political ideology, an ideology that

held strong from the colonial period through to the era of the early republic. For a long time, scholars have viewed the frontier as fostering a peculiar vision of government and governance. After all, settlers made their way to the frontier to stake claim to land in an area that was largely unencumbered by a government that could intrude on their lives. In the process, it is commonly maintained, settlers developed a taste of their own self-possessed individualism and personal independence, and they worked hard to protect that status. Popular uprisings have been viewed as extensions of that quest, pitting, as Thomas Slaughter put it, "friends of liberty" against "friends of order," which really boils down to Lockean liberalism versus law and government. The intersection of religion and politics, however, reveals a people who embraced a religious creed that promoted the benefits of government, particularly one that upheld, sometimes intrusively and rigorously, the public welfare.<sup>16</sup>

It is only with such reorientation that we can understand the pro-government slogans that fell from the lips and shot from the pens of the Paxton Boys, Whiskey Rebels, and their supporters, such as "LIBERTY and LAW," the "Good Order of Government," and "Liberty and Government."<sup>17</sup> They fervently believed that liberty necessarily depended on law and government, and that God ordained this goodly connection; central points often emphasized by their ministers. Those leaders declared from the pulpit, in the press, and on the roads, that law and government crucially upheld the public welfare and the needs of the community against the self-interest of the few. *Salus populi suprema lex est* (the welfare of the people shall be the supreme law) signified a message and a way of governance that relegated the individual subservient to the community. Frontier people and their ministers wholeheartedly believed a government predicated on such values guaranteed their collective liberty and legitimized government in the eyes of God.<sup>18</sup> If government did not live up to those basic expectations, though, they had a duty to their neighbors and their God to take matters into their own hands, violently if necessary. Therefore, they did not just resist government; rather they sought to regulate it, bringing it in line with their own conception of its proper role and function—ideas taught and reinforced by powerful religious leaders, providing ideological consistency and religious legitimacy.

In December of 1763 the Paxton Boys, on two occasions in and near Lancaster, brutally massacred a group of peaceful Indians. The following spring, at the height of their fury, they marched on the colonial government in Philadelphia to demand it recognize their right to "liberty" and their own

understanding of good government. In the weeks and months after those fateful events, members and supporters of the Paxton Boys flooded the colony with political pamphlets and petitions elucidating for the first time a common set of frontier grievances and, for historians, a reference point for the political philosophy of many western Pennsylvania settlers.

These numerous pamphlets and petitions derided the failure, weakness, and unresponsiveness of the colonial government. A compelling thread of many of these was the salient notion that government should work for and represent the whole people, not a particular “set or class” of men. Self-interest, petitioners exclaimed, destroyed government. With that vision of government in mind, petitioners demanded equal representation of frontier counties in the legislature, a restructuring of the county and supreme courts, new policies and officers to regulate the local economy, and initiatives to defend the frontier. These reforms, petitioners cried, would finally make the government work for more than just “a Part of the Inhabitants.” As over 1,200 petitioners from Cumberland County put it, the structure of government, both provincially in the legislature and locally in law, favored the few and left the many to suffer, which “inconsistency” inflamed “the Minds of his Majesty’s other good Subjects,” increased “public Disturbances,” and threw “the province into the most violent Convulsions.”<sup>19</sup>

For many people on the frontier, the Paxton Boys, while brutal and violent, represented the will of “the people” in their attempt to promote a public welfare vision of liberty, law, and government. According to an Anglican minister from Lancaster, Thomas Barton, the Paxton Boys’ actions regulated a government that did not adhere to its proper role and purpose. “*Salus Populi suprema Lex esto*,” the minister wrote, “is a Sentence that deserves to be written in Letters of Gold—It is a Sentence that should be the MOTTO of every Government, where LIBERTY and FREEDOM have any Existence.” Yet, he argued, Pennsylvania’s government failed to live up to that vaunted ideal. Over the course of the 1750s and early 1760s, Barton admonished, the government proved incapable of protecting the inhabitants on the frontier, and that inability stemmed from the economic self-interest of eastern oligarchs who wanted to protect “their *darling Power*.” The needs and security of the public, the central object of “good government,” could not move men and measures. Instead, those in power treated the people “like *Asses*” who did not have the “*Privilege or Authority* to complain of their Sufferings or remonstrate their Grievances.” Only by responding to and upholding the public interest, as the author believed the Paxton Boys did, could Pennsylvanians finally “feel the happy Effects resulting from LIBERTY and LAW,” central elements of the “good Order of Government.”<sup>20</sup>

Like Barton's observation, the Paxton Boys viewed their violent actions as a necessary means to promote the welfare of the community. According to Lazarus Stewart, "what I have done was done for the security of hundreds of settlers on the frontier."<sup>21</sup> Westerners, he argued, had "waited long enough on government" and fervently believed they had been left to themselves, abandoned by a government corrupted by special interest and insensitive to the needs of the whole. As explained in their petitions, settlers had been "neglected by the Public." They wanted a government to adhere to first principles and provide for the security and protection of the people, not a part or a regional section of them. The failure of the government to live up to that ideal made the Paxton Boys "mad with rage" and pushed them "to do what nothing but the most violent necessity can Vindicate." The Paxton Boys, then, did not see their extralegal action as unlawful, but viewed it as a means to correct a government that proved incapable to defend the "Life, Liberty, and Security" of the community.<sup>22</sup>

Religion crucially informed frontier settlers' understanding of law, liberty, and government. Focusing on the motivations of the Paxton Boys, while it displays the importance of race and a deeply ingrained racism, also demonstrates the intersection of religion and political theory.<sup>23</sup> The Presbyterian religion shaped many of the members of the Paxton Boys' understanding of civil society and guided their decision to partake in extralegal action. Ministers exhorted, on numerous occasions, that the government should provide for the security and protection of the community and that individuals, as part of that community, had a duty to their neighbors to intercede if government failed to meet that expectation; they rebelled against God if they did not act for the common good. After mid-century, the stark contrast between the ideal civil society and the reality of governance in the province infuriated many and provoked quite a few. This juxtaposition motivated the Paxton Boys just as much as their developing hatred of Indians. While racism fueled their bloodlust and inhibited them from viewing Indians as anything but "lawless savages," the inability of the government to, in their mind, protect the public welfare, drove them to extralegal action.<sup>24</sup>

People living in and around Paxton Township in Lancaster County (now in Dauphin County) were a religious lot. A majority of the inhabitants were recent immigrants. They were largely Scots by ethnicity, Irish by birth, and devoted to the Presbyterian Church. The religiosity of inhabitants near Paxton was well known. One traveler noted that a crowd of Paxtonians asked him, "Do you believe in scripture? If you do not, we have nothing to say

to you.”<sup>25</sup> These “children of Promise,” unlike many other inhabitants of Pennsylvania, had a regular pastor, John Elder, who served them from 1738 until his death in 1792, and was an important leader in Paxton. He kept his congregation and surrounding ones from breaking apart during the Great Awakening; a shocking outcome considering that he fervently supported the “old side” against religious enthusiasm, which must have rankled some.<sup>26</sup> More to the point, Elder was, as one local man noted, “so respected by every Body” that his community gave him command of the “Paxtang Rangers” who defended the back settlements from Indian raids during the Seven Years’ War and later no doubt comprised the bulk of the group now known as the Paxton Boys.<sup>27</sup>

Elder’s Paxton Church, as all frontier Presbyterian churches, served as a gathering place for people as well as a focal point in the founding of Scots-Irish communities. In that one-story stone building, families prayed together, planned together, and sometimes church officials reprimanded them together. During the terrifying days of the Seven Years’ War in North America, local Presbyterians used the church as a sanctuary and deemed church attendance so important that they brought their guns with them rather than miss “the public services of the Sabbath.” Even Elder, the “fighting parson,” kept his rifle beside him at the pulpit as he occasionally preached a martial sermon on fighting “manfully under the Banner of ye Captain of our Salvation having put on ye whole Armour of God.”<sup>28</sup>

Upon landing in America, Ulster Presbyterians often migrated westward and immediately set about building their churches. According to historian Patrick Griffin, as settlers constructed rough-hewn cabins in the areas in and around Paxton, they also erected temporary meetinghouses for religious gatherings. Recent immigrants believed religion, particularly the church, counteracted the “Hardships and difficulties” of “this American world.”<sup>29</sup> For many on the frontier, the church provided the essential service of ordering the life of the community. Ministers, church elders, and parishioners sat in “sessions” to uphold the moral, spiritual, and sometimes worldly laws of the community. The authority of the church in religious and sometimes secular matters was paramount for the Presbyterian inhabitants under its care.<sup>30</sup>

The church’s concentration on order, stability, community, and its efforts to police congregants led ministers to convey a message to their parishioners that often conflated civil, philosophical, theological, and ecclesiastical doctrines into a workable image of society and government. Presbyterian churches exposed parishioners to a doctrine rooted in a confessional tradition



emphasizing community solidarity. Even in its ecclesiastical organization and worship, the church placed its community of believers, the "visible church," above the individual. It maintained both the moral and spiritual integrity of the congregation through worship and church governance.<sup>31</sup> Because of the church's goal to provide for order and good government, followers and ministerial cohorts encouraged ministers to mix the civil with the spiritual in sermons. According to an ordination sermon by Charles Beatty in 1752, ministers should sermonize on "the Law as well as the Gospel" yet not so far "that Persons should seek Salvation by the Law."<sup>32</sup> As New Light Presbyterian minister Gilbert Tennant explained, law was a "so valuable and excellent Rule of Life" that ministers needed to make it part of religious teaching. "Law," he argued, is "established by Faith."<sup>33</sup>

With the importance of law in mind, clergy modeled for their parishioners a powerful vision of government. While ministers consistently preached and upheld the authority of God's Law, the guiding moral and spiritual principles that ordered the lives of congregants, many ministers went beyond strictly religious prescriptions and focused on the meaning and importance of civil society. By examining that, ministers also expounded on the state of nature, natural law, and its relationship to God. Such subjects, while seemingly outside the confines of religious importance, served a central purpose of reaffirming the centrality of community, law and government, and order and stability, crucial elements of Presbyterianism.

Ministers pushed the theme of community and law to extremes in North America and Pennsylvania in particular due to instability and lack of significant social organization. Geographic mobility, settlement patterns, and religious heterogeneity proved the need, at least from a clerical perspective, for community and order. After mid-century, apparent challenges to community, church, and, to some extent, the patriarchal family pushed many ministers to reaffirm the relationship of individuals to the wider community.<sup>34</sup> "Every man," ministers argued, "is bound by the law of nature, not only to preserve his own life, liberty and property; but also that of others." The reason for this reciprocal obligation of individuals in society, according to clergyman John Goodlet, was simple: "there is a natural relation between all mankind constituted by our glorious Creator, an universal brotherhood or fraternity." Therefore, he argued, "every one by the law of nature is every one's neighbor, and every one's brother, and consequently ought to be his *helper* and *keeper*; that is, he ought to use all lawful means to preserve his life, property and freedom, as well as his own."<sup>35</sup> In essence, ministers promoted



a relational theory of individual rights that were relative to the mutual obligations inherent in the social being of man.

Such a view of the community obligations intrinsic to the state of nature powerfully informed churchgoers' vision of civil society. As Goodlet expounded to his audience, since man in the state of nature "has a two-fold moral right," that of preserving himself and his neighbor, he therefore claimed a "power to repress the crimes committed against the law of nature."

Every man, [then,] by the right he hath to preserve mankind in general, may *restrain*, or, where it is necessary, *destroy* things noxious to them and so may bring such evil on any one who hath transgressed that law, as may deter him and others from doing the like mischief.

This great community responsibility of the state of nature, however, resulted in constant chaos and confusion with little "outward peace, order and safety." Thus, the minister told his listeners and readers, man formed civil society "to establish and settle a known law" to save the community from "disorder and ruin."<sup>36</sup>

Gilbert Tennant argued similarly that neighbors possessed mutual duties to preserve the welfare of the community. "Man was made a sociable creature, to promote not only his own but the *public Good*." Anyone failing to live up to this standard by placing individual interests above the needs of the community was guilty of "*Self-love* which is criminal and vicious." Government, then, confirmed and upheld a basic understanding of natural law. The duty of the civil magistrate, Tennent explained, maintained natural law by punishing "Criminals in his own Community." The magistrate, ideally, embodied and protected the interest of the community from both internal threats and "from a foreign Enemy!"<sup>37</sup> In a "political society," another Presbyterian minister lectured, "*every one* even an *Infant* has the whole Force of the Community to protect him."<sup>38</sup>

As minister of Paxton Presbyterian Church, John Elder regularly exposed his parishioners to similar theological and political doctrines as those highlighted above. In his sermons he often expatiated on the centrality of moral laws to the good order of the community and encouraged his parishioners to think of themselves as part of a society of believers with mutual needs and interests. "The way of man," Elder argued, "is not in himself." During church service, he led congregants in prayers to God to "Bless all Ranks & Orders of Men in this Part of thy World. May they all do ye Duties of their

several stations so as to promote thy glory & ye Publick Good." Like other ministers, Elder regularly preached on the origins of civil society, tracing its development through a combination of biblical examples and natural law precepts. He told his listeners that the public good through the maintenance of the public peace constituted the ultimate purpose of government. As Elder noted in a sermon, the people should pray that their leaders and government officials served as a "Terror to evil Doers & an Encouragement & Protection to all those who do well."<sup>39</sup>

Such messages, while sanctioning the importance of the rule of law through the force of government, also promoted an underlining rebelliousness. Government required obedience, but that submission had limits. In the ideal, government protected and promoted liberty by upholding the obligations individuals owed to the community rooted in natural law. Yet, as Elder remarked to his parishioners, "Liberty does not consist in an Absolute Indifference."<sup>40</sup> All people had to assure liberty's existence by any means necessary, which sometimes meant challenging lawful authority. According to some Presbyterian ministers, during certain times and circumstances popular action proved acceptable and justified. "When man joins himself in civil society with others," one argued, "he, as well as every one with him, gives up his rights which he has naturally, to be regulated by the laws made by the society, and to which he consents; at least so far as his own safety, and that of the *rest of society*, shall require."<sup>41</sup> Obedience, they cautioned, had limits.

If government failed to live up to expectations, the people had a right to act in the interest of the public good. According to Tennant, if the government did not punish criminals and protect inhabitants from a foreign enemy, it becomes "an empty Name, a meer *Cypher*, of no Moment and Consequence to Society" and therefore could not expect "Obedience" from its subjects.<sup>42</sup> Another minister, "Sounding the Trumpet of Liberty and Truth," argued people owed "*Caesar* the Things that are *Caesar's*" only so long as Caesar upheld the "Agreement made when we threw off the State of Nature" for common protection. Therefore, "when I am not protected," the minister exclaimed, the government could not expect submission, and this, for him, was "the Truth of Christ."<sup>43</sup> All people, Joseph Montgomery, a minister born in Paxton Township, surmised, should "make use of such means as God and Nature hath put in our hands" for their common protection and safety.<sup>44</sup> If the people did not use the "means in our power" when the government failed to "observe its original design," the Reverend John Carmichael argued, they "then tempt God, and rebel against his government."<sup>45</sup> As told

by Presbyterian ministers, then, God sanctioned the forceful regulation of a wayward government.

Political theories expressed by Presbyterian ministers provided a particular vision of government predicated on the public welfare that also outlined the limits of political obedience. They exhorted a political creed upholding compliance and respect to government when it maintained its responsibilities of security, safety, law and order, but countenanced extralegal action that supplanted lawful authority when government failed in its duties. When the Paxton Boys justified their actions by referencing the economic “self-interest” of Pennsylvania’s politicians, unequal political representation favoring an elite eastern oligarchy, inept and corrupt courts and judges, as well as the failure of the government to arrest Native American “murderers” and provide protection during war, they drew on a shared language and vision of government taught by their ministers. God, they thought, approved their reasons and goals for resistance and extralegal action. Therefore, they only needed to look, as Stewart bluntly stated, “to our God, and our guns.”<sup>46</sup>

This important religious connection was not lost on contemporaries. During the flood of pamphlets following the Paxton riots, both those writing for and against the Paxtonians focused on the religious dimensions of the uprising, often associating a “Presbyterian zeal” with the event.<sup>47</sup> For the opponents of the Paxton Boys, the “Piss-Brute-tarians,” those self-proclaimed religious men who thought they were fighting “the Lords Battles,” were false Christians. After all, was not Jesus Christ “the Prince of Peace”?<sup>48</sup> While historians have often characterized the backlash against Presbyterians for guiding the uprising as hyperbolic political rhetoric, many more Pennsylvanians highlighted the religious underpinnings of the event to justify the actions of the Paxton Boys.<sup>49</sup> In one pro-Paxton poem, significantly titled, “The Cloven-Foot Discovered,” the author painted the Paxton Boys as true Christians who were indeed engaged in “the Lords Battles” against the agents of the devil. Those agents were both enemy Native Americans and the colonial government. Therefore, the entire movement was cast as receiving the blessing of “kind Heav’n.”<sup>50</sup>

The Paxton riots and the popular political debate it inspired had vast implications for the revolutionary period in Pennsylvania. They simultaneously demonstrated the strength of Presbyterians and their political exclusion. Immediately following the event, over twenty-five prominent ministers sent a circular letter to the colony’s vast congregations, expressing that though Presbyterians were “so numerous in the Province,” they were

"considered as Nobody . . . so that any Incroachments upon our essential and Charter Privileges may be made by evil-minded Persons, who think they have little to fear from any Opposition that can be made to their Measures by us." In response, Presbyterians founded a committee of correspondence that included both ministers and the laity, uniting the disparate congregations throughout the province to advance the "Welfare of Society and the general Good of the Community to which we belong."<sup>51</sup> Such mobilization and the challenge to the traditional ruling powers that it signified marked a crucial transformation in the politics of the colony. By 1776 men in power feared this "dangerous combination of men, whose principles of religion and polity" were "equally averse to those of the established Church and Government" of Great Britain.<sup>52</sup> It was no coincidence that during the debate over American independence, conservatives railed against the "Presbyterian Republicans," and middle colony delegates to the Continental Congress feared creating "an American Republic" because they thought it would be founded on "Presbyterian Principles."<sup>53</sup>

Those principles, whether lauded or hated, had a longevity on the frontier sweeping beyond the Presbyterian religion. During the early republic, the religious revivals historians term the Second Great Awakening elucidated those same political ideals from the pens and mouths of powerful evangelical ministers who could and did inspire many on the frontier to take action.<sup>54</sup> The Whiskey Rebellion is a prime example. Frontier people then, like before, envisioned government as the protector of the public welfare and justified extralegal action as sanctioned by God. When they resisted Federalist policies in the 1790s, particularly a tax on whiskey, they, like the Paxton Boys before them, proclaimed their devotion to God and their struggle as upholding "Liberty and Government." In other words, they resisted to preserve government. Theirs was a struggle, as it had been during the American Revolution, to create and in this instance maintain what many called "the good order of government."<sup>55</sup> Therefore, it was not the tax on whiskey that inspired their rebellion, but what it symbolized for the future.

For many in western Pennsylvania, the tax on whiskey represented a vision of government proffered by the ruling Federalists challenging, to the very core, the proper role of government and the one they believed the revolution promised. Alexander Hamilton's tax, and federal intervention in the western economy more generally, instituted a favoritism, enshrined in positive law, that benefited a few wealthy elites to the detriment of the larger community. Hamiltonian government eschewed the public welfare, which frontier

petitioners thought “ought to be the true object of a republican government,” for private enterprise, which signified graft and corruption. For many westerners, “the middle and low class” should have “an equal privilege with those of the rich,” and it was the job of government, through regulatory policy, to maintain that equitable balance.<sup>56</sup>

During the Whiskey Rebellion, frontier dwellers affirmed in a myriad of ways the importance of the “public welfare” to their own understanding of society and government. Their petitions drew on that salient principle and even their resistance efforts through ritualistic violence toward excisemen and compliant distillers reinforced the idea of the common good and the elevation of the community over the individual. For example, the Whiskey Rebels set up extralegal courts, adjudicated the guilt or innocence of offenders, demanded the resignation of officers, and sentenced those convicted to tar and feathering. Often, however, the extralegal court would commute the sentence to public humiliation and banishment. Both punishments, by casting off such offenders, reinforced the importance and strength of the community and its collective welfare against what many viewed as the self-interest of individuals. In a similar vein, when it seemed that many prominent inhabitants in Pittsburgh favored the excise and would not muster for “the Common Cause,” rebels berated them for failing to uphold “those duties that as men and fellow citizens we owe to each other,” declared the town “Sodom,” and threatened to march there and “destroy it by fire.”<sup>57</sup>

Analogous to the Paxton affair, religion and politics fundamentally intertwined on the western edges of Pennsylvania to reinforce the importance of the public welfare and justify resistance, violent if necessary. Yet, the Whiskey Insurrection was in many ways different, as it took place during a period of millennial revivalism that crucially imbued modern political events with religious and prophetic significance—a connection Nathan O. Hatch argues originated in the Revolutionary era and aptly termed “civil millennialism.”<sup>58</sup> With that new understanding of the millennial in mind, many Whiskey Rebels felt they fought on the side of Christ against the forces of tyranny. Moreover, modern political events in Europe, particularly the French Revolution, demonstrated the global dimensions of this millennial mission. Although we often think of the Whiskey Rebellion as a secular event, the Federalist administration of the time found it little surprising that those men most active in the cause of resistance were local ministers and self-professed prophets.<sup>59</sup> Because the religious connection was so potent, prominent government officials tried to combat the “true religion” of the movement,

demanding rebels to consider whether their "insurrection" was the "work of God or of the Devil."<sup>60</sup>

The religious element of the uprising was the product of a rise in religious fervor during the early national period. Ministers, itinerant preachers, and bizarre prophets paraded the new United States whipping up the populace by combining religious messages about the coming reign of Christ with modern political events at home and abroad. Baptist ministers, such as David Philips and John Corbly, preached "vigorous and warlike sermons that heartened frontiersmen who came for many miles around."<sup>61</sup> Those same ministers proved the "most violent for resistance" during the rebellion. At the rather militant Parkinson's Ferry (now Monongahela City) meeting in August 1794 to discuss whether or not westerners should peaceably submit to the laws of the country, Corbly forcefully favored resistance and denounced any thought of peaceful "petitions or remonstrances." The federal government eventually arrested Corbly for his violent countenance the following November.<sup>62</sup>

Baptist preacher Morgan John Rhee similarly converted many frontiersmen with his evangelical message of God's intention to spread "the perfect law of liberty" through the whole earth and that the "*fire of freedom*" would reign supreme regardless of Federalist intentions. "*Citizens of America!*" he railed to an enraptured audience of frontier dwellers in Greenville, Alleghany County, an area that held out against the federal government's peace offerings during the Whiskey Rebellion, "Guard with jealousy the temple of liberty. Protect her altar from being polluted with the offerings of force or fraud." If they did not, he warned, frontiersmen would suffer like the people of Meroz whom God cursed for not helping the Lord in time of battle.<sup>63</sup> It is no surprise, then, that at a time of political turmoil in the United States, where ministers whipped up the general populace reeling from disenchantment, that church membership grew rapidly. According to historian Dorothy E. Fennell, the western sections of Pennsylvania, the same areas that rose up to protest Federalist policy, experienced a religious revival in the early 1790s.<sup>64</sup>

Perhaps the most conspicuous of all frontier preachers during the late 1780s and early 1790s was the self-professed "Alleghany Philosopher" and biblical prophet, Herman Husband. Known at least as early as the 1770s as a local and political leader he lived on a large farm on the western edges of Bedford (now Somerset) County. In 1778 his neighbors elected him to the Assembly and within the year they used his home as a place of safe refuge during a horrible winter and amid circulating rumors of Tory plots and Indian raids. By the 1780s, he had taken to the road. Wearing his homespun

clothing and gripping a "Pilgrim's staff," Husband preached to all and sundry about the coming of the "New Jerusalem" and the imminent battle between God and the Devil.<sup>65</sup>

Although eastern political leaders amused themselves by reading Husband's sermons and criticizing his message as "Balderdash," frontiersmen obviously found something important and relatable in his religious and political prophecies.<sup>66</sup> It should be remembered that Husband had experience leading men on the frontier in their resistance efforts, as he was involved in North Carolina's Regulator movement. Settlers demonstrated their continued admiration of Husband during the Whiskey Rebellion by choosing him to represent their interests on the leading Committee of Conference at Parkinson's Ferry in August 1794, and again as a representative at a popular meeting at Brownsville, and finally, they chose him to negotiate a peace with the United States Commissioners. Frontier dwellers had a great deal of confidence in this man.

Government officials also recognized Husband's leadership role. They received a steady stream of reports declaring Husband integral to inciting "insubordination against the excise and the state."<sup>67</sup> For instance, when rebels declared excise collector Benjamin Wells a traitor to the cause and burned his home, the stalwart collector trekked to Philadelphia and accused Husband as the grand instigator of these violent actions.<sup>68</sup> By the fall of 1794, President George Washington headed his army west, demanding Husband be found, arrested, and conveyed to Philadelphia "for winter quarters" by any means necessary, or as he put it, "by *Hook*, or by *Crook*."<sup>69</sup>

It is easy to imagine why frontiersmen chose Husband and why the Federalist administration would want him arrested. Since the early 1780s, Husband had presented a cyclical vision of history to the public, one where a cosmic dialectic struggle constantly unfolded, pitting the forces of good against the diabolical machinations of evil. Significant for the purposes of armed resistance, Husband related that these battles did not take place in some ethereal cosmos or the heavens above, but occurred on the ground, often over political principles.<sup>70</sup> As Husband proclaimed, "Outward Civill Government" was "the true Church of God" and "the Lord's sanctuary," therefore, all divine encounters would take place within that asylum.<sup>71</sup> In his sermons, he suggested that the American public, particularly the "common Men," should be on their guard to protect that sanctuary, especially after a revolution that "promised liberty." Democratic revolutions, he argued, were steps toward the Millennium and therefore precipitated



cosmic Manichean struggles. Although God ordained and supported the cause of democracy and equality, he cautioned, the devil, through his agents on earth, sought to overturn their hard work. In one sermon Husband argued that in "every Revolution" when "the foreign oppressor is thrown off as Rome over England, and as England over these states, then our leaders and designing men emediately Aim to take their place."<sup>72</sup>

Husband painted the Federalist administration and their policies as the representatives of the devil in their own time, an idea perhaps closer to home for many in western Pennsylvania. The government leaders were, he said, "Enclinable to Idollitry and the Worshipping of false Gods" which the "luxury, Greandier [Grandeur], Superfluity and Waste" of "their own institutions and Laws" clearly demonstrated. These "monarchical" men, he concluded, stalled and threatened a millennium that Americans forwarded in their revolution.<sup>73</sup> For Husband, Americans were in the midst of a holy war pitting the "divine spirit of God" that embraced the "publick welfare" against the devil and the beast of Revelations that crept into the world "through laziness" and "self-interest" to "Give up the publick welfare."<sup>74</sup>

According to Husband, divinely inspired government mirrored the fundamental ideas of the revolution, especially those promoted by popular committees and conventions in the halcyon days of 1776. He constantly reminded his listeners and readers of the revolution's public, community, and egalitarian nature. In one prophetic sermon Husband quoted an *Address of the Deputies of the Committees of Pennsylvania*, authored by some of those who crafted the state constitution in the summer of 1776. Using their words and the spirit of their ideas, Husband pontificated that "our revolution" contended "for permanent Freedom" under a government that had "for its Object not the Emolument of one Man or Class of Men only, but the Safety, Liberty and Happiness of every Individual in the Community."<sup>75</sup> Such an idea of liberty and government predicated on the public welfare was, Husband believed, "generally Inspired by the Same Spirit" that "Religious Professors called Christ."<sup>76</sup> For Husband, the governments created in 1776 that enshrined the idea that individuals were "a part only of that community" laid the groundwork that Americans must revise and further to establish the kingdom of heaven here on earth.<sup>77</sup>

For all the good done in that transformative year of 1776, Husband told his western audience, "our leaders and designing men," in league with the devil, sought to scale the hard-won revolution back by introducing a government rooted in individual self-interest. Americans needed look no further

for proof of this malevolent design than to the federal Constitution, which Husband argued, “proceeded from the spirit of the serpent, or what we call tyranny.” That constitution and the men who supported it “falsely call themselves republicans” and, like the corrupted Esau, the brother of Jacob and grandson of Abraham, wanted to use an “iron hand” to bring America “back to a despotic form of government.”<sup>78</sup>

In sermons and prophetic letters to the public, Husband castigated the whole scheme of the federal government and the officers at its helm. Men who basked in corruption, vice, and luxury created and supported the federal Constitution. Husband sneered that those same men displayed the pomp and parade of idolatry as they rode to the capital “in a coach or chariot with costly equipage,” rather than ride a “common ass,” signifying the coming reign of Christ.<sup>79</sup> These men of luxury, receiving bloated salaries to further their own venality, Husband railed, sold “our liberty” for “a mess of pottage.”<sup>80</sup> The new government would, he warned, produce standing armies to buttress men who prized “self-interest” and allow them to “lay taxes to the ends of our continent, to the oppression of the people.” The legislatures of the states would become a “mere shadow” of their former glory and the new general government would favor moneyed men, land jobbers, and speculators who “have it in view to serve themselves.” Therefore, the whole governing structure guided by “serpents, adders, [and] vipers,” would be “deaf to any petitions or remonstrances of the people,” and would eventually “tumble down into the old Egyptian sea of slavery.”<sup>81</sup>

While Husband provided a rather bleak vision of the future under the Constitution and the ruling Federalists, he did offer his listeners and readers hope that justified resistance. While he was not a proponent of violence, being a pacifist himself, Husband’s message struck a militant air. For those in his audience not inclined to his peaceable view, that rebellious message was not lost. Of particular importance was Husband’s investigation of ancient Athenian law based on the ideas of Solon. “If I remember right,” Husband noted in one of his sermons, “Solon’s laws punished those men, who remained neutral, in times of public dissention.” According to Husband, ancient republics, also inspired by God, relied upon the will of the people and, as tyrannical government encroached on the world, their direct action. If man did not obey the laws of Solon, they would, in time, become slaves. Using the story of Issachar, the son of Jacob in the Book of Genesis, Husband hammered home this crucial point. Issachar “was a strong ass of a man, that saw the land was good, and loved ease; and so bowed his shoulder, to bear

every usurpation of tyrants, 'till he became a despicable slave." Although Husband believed "God shall overcome at the last," the people, he argued, could not sit idly by "as we have all the combined powers of tyranny to oppose; who has held all the nations in the world in bondage, ever since before Noah's days." Summarizing, Husband told his listeners and readers that the exclusion of the common people from the government, the failure of the government to redress grievances or even hear the voice of the public was the work of the beast, which "common Men" could either rectify "by force of arms" or supinely accept and become slaves like Issachar.<sup>82</sup>

Husband portrayed such violent resistance against tyrants as necessary, not only to safeguard the people from slavery, but also because God willed it. The intersection of individual self-interest and government "is so provoking to God" that "he has totally destroyed every government that ever ran or fell into such idolatry, luxury and waste." Like most millennial prophets, Husband looked to the books of Revelations and Daniel to discover God's true intentions for the world. In those books, Husband found assurance that God would jettison all the political corruption, exploitation, and greed that ultimately produced widespread poverty and undermined the public spirit and welfare of any good "Civill government." Because humankind acted as God's earthly instruments, it was only natural, or rather biblical, that the people should scorch corrupt governments from the earth.<sup>83</sup>

Once those governments were eradicated, people could begin to establish their earthly and divinely inspired paradise, one started during the Revolution and stalled by Federalist policy and underlings. This earthly paradise would embrace everyone in a cooperative government where each person would "receive a proportionate part of the profits, equivalent to his labour and stock put in." Theirs would be a government where "every workman and labourer has such an interest in the whole" that "it will excite industry and care through the whole, and like members of the natural body, such one will care for the rest."<sup>84</sup> Husband's vision for the future provided a stark contrast with the current reality of many westerners, but also provided a glimpse of light down a long, dark, demon-filled tunnel.

In treatises, sermons and open-air addresses, Husband combined ancient political principles with biblical prophecy to outline an earthly paradise, his "New Jerusalem." In one sermon, for example, he likened his message and himself to the great Spartan legal reformer Lykurgus. His divinely inspired government and society would embrace the very essence of Lykurgan reform, for it enshrined the common good or what the Spartans termed "homoioi,"

a word denoting their status as equals, peers, or similars with a duty to the common welfare and mess. Significantly, Spartan understanding of “*homoioi*” rested on the principle that each received an allotment of land at birth, allowing them to contribute to their society and granting them political rights. Like Lykurgus, Husband promised that in the “New Jerusalem” every husband should receive 300 acres, each wife 200 acres and whatever their children inherited would augment a 100-acre tract granted to every child at birth by the state, though no family could exceed 2,000 acres. This equitable distribution of land, Husband proclaimed, was God-ordained.<sup>85</sup>

Westerners railing against speculators and moneyed men (who, they reasoned, with government support gobbled up large swaths of land to the detriment of the middling and poorer sorts) related to the necessity of Husband’s reforms. During a September 1794 popular gathering in Cumberland County, it was resolved that the federal government’s support of speculators and others “is unjust and improper.” The assembled demanded “the equal division of landed property which ought to be encouraged by law.” Such an idea, they argued, was “an essential principle in every republican government”; anything less was “tyrannical and unjust.”<sup>86</sup>

For Husband, these ideas were based on more than just ancient forms; he linked his “New Jerusalem” to biblical prophecies and the will of God. He stated, “God has ordered” that civil government should resemble “the true nature of things,” and it mirrored the “Body of Christ”: a “body made up of different members and classes of officers united into one general interest.” Husband therefore argued, “all should have the same care one for another, as the different members of the body natural have for each other.” As he contended in 1790, “for if one member in the body politic perish, it will affect all the members the same as happens in the body natural.” The people were intimately connected to each other through Christ and their all, as individuals, was only significant in as far as it pertained to the welfare of the whole. In essence, Husband outlined the ideal government, one establishing perfect balance between all its parts, whether that be geographic, social, or economic. Any disruption of that balance, then, challenged what “God has ordered;” a powerful vision given the religious sentiments, grievances, and proclivities of early modern peoples on the frontier.<sup>87</sup>

God revealed such a government to Husband as he walked the steep rocky slopes of the Allegheny Mountains. Light stretching across them highlighted a doorway to the “New Jerusalem” and Husband searched the Bible for a basis and structure for this divinely inspired and revealed government. In his

search for "truth," Husband discovered that God had earlier manifested the perfect structure of government to the prophet Ezekiel who tried, with little avail, to instruct "all those governments" in the world on the true principles of civil society, specifically that all governments needed to "tend to the justice, equity, good, and happiness of the whole community." This meant that government, in its lawmaking, regulatory policies, and function, had to draw the line between what is right and what is wrong, what is vice and what is virtue, what is moral and what is immoral, for the sake of the whole.<sup>88</sup>

The governments Ezekiel instructed failed to flourish. Destroyed by tyranny and beset by the difficulty of drawing the line between those black-and-white polarities, abortive governments stalled the progress of the millennium. Husband argued, however, that the line separating vice and virtue was clear in scripture, basing his whole vision of civil society on God's creation of the "body politic," a community entity with common interests among individuals. Husband reasoned that God made man for society "with no other aim but the common happiness of every individual. There is not, nor can be, any other social tie than that of the common interest. Therefore, nothing can be consistent with the order of society," or God's law, "unless it be consistent with the common utility of its members- this is the only criterion of vice and virtue."<sup>89</sup>

Husband's "New Jerusalem," then, visibly manifested a public welfare legal and political philosophy, wrapped in biblical legitimacy. The government and the people should figuratively and literally represent the "human body politic." His plan outlined decentralized empires that maintained control through a federated system of states. Each state would act for the common good, regulating land purchases, the economy, private enterprise, as well as civil and criminal law. The state would provide for public education, share in the development of internal improvements, and support the arts. All would be done for and by the people through a participatory democracy predicated on the community's welfare. Husband's ideal government had no place for individualism and economic self-interest; community values reigned supreme.<sup>90</sup>

The eruption of revolution in France gave cogency, meaning, and universal significance to Husband's millenarian vision of liberty, government, and law. American newspapers, pamphlets, speeches, political societies, and sermons all referenced and fed off the rhetoric of French revolutionaries. The message of the public welfare, enshrined in French revolutionary actions, reaffirmed the importance of the common good to a revolutionary and republican heritage in which Americans shared and believed. Newspapers ran

stories and opinion pieces throughout the first half of the 1790s proclaiming in loud and vocal print, "These words, *Salus populi, suprema lex esto*, should be the motto of every patriot, and ought to be engraved, in characters of gold, on the frontispiece of all republican societies."<sup>91</sup> Popular democratic societies ran ads stating bluntly that the actions of revolutionaries in France confirmed, "the safety and welfare of the community, is, or ought to be, the first object of government." If Americans did not stand up for those golden letters against "turbulent and designing men" intoxicated by "prosperity," they "render themselves unworthy of the invaluable blessings of peace, the best boon of Heaven; and are in danger of losing them."<sup>92</sup>

In case readers and listeners in taverns, coffee shops, and open-air congregations missed the prophetic significance of those salient and pregnant Latin words, writers punctuated their opinions with scripture such as Isaiah 59:19, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."<sup>93</sup> More to the point, the *Pittsburgh Gazette* ran a series of "Singular Prophecies on the Present Times" equating the French Revolution with the "destruction of Antichrist."<sup>94</sup> Enemies of the public welfare should therefore fear the handmaidens of God on a divinely inspired mission.

Francophilistic and revolutionary rhetoric, then, had a violent religious undertone. A revival of millennial writing in the 1790s crucially imbued modern political events with religious significance.<sup>95</sup> Husband, then, was part of a much larger religious and political trend in the United States. American ministers of all Christian persuasions inundated the public with published sermons linking the American and French revolutions to an imminent millennium. According to Anglican bishop Elias Lee, the American and French revolutions signified God's plan to eradicate tyrants "as the chaff of the mountain before the wind." These revolutions were, as the bishop pointed out, the beginning of a global struggle to restore "the human race to their inherent rights."<sup>96</sup> Or, as a Baptist minister noted, the French Revolution served as evidence that the whole Christian world was in a pitched battle to "pursue the spirit of monarchy to its very last recess; and completely demolish the empire and kingdom of the Antichrist."<sup>97</sup> These prophetic statements were not just commentaries on European events, but inherently oppositional tracts painting the Federalist Party as obstacles of the millennium, supporters of the beast foretold of in Revelations.

Over the course of the early 1790s, millennial writers, like Husband, increasingly cast the reigning Federalists as "monarchical," a "beast with,

to be sure, seven heads, and ten horns."<sup>98</sup> Prophetic exegesis informed a religious public that such "Monarchical Government" as the Federalist Party promoted "is the literal kingdom of Satan, and the antichrist or the Image of the beast" whereas "Representative government is the literal and peaceable kingdom of the Messiah."<sup>99</sup> As one popular religious political tract excoriating Federalist policy explained in 1794, during the American Revolution "we were then taught" that the government would uphold the "pure religion of Jesus Christ" that is "*salus populi was suprema lex.*" The writer went on: "alas! alas! we have been deceived."<sup>100</sup>

Frighteningly, at least for many Federalists, revolutionary exegesis also prophesized that the proponents of "representative government" would ultimately "chace, break, and destroy Monarchical Government and spread itself over the earth."<sup>101</sup> Ministers, preachers, and itinerants of all Christian persuasions foretold that the people of the republics would actively rise up and reform the world in preparation for the coming reign of Christ. "Be alarmed, my dear countrymen . . . our new masters come like Job's messengers, with worse and worse tidings" and therefore "your situation calls as loudly for your exertions as in 1774." Leaving off this rebellious note, the author exclaimed "*vox populi vox Die* . . . the voice of the people is the voice of God."<sup>102</sup>

The words and spirit of revolutionary millennial exegesis spoke to lingering grievances, justified resistance, and gave hope for the future. Thousands of men mustered, took up arms, and marched on towns and federal officials. Liberty poles were erected and protected and men were tarred and feathered. Despite all of this, though, the mobilization of western farmers could never overcome the energy of the federal government and the army it commanded. By the winter of 1794 the rebellion was dead and the leaders were in jail. For his part, Herman Husband spent a brutal winter in prison, where he became sick and weak. Though he was finally released, that experience took its toll and he died somewhere on the road during his long march home. Yet, as the Paxton Riots some thirty years earlier demonstrate, the ideas undergirding the movement did not vanish with the rebellion. Five years after the Whiskey Insurrection, westerners again took up arms against Federalist policies and, like before, some clergy led them. In Northampton County, taking part in Fries' Rebellion, Rev. Jacob Eyerman preached against unequal federal taxation and the individual self-interest of greedy politicians subverting the public welfare. He even promised to place his "black coat on a nail and fight the whole week and preach for them on Sundays." According to one resident, without the preacher "nothing would have happened."<sup>103</sup>



Examining the religious dimensions of such events draws out the salience and longevity of crucial political principles that shaped and guided political action on the frontier. Westerners would most likely disagree with many modern scholars as to their own religiosity and, moreover, their political ideologies. They were, as rebels proclaimed in 1794, like the biblical warriors of old, “glorious instruments in the hands of Providence.” Moreover, those same rebels declared that they never demonstrated a “want of duty to a government”; rather they refused to “sacrifice” themselves to the “local interest” of eastern politicians. They fought for a “true government” that protected their collective “natural rights” against the “engrossing, forestalling, and avarice” of “evil” individuals encouraged by “our government.”<sup>104</sup> In essence, they wanted more government, not less, and desired that government protect the liberties of and assure equal opportunities for common people. Such was a political philosophy, promoted by their religion, consistently at odds with formidable ruling powers and the historical imagination. This should push us to rethink ingrained assumptions that irreligious frontiersmen embraced and fought for an emerging liberalism prizing small governments for their own personal independence.

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#### NOTES

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1. *Historical Magazine of Monongahela's Old Home Coming Week: September 6–13, 1908* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1908), 77.
2. “An Exciseman,” August 13, 1792, from the Philadelphia History Museum at the Atwater Kent, Philadelphia.
3. William Logan, quoted in Kevin Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn's Holy Experiment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 146.
4. Anonymous letter, February 29, 1764, in *Hazard's Register of Pennsylvania*, ed. Hazard, 12:10.

5. Lazarus Stewart, "Narrative of Lazarus Stewart," in *Historical Collection of the State of Pennsylvania*, ed. Sherman Day (Philadelphia: George W. Gorton, 1843), 280.
6. "An Exciseman," August 13, 1792.
7. *Carlisle Gazette*, July 9, 1794.
8. Carl Bridenbaugh, *Mitre and Sceptre: Transatlantic Faiths, Ideas, Personalities, and Politics, 1689–1775* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), xvii.
9. Thomas Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).
10. See, for example, one of the newer works on the Paxton Boys by Kevin Kenny. In it, he certainly recognizes religious differences, especially during the political debates inspired by the Paxton Boys, but dedicates very little time teasing out how or even if religion influenced the uprising. Most interpretations of the Paxton Boys start off noting that many of them were Presbyterians and that one of their ministers, John Elder, was an important community leader, though he did not lead the actual rebellion, but this background information is quickly abandoned, only to be used to explain the political fallout after the Paxton Boys' trek home from Germantown in early 1764. See, for example, Brooke Hindle, "The March of the Paxton Boys," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (1946): 461–86; Peter A. Butzin, "Politics, Presbyterians and the Paxton Riots, 1763–64," *Journal of Presbyterian History*, 51, no. 1 (1973): 70–84; Jeremy Engels, "'Equipped for Murder': The Paxton Boys and 'the Spirit of Killing all Indians' in Pennsylvania, 1763–1764," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 8, no. 3 (2005): 355–81. A recent book-length assessment of the Paxton Boys is Jack Brubaker's *Massacre of the Conestogas: On the Trail of the Paxton Boys in Lancaster County* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2010).
11. Marjoleine Kars, *Breaking Loose Together: The Regulator Rebellion in Pre-Revolutionary North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).
12. Brendan McConville, *These Daring Disturbers of the Public Peace: The Struggle for Property and Power in Early New Jersey* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).
13. As Alan Taylor pointed out about the Whiskey Rebellion, John Corbly and Herman Husband were "influential preachers and important rebels. . . . Until we come to terms with their roles, our understanding of the rebellion remains incomplete." Alan Taylor, "Frontier Ferment" *Reviews in American History* 15, no. 1 (1987): 596.
14. Anglican minister Thomas Barton, as well as Presbyterian ministers Andrew Bay and John Steel, supported the Paxton affair. Bay and Steel, like John Elder, led some of the men who took part in the uprising during the Seven Years' War, and continued that leadership in their local churches and communities. During the Whiskey Rebellion, Herman Husband was one of many religious leaders who countenanced and even participated in the rebellion. For example,

- Baptist ministers David Philips and John Corbly were vocal supporters and leaders.
15. The important role of ministers and preachers in early America, though often understated, should not be discountenanced. They were crucial community leaders, recognized for their persuasive power and the respect they garnered from their parishioners. Historian Spencer McBride has gone as far as to argue that without clergymen, politicians would have been “hard-pressed” to persuade “the many” to mobilize as energetically as they did during the American Revolution. More to the point, early American history is filled with instances of clergymen taking decisive roles in popular political affairs. In Massachusetts, for example, minister Samuel Ely mobilized many people in his community to shut down the local courts, instigating what one scholar deemed, “a civil war” that foreshadowed Shays’s Rebellion. Spencer W. McBride, *Pulpit and Nation: Clergymen and the Politics of Revolutionary America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016); John L. Brooke, “To the Quiet of the People: Revolutionary Settlements and Civil Unrest in Western Massachusetts, 1774–1789,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (1989): 425–62.
  16. In his work, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, Slaughter argues that frontier dwellers were, essentially, irreligious and prized a “liberty” representing “proto-Lockean” individualism at odds with the ideology of “order” promoted by the eastern “political overlords.” Such a dichotomy was certainly espoused by government officials during and after the rebellion; one need only read the thoughts of Alexander Hamilton or Judge Alexander Addison to reach such a conclusion. However, those ideas rarely reflected the thoughts and motivations of ordinary westerners who partook in the uprising. Similar to Slaughter, Mark H. Jones argues that frontier peoples sought a form of “civil libertarianism.” Exploring violent uprisings in northwestern Pennsylvania, Paul Moyer likewise contends, “The vision of personal independence that drew settlers to the frontier also drew them into conflict with Indians, governments, wealthy speculators, and fellow settlers who sought possession of the land.” Like Slaughter, Jones, and Moyer, Terry Bouton fuses together egalitarianism, individualism, and antigovernment proclivities to explain frontier political ideology. Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 32, 82–84; Jones, “Herman Husband: Millenarian, Carolina Regulator, and Whiskey Rebel” (PhD diss., Northern Illinois University, 1982), 154; Moyer, *Wild Yankees: The Struggle for Independence along Pennsylvania’s Revolutionary Frontier* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 7–10; Bouton, *Taming Democracy: “The People,” the Founders, and the Troubled Ending of the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).
  17. Anonymous [Thomas Barton], “The Conduct of the Paxton Men” in *A LETTER from a GENTLEMAN in One of the Frontier Counties to His Friend in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1764), in *The Paxton Papers*, ed. John Raine Dunbar (Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1957), 298. Though published anonymously,

- Barton likely authored "The Conduct of the Paxton Men," one of the incendiary pamphlets published in early 1764. His authorship of the pamphlet is discussed in James P. Myers, "The Rev. Thomas Barton's Authorship of *The Conduct of the Paxton Men Impartially Represented* (1764)," *Pennsylvania History* 61, no. 2 (1994): 155–84; quote of Whiskey Rebellion deposition in Bouton, *Taming Democracy*, 238.
18. The use of *Salus populi suprema lex est* was a common term employed by rebels and revolutionaries in the early modern world, particularly the religious and political radicals, the Levelers, during the English Civil War. The term also has significance for the state governments created during the American Revolution and the justification for regulatory policy during the nineteenth century. For an analysis of its significance for regulatory policy decisions in the nineteenth century see, William Novak, *The People's Welfare: Law and Regulation in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). For its importance to the American Revolution see Christopher R. Pearl, "'For the Good Order of Government': The American Revolution and the Creation of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1740–1790" (PhD diss., Binghamton University, 2013).
  19. See petitions sent to the Assembly between March 23 and May 25, 1764, in *Pennsylvania Archives* (hereafter *PA*), ed. John B. Linn and William H. Egle (Harrisburg, 1876), ser. 8, vol. 7, 5581–5610.
  20. [Barton,] "The Conduct of the Paxton Men."
  21. "Narrative of Lazarus Stewart," 280.
  22. *Declaration and Remonstrance of the distressed and bleeding Frontier Inhabitants of the Province of Pennsylvania*, in *The Paxton Papers*, ed. Dunbar, 104.
  23. For excellent examinations of race and racism on the frontier see James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 284–88, 290–91; Collin G. Calloway, *The Scratch of a Penn: 1763 and the Transformation of North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 77–79; Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008), 179–81; Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost*; Patrick Spero, "Creating Pennsylvania: The Politics of the Frontier and the State, 1682–1800" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2009), 222–31, and his new book, *Frontier Country: The Politics of War in Early Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 148–69.
  24. Although there are many different theories for the organization and mobilization of violent crowds, both old and recent, a combination of approaches from political scientists, sociologists, and historians provides the best model to evaluate the mobilization of people and political violence. In his seminal work, *Why Men Rebel*, Ted Robert Gurr argues that political violence stems from "discontent" over a "perceived discrepancy between men's value expectations" and their perceived reality or what actually exists. While Gurr provides

- a logical connection for the formation of discontent, he does not offer a satisfying analysis of how that discontent turns into extralegal crowd action. However, the work of Rollo May and James Barton Hunt offer crucial insights into motivating factors for the transition from discontent to crowd action. In a word, they both argue “anxiety” is the key to the puzzle. According to May, anxiety is characterized by “feelings of uncertainty and helplessness in the face of danger.” The lack of resources to manage that fear, as Hunt argues, can result in potentially violent crowd action. Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), 11–13; Rollo May, *The Meaning of Anxiety* (New York: Ronald Press, 1950), 190–91; James Barton Hunt, “The Crowd and the American Revolution, A Study of Urban Political Violence in Boston and Philadelphia, 1763–1776” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1973), 12–13.
25. Anonymous letter, February 29, 1764, in *Hazard’s Register of Pennsylvania*, ed. Hazard, 12:10.
  26. William Henry Egle, *Glimpses of the History of Old Paxtang Church* (Harrisburg, PA: Harrisburg Publishing Company, 1890), 21–22. For how the Great Awakening divided communities, see Martin E. Lodge, “The Crisis of the Churches in the Middle Colonies, 1720–1750,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 95, no. 2 (1971): 195–220; Harry S. Stout, “Religion, Communications, and the Ideological Origins of the American Revolution,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (1977): 519–41; Frank Lambert, “The First Great Awakening: Whose Interpretive Fiction?” *New England Quarterly* 68, no. 4 (1995): 650–59; John Fea, “In Search of Unity: Presbyterians in the Wake of the First Great Awakening,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 86, no. 2 (2008): 53–60; Thomas S. Kidd, *George Whitefield: America’s Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 58–147.
  27. Joseph Shippen to John Elder, July 12, 1763, quoted in Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost*, 120–21.
  28. John Elder, “A booklet of notes for sermons and prayers of Rev. John Elder,” Elder Collection, MG 070, Dauphin County Historical Society; William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1858), 77.
  29. Patrick Griffin, “The People with No Name: Ulster’s Migrants and Identity Formation in Eighteenth-Century Pennsylvania,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (2001): 598.
  30. See also Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost*, 27–28.
  31. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), 265–79.
  32. Charles Beatty, *A Sermon Preached in Woodbury* (Philadelphia, 1752), 25–26.
  33. Gilbert Tennant, *Vindicae Legis: LAW established by Faith* (Philadelphia, 1745), 3.
  34. For an exploration of the breakdown of community, church, family, and law, the four ordering forces of the early modern world in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania, see, Pearl, “For the Good Order of Government,” 30–114.

- For how it was happening elsewhere, see Robert A. Gross, *Minutemen and Their World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976).
35. John Goodlet, *A Vindication of the Associate Synod* (Philadelphia, 1767), 8–11. For a similar expression of ideas see Samuel Davies, *A Sermon on Man's Primitive State; and the First Covenant, Delivered before the Reverend Presbytery of New-Castle*, April, 1748 (Philadelphia); Davies, *Religion and Public Spirit: A Valedictory Address to the Senior Class, Delivered in Nassau Hall* (New York, 1761); Joseph Montgomery, *A Letter, from a Clergyman in Town* (Philadelphia, 1764); Elisha Williams, *The Essential Rights and Liberties of Protestants* (Boston, 1744). See also Francis L. Broderick, "Pulpit, Physics, and Politics: The Curriculum of the College of New Jersey, 1764–1794," *William and Mary Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (1949): 42–68.
  36. Goodlet, *A Vindication of the Associate Synod*, 8–11.
  37. Gilbert Tennant, *The Late Association for Defence encouraged or The Lawfulness of a Defensive War Represented in a Sermon Preach'd at Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1748), 8–19.
  38. Elisha Williams, *The Essential Rights and Liberties of Protestants* (Boston, 1744), 4. For an excellent investigation of the political thought of Pennsylvania's frontier dwellers see Kozuskanich, "Falling Under the Domination Totally of Presbyterians": The Paxton Riots and the Coming of the Revolution in Pennsylvania," in *Pennsylvania's Revolution*, ed. William Pencak (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010). See also Kozuskanich, "For the Security and Protection of the Community": The Frontier and the Makings of Pennsylvania Constitutionalism" (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2005). In these works, Kozuskanich nicely sums up the community-oriented political philosophy of frontier inhabitants in relationship to the military defense of the frontier. However, Kozuskanich often downplays the place and importance of religion in the forming, disseminating, and sustaining a "public welfare" "man in society" vision of civil society that frontier dwellers used to juxtapose all aspects of government not just military defense.
  39. Elder, "A booklet of notes for sermons and prayers."
  40. Ibid.
  41. Goodlet, *A Vindication of the Associate Synod*, 11 (my emphasis).
  42. Tennant, *The Late Association for Defence*, 18–19.
  43. William McClenchan, *A Letter, from a Clergyman in Town* (Philadelphia, 1764), 5.
  44. Joseph Montgomery, *A Sermon Preached at Christiana Bridge and Newcastle* (Philadelphia, 1775), 28.
  45. John Carmichael, *A Self-Defensive War* (Philadelphia, 1775), 20.
  46. Stewart, "Narrative of Lazarus Stewart"; *Declaration and Remonstrance*, 101; extract from a Remonstrance presented to John Penn, February 24, 1764, in *Historical Collection of the State of Pennsylvania*, 279.
  47. *A Looking Glass for Presbyterians, Number II*, in *The Paxton Papers*, ed. Dunbar, 301.



48. Isaac Hunt, *A Letter from a Gentleman in Transilvania* (Philadelphia, 1764), 7; *A Dialogue, Between Andrew Trueman and Thomas Zealot*, in *The Paxton Papers*, ed. Dunbar, 89–90.
49. See, for example, James Hutson, *Pennsylvania Politics, 1746–1770: The Movement for Royal Government and Its Consequences* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 110–11; Alan Tully, *Forming American Politics: Ideals, Interests, and Institutions in Colonial New York and Pennsylvania* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 185–87; Alison Olson, “The Pamphlet War over the Paxton Boys,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 123, nos. 1/2 (1999): 31–55.
50. “The Cloven-Foot Discovered,” in *The Paxton Papers*, ed. Dunbar, 86.
51. “The Circular Letter and Articles of ‘Some Gentlemen of the Presbyterian Denomination,’ in the Province of Pennsylvania,” March 24, 1764, in Charles Augustus Hanna, *The Scotch-Irish: Or, the Scot in North Britain, North Ireland, and North America* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1902), 2:4–5.
52. Joseph Galloway, *Historical and Political Reflections on the Rise and Progress of the American Rebellion* (London, 1780), 54.
53. Thomas Bradbury Chandler, *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, 1774), in *The American Revolution: Writings from the Pamphlet Debate, 1773–1776*, ed. Gordon S. Wood (New York: The Library of America, 2015), 294; John Adams to Abigail Adams, June 11, 1775, *The Adams Papers Digital Edition*, ed. Sara Martin (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008–2017), <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/ADMS-04-01-02-0146> (accessed August 9, 2017). For more information on religion and the American Revolution see Mark A. Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 53–157; Noll, “The American Revolution and Protestant Evangelicalism,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23, no. 3 (1993): 615–38; Gideon Mailer, *John Witherspoon’s American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Thomas Kidd, *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 2010); Christopher Pearl, “Pulpits of Revolution: Presbyterian Political Thought in the Era of the American Revolution,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 95, no. 1 (2017): 4–17; McBride, *Pulpit and Nation*.
54. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989); Ruth Bloch, *Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
55. For the meaning and significance of the term “Good Order of Government” for early Americans see Pearl, “For the Good Order of Government.”
56. *General Advertiser*, September 10, 1794. See also “Resolve of Ohio Country, Virginia,” September 8 and 9, 1794, in *PA*, 2:4, 269–71.



57. "Minutes of the Meeting at Pittsburgh," in *PA*, ser. 2, vol. 4, 31; Hugh Henry Brackenridge to Tench Coxe, August 8, 1794, *ibid.*, 143; John Wilkins to William Irvine, August 19, 1794, *ibid.*, 168–74.
58. Civil millennialism is defined by its reliance on thwarting "the precipitate advance of power rather than to advocate the conversion of sinners." For "Revolutionary millennialists" making America the "seat of Liberty" would assure "that America would become the principle seat of Christ's earthly rule." Nathan O. Hatch, "The Origins of Civil Millennialism in America: New England Clergymen, War with France, and the Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (1974): 407–30.
59. According to the Supervisor of the Excise, George Clymer, the "clergy also are among the most outrageous" supporters of resistance to the excise. Clymer feared their power so much that he refused to venture farther than Pittsburgh to help enforce the excise. See George Clymer to Alexander Hamilton, October 10, 1792, in *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, digital edition, ed. Harold C. Syrett (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/ARHN-01-12-02-0378> (accessed August 11, 2017). See also, *National Gazette*, November 28 and December 1, 1792.
60. *Pittsburgh Gazette*, December 27, 1794.
61. Rueben Gold Thwaites and Louise Phelps Kellogg, *Frontier Defense on the Upper Ohio, 1777–1778* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1912), 24 n. 52.
62. James Ross, Jasper Yeates, and William Bradford to Secretary of State, August 17 and 30, 1794, in "Pennsylvania Whiskey Rebellion Collection," Library of Congress, MSS 16804. According to the United States Commissioners charged with restoring peace in the West, there were "three parties" in the resistance. The first were those who were "disposed to renounce all connection with the government & to maintain the present opposition by violence," the second countenanced peaceful resistance, and the third would submit to the laws. The commissioners pointed out that the third group was led by "men of property," while the violent party was led by clergy, particularly John Corbly, "a baptist Preacher." "The United States Commissioners to the Secretary of State," August 17, 1794, in *PA*, 2:4: 164–65. See also Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *Incidents of the Insurrection* (Philadelphia, 1795), 139.
63. Morgan John Rhees, *An Oration Delivered at Greenville* (Philadelphia, 1795), 5–8.
64. Dorothy E. Fennell, "From Rebelliousness to Insurrection: A Social History of the Whiskey Rebellion, 1765–1802" (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1981), 93.
65. "A Letter from the Allegany Philosopher to his old Friend Chrononhotonthologos," August, 20, 1786, in *Ellicott's Maryland and Virginia Almanack for 1787* (Baltimore, 1787),
66. Richard Peters to James Madison, March 31, 1790, in *The Papers of James Madison*, digital edition, ed. J. C. A. Stagg (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 133.

67. Dr. Christian Boerstler, quoted in Jones, "Herman Husband," 359–60.
68. William Hogeland, *The Whiskey Rebellion: George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and the Frontier Rebels Who Challenged America's Newfound Sovereignty* (New York: Scribner, 2006), 178–79.
69. George Washington to Alexander Hamilton, October 26, 1794, *The Papers of George Washington*, digital edition (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008), <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/GEWN-05-17-02-0077> (accessed August 15, 2017).
70. Husband argued that the "same two spirits among mankind" existed "since Adam's day." He argued Adam, Eve, and the serpent constituted the first, then, "among the Jews" there existed the Lord's people and Baal's people, in the "apostolic days" there existed "Christ and the Anti-Christ" and now, "the patriotic spirit, and spirit of tyranny." Lycurgus III [Herman Husband], *A Sermon to the Bucks and Hinds of America* (Philadelphia, 1788), iii.
71. Husband, *Manuscript Sermons*, Darlington Memorial Library, University of Pittsburgh, 4; Husband, *A Dialogue Between an Assembly-Man and a Convention-Man* (Philadelphia, 1790), 8.
72. Husband, *Manuscript Sermons*, 24–25; also quoted in Fennell, "From Rebelliousness to Insurrection," 206. Husband presents the same ideas in *A Sermon to the Bucks and Hinds of America*, iii.
73. Husband, *Manuscript Sermons*, 66.
74. Husband, "A Sermon," in *The Regulators in North Carolina: A Documentary History, 1759–1776*, ed. William Powell (Raleigh, NC: State Dept. of Archives and History, 1971), 228.
75. Husband, *Proposals to Amend and Perfect the Policy of the Government* (Baltimore, 1782), 32. See exact quote in "Letter from the Provincial Council to the 'Associators of Pennsylvania,'" in *Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg: Wm. Stanley Ray, 1903), 9:335.
76. Herman Husband, quoted in Jones, "Herman Husband," 94–95.
77. Husband, *XIV Sermons on the Characters of Jacob's Fourteen Sons* (Philadelphia, 1789), iv–xi. Quote from Pennsylvania Bill of Rights, "The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania," in *Laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: John Bioren, 1812), 5:425.
78. [Husband,] *A Sermon to the Bucks and Hinds*, 2, 15.
79. *Ibid.*, 6.
80. Husband, *Manuscript Sermons*, 67.
81. Husband, *A Sermon to the Bucks and Hinds*, 4, 6, 14, 15; Husband, *XIV Sermons*, 6:19.
82. Husband, *XIV Sermons*, 5:18–19; 7:22, 29.
83. *Ibid.*, 23.
84. *Ibid.*, 46, as quoted in Fennell, "Rebelliousness to Insurrection," 224–25.
85. Husband, *A Sermon to the Bucks and Hinds of America*, 22–23.
86. *General Advertiser*, September 10, 1794

87. Husband, *A Dialogue*, 5–6.
88. *Ibid.*, 6–7.
89. *Ibid.*, 11–12.
90. *Ibid.*
91. *American Daily Advertiser*, September 4, 1793; see also *Carlisle Gazette and the Western Repository of Knowledge*, November 13 and 19, 1793.
92. *American Daily Advertiser*, August 13, 1793.
93. *Independent Gazetteer*, April 30, 1789.
94. *Pittsburgh Gazette*, July 6, 1793.
95. For an excellent analysis of millennial writing in the early republic see Bloch, *Visionary Republic*, 150–86.
96. James Madison, *Manifestations of the Beneficence of Divine Providence Towards America* (Richmond, 1795), 7–10.
97. Elias Lee, *The Dissolution of Earthly Monarchies; the Downfall of the Antichrist; and the Full Display of Zion's King* (Danbury, 1794), 6.
98. *Ibid.*
99. Jedidiah Peck, *The Political Wars of Otsego: Or, Downfall of Jacobinism and Despotism* (Cooperstown, NY, 1796), 97.
100. *Independent Gazetteer*, June 14, 1794.
101. Peck, *Political Wars of Otsego*, 97.
102. *Independent Gazetteer*, June 14, 1794.
103. "The Trial of Jacob Eyerman," in *American State Trials*, ed. John D. Lawson (St. Louis, 1919), 11:191–93.
104. *Carlisle Gazette*, July 9, 1794.