The Anglican Clergy of Pennsylvania in the American Revolution

A consideration of the part played by the Anglican clergy of Pennsylvania in the American Revolution furnishes a most interesting side-light upon the history of that epoch. Recently, more attention has been given to the economic and other underlying causes of military conflict than to the chronicling of the movements of troops, battles, and important leaders. Yet even these have been found insufficient to describe completely either the motives or the course of historic events. Thus, Van Tyne, in discussing the influence of religious and sectarian forces on the American Revolution, says, "...but it will be shown... that the historical muse has been too much of a worldling, and has worshipped too partially the golden calf of economic causes." Indeed, the intimate experience of the average person with war makes everything seem remote except only the maelstrom in which he is caught up, of struggling, conflicting passions. To the individual, these latter are the ever-present realities in the fever of war excitement, and a study of them brings to us a sense of the reality of past events and persons such as no other part of the record can give. Issues over which men fought may change and seem remote through the veil of intervening years, but the passions which tear at human hearts are ever the same, and to grasp them is to be linked intimately with bygone ages, as if we were dealing with realities so timeless that there is no past.

Serviceable as patriotic prejudices may be in cementing the ties which bind together people into a nation, they are a distinct handicap when we carry them with us in examining the forces which determined men's conduct, and won, or failed to win, their allegiances in the conflict of loyalties that led up to and culminated in, the American Revolution. As Americans, it has not been our business to recognize that

1 C. H. Van Tyne, "Influence of the Clergy, and of Religious and Sectarian Forces, on the American Revolution," American Historical Review (1914), XIX. 44.
the Briton who found the bonds of his British citizenship too strong to succumb to the revolutionary spirit in colonial America, was likewise a patriot. To us, the issues involved seem quite plain. It was a struggle for liberty. No real patriot can doubt that, or did. No matter how hazy our understanding of the situation—and for most of us, it is very hazy—we feel very certain of the stand we should have taken. In point of fact, however, if we were facing anew that same crisis, it is indubitable that a goodly percentage of us, as of our forefathers, would be found in the opposing camp, and many of us would be sorely torn between our loyalty to British or colonial citizenship. Among us likewise would be numbered the zealous patriot and the lukewarm one, the half-hearted as well as the ardent loyalist, to say nothing of that considerable group whose indifference prevented their being swayed at all.

As we consider the position of the Anglican clergy of the colonies in the midst of the turmoil that led to the American Revolution, we are confronted with an array of factors that would seem to predestine their adherence to the Loyalist cause. In the first place, the eighteenth-century clergyman of the established church was naturally a conservative. He noted with much concern that, as the spirit of unrest and revolution grew, there developed an ever greater tendency toward radicalism. As early as December 2, 1773, the Anglican missionary at Apoquiniminck, writing to the Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (in England), complains of “the relish which people have conceived for those ill-defined, misapprehended terms, Liberty and Patriotism.” As is always the case in revolutionary movements, the rougher element in the population first became associated with the cause, and occasioned no little concern even among the Whigs themselves. A contemporary Whig writer speaks of mobs as “always the first-born offspring of oppression.” That was his excuse for them. The best-known, but by no means the only outbreak of mob violence and lawlessness was the Boston Tea

2 Philip Reading to the Secretary of the S. P. G., W. S. Perry, ed., Historical Collections Relating to the American Colonial Church (Hartford, 1871), II. 464. Hereafter referred to as Perry, Historical Collections.

Party, which well exemplifies the degree to which, in all the provinces, this element was inclined to take things into its own hands. Even as pronounced a firebrand as Samuel Adams was of the opinion that the East India Company should be reimbursed for the tea spilled into Boston harbor.

There is considerable evidence that some of the provinces reached the eve of the Revolution with Loyalist groups rivaling or even outnumbering the Whigs, but they were in no case effectively organized, and were inclined to depend too much upon government support. Hence they were comparatively powerless to stem the rising tide of radicalism. Before many of the conservative people of the colonies realized the danger, affairs were in the hands of the more zealous and better organized Whigs. Some of the Anglican clergy, as we shall see, who were at first disposed to favor the Whig cause, recoiled at the evidence of excesses on the part of the extreme radical wing, and gradually withdrew from active support of the Revolution.

Another thing which predisposed the Anglican clergy to the Loyalist cause was, of course, the fact that in many cases their congregations contained the members of the official and governing class, who were uniformly communicants of the Church of England. Besides these, they included many others from the conservative element of society, who, like themselves, were disposed to take a moderate stand on resistance to the unreasonable requirements of the British ministry, if indeed they were inclined to resist them at all. The most important factor, however, which inclined the Anglican clergy to loyalty towards the crown, was the fact that the king of England was head of the Church (to quote from the Act of Supremacy, "in so far as the law of Christ alloweth"). They owed him allegiance, then, not merely as temporal head of the state, but as spiritual sovereign as well. How various individuals interpreted their obligations in view of that circumstance, will form the chief theme of all that follows.

Pennsylvania formed a sort of dividing line as far as the political stand of the clergy in the colonies in general is concerned. To the north, the situation is approvingly described by the historian Wilberforce, when he virtually boasts that "no one minister of the Episcopal Church north of Pennsylvania joined the side of the insur-
To the south, as is well known, we find many instances not merely of acquiescence in, but enthusiasm and leadership for the colonial cause on the part of Anglican clergymen. In Pennsylvania itself, there was a further line of cleavage, that between the rural clergy, and those in the city of Philadelphia. There are several important reasons for this difference, of such nature as to make it necessary to treat the two groups quite separately. We have appended to this paper a roster, as complete as available source material permits, of both the rural and the Philadelphia clergy just before, and during, the Revolution, and their position may best be indicated by direct quotations from their own correspondence during these years, and from other contemporaneous sources.

The rural clergy of the Anglican Church in Pennsylvania were to be found in the Loyalist camp to a man. In large part, though not entirely, perhaps, we may consider this due to the fact that they were all missionaries of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (known as the S. P. G.), and were required to make regular reports of their activities to the Secretary of that organization in London. The income which constituted their salaries and guaranteed the possibility of their work was derived almost entirely from the funds of this important English missionary society. Any severance of the connection with England would leave them without means of sustenance—as indeed happened in many cases. More than this, the very success of the whole cause to which they had committed themselves, in most cases with all earnestness and sincerity, seemed to them to depend upon the continuance of the old harmonious relationship between the colonies and the mother country.

About this group of rural clergy in Pennsylvania we have very little available data except what we can gather from the scanty records of the S. P. G., and their own letters to its Secretary, in which they reported their own, and occasionally each other's doings. From that correspondence, however, four facts definitely emerge as bearing upon their connection with the American Revolution, namely: (1) that they avoided, as far as they possibly could, all political activity

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of any sort, so that their influence in shaping public opinion on the
issues of the times may be considered negligible, except possibly indi-
rectly; since, (2) they themselves were Loyalists, not, apparently,
through conviction as to the merits of British or colonial claims or
actions, but simply because they could interpret their ordination vows
in no other way but as pledging them to loyalty to the king as well as
to the Church, a loyalty, moreover, which made it obligatory for them
to include the prayers for the king in every service they read, and to
refuse to officiate at all, to go to the length of closing their churches,
rather than omit these petitions, so offensive to the colonial patriots;
(3) that they suffered greatly, several going to their deaths as a result
of the hardships their tenacious adherence to principle brought upon
them; and, (4) that a number of them continued bravely to minister
to their charges throughout the years of the war, without hope of
any reward but the consciousness of duty faithfully performed, this
in spite of the fact that their churches remained closed, and they them-
selves lived under constant suspicion and persecution as enemies of the
colonial cause.

That these missionaries, though Loyalists at heart, strove to be
nothing so much as non-committal politically, we gather from many
and repeated allegations on their part. Their position is clearly stated
in a letter addressed by Mr. Barton, "In behalf of himself and the
rest of the Protestant Episcopal Missionaries of Pennsylvania" to "the
honorable Assembly of the said State now met in Lancaster." It is
dated May 20, 1778, and is on the subject of the oath of allegiance
to the colonial cause which was then being required of all the men
in the state, from which oath Mr. Barton pleads that the group he re-
resents may be exempted. He first explains the purpose of the S. P. G.,
and quotes from its instructions to its missionaries the admonition,
"To inculcate submission to government and obedience to authority.
... To exhort their people ... to pay tribute to whom tribute is due,
and to take special care to give no offence to the civil Government by
intermeddling in affairs not relating to their own calling or function." He then says, "In conformity to these Instructions, the Missionaries
... beg leave to declare ... that they have not intermeddled directly
or indirectly in the present ... contest, nor done any act ... inimical
to the liberty or welfare of America"; and, after quoting precedent for the immunity from political obligations extended to missionaries generally in all parts of the world, continues:\footnote{5}{Perry, *Historical Collections*, II. 491–93.}

Bound by every tie of duty to their Ecclesiastical superiors at home, \ldots exempted by their office from taking any active part on either side, they have \ldots made it their study to give no offence to either of the contending parties.

The Missionaries, having never derived any advantages from American establishments or settled Revenues \ldots must be reduced to disabilities of procuring the common necessaries of life \ldots were the Society’s bounty to be withdrawn.\ldots

Having the happiness of addressing themselves to Christians & Protestants \ldots the Missionaries hope that they will be permitted candidly to avow they cannot in conscience abjure the "King of Great Britain, his heirs and Successors," nor totally dissolve their connections with the Countries \ldots from which they have \ldots drawn their chief support.

Such a plea, indeed, is nothing if not naïve, considering the time and circumstances under which it was penned, and is in itself strong evidence of the guilelessness, politically speaking, of these worthy men. Again, in a letter to the Secretary of the S. P. G. under date of January 8, 1779, the same gentleman exclaims,\footnote{6}{Ibid., V. 132.}

What have we done to deserve this hard treatment from our former friends & fellow Citizens? We have not intermeddled with any matters inconsistent with our Callings & Functions. We have studied to be quiet & to give no offence to the present rulers. We have obeyed the Laws & Government now in being, as far as our Consciences & prior obligations would permit.

And indeed, there is no evidence of any sort that this is not a perfectly truthful statement as regards this whole group of clergymen in Pennsylvania, at least.

In another letter to the Secretary, written October 25, 1779, Mr. Barton, in rather optimistic vein, ventures the following interesting comment on the situation:\footnote{7}{Ibid., V. 134.}

Notwithstanding the present depress’d & persecuted state of the Church of England here, \ldots I \ldots still \ldots hope & believe that she will one day \ldots be the Glory of the new world. The Evidence she has \ldots given of her moderation & peaceableness, & the general conduct of her Clergy throughout the whole of this violent contest, must at length recommend her \ldots to the Esteem \ldots of the people, as soon as their present \ldots prejudices cool & subside; particularly to those who \ldots have never heard anything from the Pulpit but angry Invectives against the best of sovereigns; treasonable Declamations against the best of Governments; Wrath, Bitterness, & persecution against peaceable and innocent people.

\footnote{5}{Perry, *Historical Collections*, II. 491–93.} \footnote{6}{Ibid., V. 132.} \footnote{7}{Ibid., V. 134.}
How very seriously and literally these men interpreted their obligations to the English crown, is attested forcibly in a number of letters. Mr. Reading, writing to the Secretary on March 18, 1776, says,

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It is hardly possible since the commencement of the late hostilities to avoid taking part on one side or the other. . . . Threats have been used to deter me from reading the prayers for the king, but hitherto I have stood firm . . . having taken the oaths of allegiance . . . and vowed canonical obedience at my ordination, . . . I do not think myself at liberty to dispense with these solemn obligations, but shall persevere . . . in complying with them.

Evidently, further thought on Mr. Reading's part confirmed him in his resolution, for he writes at greater length on the subject on August 25, 1776. After bewailing the "anguish of mind . . . for what has lately befallen me as a missionary, and for the abject situation with which my family . . . is threatened," he exclaims,

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The Church of England has now no longer an existence in the United Colonies of America. . . . My reason for speaking in this manner is as follows: I look upon the King's supremacy and the constitution of the Church of England to be so intimately blended . . . that whenever the supremacy is . . . abrogated the fences of the Church are . . . broken down and its visibility destroyed. . . . [After the Declaration of Independence] the generality of our Clergy (as far as has hitherto come to my knowledge) dismissed all those prayers from the public service of the Church wherein the names of the King and Royal Family are mentioned, and adopted in their stead a prayer for the Congress. . . .

As to myself . . . the more I considered . . . [my vows] the more I was confirmed in my opinion of the strict obligation I was under to adhere inviolably to what they enjoined. . . . I look upon every person whether Clergyman or layman by impugning the King's Supremacy to be virtually excommunicated. . . .

He goes on to describe how he read the "public service entire" even after independence had been declared, until his senior warden earnestly warned him of the danger of the proceeding, whereupon he replied that, "whenever [he] was compelled to desist from using the prayers for the king . . . [he] should desist likewise from using any part of the public service, and that consequently the church would be shut up." This he did the following Sunday, and it remained closed, for two years later he reports, on September 30, 1778: 10

8 Ibid., II. 483. Reading continued with the comment that the preceding paragraph, part of which was quoted above, was a repetition of part of his letter to the Secretary of September 19, 1775. This letter he understood to have been seized, "brought back to Philadelphia and submitted to a Committee of inspection." The original manuscript of Reading's letter of September 19, 1775, is in the Gratz Collection, H. S. P.

9 Perry, Historical Collections, II. 484.  10 Ibid., II. 494.
I persevere with firmness & resolution in pursuing the same line of conduct, . . . sturdily adhering to & not in the least violating the oaths, vows & obligations I entered into when I took upon me the Ministerial office.

What Mr. Reading means by speaking of the “generality of our clergy” as omitting the prayers for the king, is not clear. He probably was not in touch with many but those in Philadelphia, and of them, as we shall see, that was true. It may, again, have been a bit of self-glorification, pardonable when we consider the price he paid for his “sturdily adhering” to principle. At any rate we have record of others of the missionaries doing as he did. A Loyalist vestryman, writing from York in the stead of the clergyman in that place, Mr. Batwell, reports to the Secretary on November 25, 1776: 11

... when the present unnatural dispute had been raised, . . . The Party which had taken up Arms . . . were very noisy about the prayers for his Majesty. Mr. Batwell persevered in going through the service as usual . . . until last April when the violence of the times carried everything before them and since that time we have had no Church Service here . . .

This hath been nearly the case . . . at Carlisle whereby the Church was shut up there about the same time. In Huntington the Church Service was performed until near the time when Independence was declared since which no Church Service hath been performed in this Province except in the City of Philadelphia where some part of the service which relates to His Majesty is omitted.

Mr. Barton likewise reports, under date of November 25, 1776: 12

... I have been obliged to shut up my Churches to avoid the fury of the populace who would not suffer the Liturgy to be used unless the Collects & Prayers for the King . . . were omitted, which neither by conscience nor the Declaration I made . . . when ordained would allow me to comply with; and altho' I used every prudent step to give no offence even to those who usurped authority & Rule . . . yet my life and property have been threatened. . . . Indeed every Clergyman of the Church of England who dared to act upon proper principles was marked out for infamy and insult, . . . I believe [the missionaries] . . . were all (or at least most of them) reduced to the same necessity . . . of shutting up their Churches. . . . If I have acted wrong (in not using the Liturgy in that maimed & mangled state, in which it is said some of my reverend brethren use it, rather than shut up my Church prō Tempore), I hope the Society will attribute . . . [it] to the strictness of my attachment to . . . duty.

Two only of the other missionaries have left a direct statement of their conduct under these trying conditions, and with them it seems that a consideration for the welfare of their work at least partially

11 Ibid., II. 488.
12 Ibid., II. 490.
overweighed their scruples. Thus, Mr. Tingley reports to the Secretary on March 5, 1782,

After the Declaration of Independency, I could not, with safety either to myself, family, or hearers, be explicit in the prayers for the King (whom God preserve & crown with success) . . . I was therefore left to my own prudence, & the conduct of Heaven, by which I believe I was directed to adopt the following words in prayer (for they occurred to me at that trying moment), well knowing that if I was prevented from preaching, the flock would unavoidably be scattered. Instead, therefore, of saying, as we are directed, O Lord, save the King, I said, O Lord, save those whom Thou hast made it our special Duty to pray for. We were surrounded by armed men, who had thrown out severe threats. In so critical a situation, what other could I have done?

Less specifically, Mr. Magaw implies his conduct when he reports from Philadelphia in October, 1776, The situation of Clergymen of the Church of England in America, you well know, is at this time peculiarly delicate & hazardous, in as much as we have the welfare of our Holy Religion to maintain, amidst a variety of difficulties, opposing Interests & Misconceptions. With regard to myself, I have thought it my Duty, for conscience sake & out of Gratitude to the venerable Society, . . . to walk at the present Critical juncture with peculiar Caution & circumspection, avoiding every Compliance that I supposed they might disapprove of and availing myself of such mild, persuasive expedients as I thought would have a tendency to preserve peace & good order among the people, whose prosperity, under their direction, I am in some degree entrusted with.

As to the sufferings of these brave men, and the extent to which they carried on their work despite every hardship and handicap, the records of the S. P. G. bear eloquent and grateful testimony. Of Mr. Tingley it is reported that from 1776 to 1782,

He went about Sussex County, and sometimes into Maryland, “strengthening and confirming the brethren,” travelling “at least 8,000 miles a year,” and baptizing “several thousands . . . among them, many blacks, from 60 years to 2 months. . . . His “difficulties and sufferings” were “many” . . . and often he “scarce had bread to eat, or raiment to put on,” and the Revolutionists were so cruel as to deprive his family of some refreshments which had been sent him, “though his weak and dying wife begged a small part only of the things as a medicine.”

Mr. Tingley continued his ministry throughout the years of the war, and afterwards, his death being recorded in 1800 in Maryland while still in the service of the Church.

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13 Ibid., V. 128.
14 Ibid., V. 128.
Of Mr. Barton's trials, we have an unusually complete record, from the annals of the Society as well as his own extensive correspondence. After closing his churches in 1776 because he refused to curtail the Liturgy, as we have noted, he was "confined to his house for two years by the rebels," then, "left no choice but to abjure his King or leave the country," he departed for New York in 1778. This was after the memorial he had addressed to the Pennsylvania Assembly had proved ineffective. He records in a letter to the Society from New York, December 15, 1778:

... being determined never to sacrifice Principle to Interest, I was reduced to the very melancholy necessity of separating from 8 children (six of them helpless & unprovided for), & from my very Dear & ... beloved people, whom I had served for 20 years.

The records of the Society relate that

At his departure... the people of Pequea and Carnarvon testified their esteem and regard for him by paying the arrears of his salary, presenting him with £50, taking a house for his eight children, and "giving the kindest assurances that they should be supported, till it might please God to unite them again."

This, however, was never to be, for Mr. Barton died in New York in 1780, from dropsy brought on by the hardships of his two years' virtual imprisonment. During that time, however, he had not been idle, for

being "no longer allowed to go out of the country... he secretly met his people on the confines of the counties, chiefly the women (who were not subject to the Penalties of the laws), with their little ones to be catechised, and infants to be christen'd."

Mr. Barton's correspondence was not confined to his own work and hardships. He casts much interesting light on the situation in general. In a letter of November 25, 1776, he says,

... the Missionaries in particular have suffered greatly. Some of them have been dragged from their horses, assaulted with stones & dirt, ducked in water; obliged to flee [sic] for their lives, driven from their habitations & families, laid under arrests & imprisoned.

Again, writing to the Secretary from New York on January 8, 1779, he gives this very important information:

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16 Ibid., 39.
17 Perry, Historical Collections, V. 129.
18 Pascoe, op. cit., 39-40.
19 Ibid., II. 490.
20 Ibid., V. 131-32.
The Clergy of America, the Missionaries in particular, have suffered beyond example, & indeed beyond the Records of any History in this Day of Trial. Most of them have lost their all. Many of them are now in a state of melancholy Pilgrimage & Poverty; some have lately (from Grief and Despondency, it is said), paid the last debt of Nature. Among the latter, I am just informed, are Mr. Reading of Apoquiniminck, Mr. Ross, of New Castle, and Mr. Craig of Chester.

This information is probably accurate, since he writes from New York, where were gathered many refugees like himself, and news about the Loyalists would be most readily available. This letter, then, disposes of the fates of three of our roster of rural clergy of Pennsylvania, of whom there is otherwise little to be said, except this succinct record of what was virtually martyrdom in the cause to which they were committed. Farther along in this same letter, moreover, Mr. Barton gives us the only account we have of the work of yet another humble but devoted servant of the Church in rural Pennsylvania. He writes:

But before I conclude, permit me the liberty to mention two of my Brethren, who have it not in their power to write, and whose present situation claims the Venerable Society’s Notice & pity. . . . [One of them is a clergyman from New Jersey.]

The second is Mr. F. Illing, a German, who, about 7 or 8 years ago, received Ordination from my Lord Bishop of London, and came to America without any appointment or allowance. He settled in the back parts of Pennsylvania, where he became very useful, by faithfully discharging the duties of his Office, both in English & Dutch, to a large number of People, whose contributions altogether, perhaps, never amounted to £30 sterling per annum, and for 2 years past, would not been [sic] sufficient to keep him alive, had he not received relief from private Beneficence. . . . I only beg leave to represent them as good men, zealously attached to the Church of England, & the Interest of Great Britain, & as being now in distress.

Mr. Illing evidently continued his ministry throughout the war, and remained in Pennsylvania afterwards, for we find record of his being invited to a conference of Pennsylvania clergymen called in Philadelphia in April, 1784. He appears to have gone to Mr. Barton’s vacant charge at Caernarvon and Pequea. Of two others, also, we know that they were still in the ministry of the Church after the war—Mr. Magaw, of whose activities during the period of the war no record is available, but who later became a leader of the Church in Pennsyl-

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21 Ibid., V. 132-33.

22 Perry, The History of the American Episcopal Church, 1587-1883 (Boston, 1885), II. 24.
vania, being rector of St. Paul's in Philadelphia as early as 1784, and vice-provost of the University of Pennsylvania in 1787; and Mr. Currie, who was both before and after the war at Radnor, as the Society's records attest for the years he was their missionary, and his invitation to the same conference at Philadelphia in 1784 for the post-war period.23

Two only of these missionaries of Pennsylvania left the country: Mr. Murray, of whom it is recorded simply that he was missionary at Reading and Mulatto from 1762 to 1778, and was a refugee in England in 1778;24 and Mr. Batwell, of whom we know a little more. We have noted above the letter from one of his vestrymen to the Secretary of the S. P. G., telling of the closing of his churches, the same letter goes on to relate the violence he encountered at the hands of a mob, who on one occasion seized him and soused him in a creek and compelled him to ride from town in that state, because "he was a Tory as they thought proper to call him, as almost all the Church people in this County are."25 In Mr. Batwell’s case, the judgment of the mob was correct, for he left his charge in 1778 to become chaplain to one of the Loyalist regiments during the war, after which he removed to England, where he died.26

In the city of Philadelphia, there were at the outbreak of hostilities, five ordained clergymen of the Church of England. Both their circumstances and their dispositions were decidedly different from those of their colleagues in the rural districts of Pennsylvania. Although they also owed their ordinations, and their respective appointments, to the Bishop of London (in whose charge was the missionary work

23 Ibid., II. 24.
24 Pascoe, op. cit., 852.
25 Perry, Historical Collections, II. 488-89. Subsequently, Mr. Batwell was called upon to endure the rigors of York prison. Two letters, relating some of the circumstances of his incarceration, which he directed to the President of the Continental Congress are in the Gratz Collection, H. S. P. In the first of these, written from “York Prison” on October 1, 1777, Batwell petitioned Congress to “discharge me out of Prison, or admit me to Bail” pleading illness. An endorsing note by Charles Thomson indicates that Congress ordered the petition referred to the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, and, in the meantime, directed the jailor “to remove the petitioner from sd. gaol to some other safe & proper place and there grant him every indulgence necessary for the preservation of his health & the safekeeping of his person.” This instance of clemency induced Batwell, on November 7, 1777, to renew his petition to be “admitted to Bail.” In this case there is no endorsement to indicate the action taken.
26 Ibid., II. 584.
of the English Church) they were not missionaries in the sense that they were dependent upon the S. P. G. for support. They were all (except William Smith, Provost of the College, later the University, of Pennsylvania) parochial clergy, and as such, were under the direction of local vestries, rather than that of a foreign missionary society. They could not, if they would, remain aloof from the impending struggle as could men pursuing their duties far from the centers of population. It was in Philadelphia that Congress assembled to take all the momentous steps that led at last to war, and the declaration of independence. Philadelphia was occupied and then evacuated again by British troops, so that it was in turn an unsafe place for Loyalist and patriot, and none could avoid definite allegiance.

Under date of June 30, 1775, the clergy of the city of Philadelphia addressed an important letter to their superior, the Lord Bishop of London, which states so clearly their position and their sentiments, that it may be quoted from at some length. It reads:

We now sit down under deep affliction of mind to address your Lordship upon a subject, in which the very existence of our Church in America seems to be interested. It has long been our fervent Prayer . . . that the unhappy controversy between the Parent Country and these Colonies might be terminated . . . without proceeding to the extremities of civil war . . . and we have spared no means in our power for advancing such a spirit so far as our private Influence and advice could extend. But as to public advice we have hitherto thought it our Duty to keep our Pulpits wholly clear from every thing bordering on this contest; . . . equally avoiding whatever might irritate the Tempers of the people, or create a suspicion that we were opposed to the Interest of the Country in which we live.

But the Time is now come, my Lord, when even our silence would be misconstrued, and when we are called upon to take a more public part. . . . The Continental Congress have recommended the 20th of next month as a day of Fasting, Prayer & Humiliation thro' all the Colonies. Our Congregations too of all Ranks have associated themselves, determined never to submit to the Parliamentary claim of taxing them at pleasure.

Under these Circumstances our People call upon us and think they have a right to our advice in the most public manner from the Pulpit. Should we refuse, our Principles would be misrepresented, and even our religious usefulness destroyed among our People. And our complying may perhaps be interpreted to our disadvantage in the Parent Country. Under these difficulties (which have been increased by the necessity some of our Brethren have apprehended themselves to be under of quitting their Charges), and being at a great distance from the advice of our Superiors, we had only our own Consciences and each other to consult, and have accordingly determined on that part, which the general good

27 Ibid., II. 470-72.
seem to require. We were the more willing to comply with the request of our
Fellow-Citizens, as we were sure . . . that they did not even wish any thing from
us inconsistent with our characters as Ministers of the Gospel of Peace.

We have neither Interest nor Consequence sufficient to take any Lead in the
Affairs of this great Country. The People will feel and judge for themselves in
matters affecting their own civil happiness; and were we capable of any attempt
which might have the appearance of drawing them to what they think would
be a Slavish Resignation of their Rights, it would be destructive to ourselves,
as well as the Church of which we are Ministers . . . such a Conduct has never
been required of us. Indeed, could it possibly be required, we are not backward
to say that our Consciences would not permit us to injure the Rights of this
Country. We are to leave our families in it, and cannot but consider its In-
habitants intitled, as well as their Brethren in England, to the Right of granting
their own money . . .

Such being our Persuasion, we must again declare it to be our constant Prayer
. . . that the hearts of . . . men . . . may be directed towards a Plan of Reconcilia-
tion, worthy of being offered by a great Nation . . . and . . . accepted by a People
sprung from them, and by birth claiming a Participation in their Rights.

This was signed by Richard Peters, William Smith, Jacob Duché, Thomas
Coombe, William White, and William Stringer. Of these, Mr. Peters, then rector of the United Churches of Christ and St. Peter's, died before the year was out, to be succeeded by Mr. Duché, his erstwhile assistant. William Stringer was at the time of the letter in charge of St. Paul's, a third Episcopal church in Philadelphia, which had shortly before been built "by a schismatic following" of the Reverend Mr. William MacClennachan—a most interesting figure, a species of stormy petrel among the colonial clergy whose activities have no bearing upon the present study. Mr. Stringer, who had come to Philadelphia in 1773, disappears entirely from the record immediately after the date of this letter, apparently returning to England to be heard of no more. Mr. Coombe and Mr. White were also assistants at Christ Church, while William Smith was provost of Philadelphia College. The four who remained, we shall treat in detail, to determine their stand on the burning questions of the day, revealing as well the stature of each man.

As will appear from the above letter, which is marked by the literary style of William Smith, the situation they faced was a crucial one, and it was not in the least overdrawn in the statement. Yet little enough choice as to their course lay with the three men associated with

28 Perry, History of the American Episcopal Church, I. 243.
Christ Church, at least. On June 15, 1775, we find the following entry in the vestry book of Christ Church Parish:

The rector acquainted the vestry that the continental congress having inserted a publication in this day's gazette, recommending . . . the 20th day of July, as a day of general humiliation, fasting and prayer . . . requested they would give him their advice with respect to his own conduct. The vestry very readily told him that they knew the sense of the congregations in this matter, and assured him it would be universally expected . . . that he should comply with the recommendation; and that if he did not, it would give great offence; and as this was the unanimous opinion of the vestry, he declared his own sense of the matter, and told them that the churches should be opened on that day, and divine service performed, and that there should be proper prayers and services, suitable to such a solemn humiliation, and notices should be given thereof in both churches next Sunday.

Again, when, not long after, the Declaration of Independence brought the matter of prayers for the king to a head, the decision with regard to their omission or inclusion in public services, so heart-searching a problem to the rural missionaries, was taken promptly out of the hands of the three young priests at Christ Church, Philadelphia. On the evening of July 4, 1776, a meeting of the Vestry was called, and the following resolution passed:

Whereas the honourable continental congress have resolved to declare the American colonies to be free and independent states; in consequence of which it will be proper to omit those petitions in the liturgy wherein the king of Great Britain is prayed for, as inconsistent with the said declaration. Therefore, resolved, that it appears to this vestry to be necessary, for the peace and well being of the churches, to omit the said petitions; and the rector and assistant ministers of the united churches are requested in the name of the vestry and their constituents, to omit such petitions as are above mentioned.

However, although their public actions were thus regulated and prescribed to follow the same course, these men were far from reacting in the same manner to the situation. It remains then, to discuss them in turn.

First to be considered is William Smith, the man Mr. White later described as "the most prominent of our clergy"—provost of Philadelphia College, clergyman, scholar, orator, writer, and clever poli-

29 Benjamin Dorr, A Historical Account of Christ Church, Philadelphia, from Its Foundation, A. D. 1695 to A. D. 1841; and of St. Peter's and St. James's until the Separation of the Churches (New York and Philadelphia, 1841), 175-76.
30 Ibid., 181.
Dr. Smith had had a prominent, indeed a stormy, career in Philadelphia before the period of the Revolution, but with that we are not here concerned. Born in Scotland in 1727, he came to this country as a young man, and in 1752 acquired the position of rector of the Academy which, under his very able guidance grew into the College of Philadelphia (of which he became provost in 1775), and still later became the University of Pennsylvania. Ordained priest by the Bishop of London in 1753, Smith's extensive correspondence with the English bishops as well as the Secretary of the S. P. G. shows him to have been very influential in England as well as in Philadelphia in the affairs of the Church. It was to him that the heads of the Church in England turned for information and suggestions regarding the church in the colony, and through him they often sent communications to the rural clergy. Always a man of decided opinions, the stormy days preceding the Revolution found him aligned unequivocally on the side of the colonists in their opposition to the oppressive measures of the English Parliament, only, he appears never to have contemplated or desired separation of the colonies from the mother country. To him, the struggle was one of Englishmen temporarily deprived of their political rights, which by a policy of moderation but firmness they would shortly recover. When it came to the question of resistance and independence, he was no longer whole-hearted in his approval, indeed, he seems to have done all he could to prevent that issue from reaching a head. To some extent committed by his own previous pronouncements, however, he had eventually to accept the inevitable, and, although never trusted completely by the Revolutionists, he retained his liberty and continued his career as clergyman and educator until his death in 1803, at which time he was provost of the University of Pennsylvania.

In the months just before war and independence were declared, Dr. Smith was called upon on several very important occasions to preach sermons in which he must needs commit himself politically, and which were printed and very widely circulated both in this country and in England. It will be instructive to quote from these, and also from his correspondence during this period. Writing to the Bishop of London on June 8, 1775, he says;

52 Perry, Historical Collections, II. 475.  
53 Ibid., II. 473-74.
No man has labored more earnestly than myself to avert the dreadful Calamity in which both Countries are now involved. God knows that my Endeavors to promote conciliatory measures were so strong during the meeting of our provincial Convention last Summer whereof I was a member that I was considered as one willing to sacrifice essential liberty for temporary safety and even as an advocate for the measures of Administration respecting this country. ... I have since that time wholly declined being of any new Committee or taking any public part. ... But having once consented to appear again in public I would not violate my principles nor be cold to the Interests of America or of the Mother Country which are inseparably connected, nor could I suffer our Church or Clergy in America to be under Imputations which I am sure as far as I know them they do not merit.

It is undoubtedly the wish (indeed too openly avowed), of some in this country to have the Church Clergy considered as Tools of Power, Slavish in their tenets and privately Enemies to the principles of the Revolution. Could this notion once generally prevail it would give a deadly wound to the Church in this country. Indeed I question whether we should have the appearance of a Congregation in it.

On July 10, 1775, he writes to the Secretary of the S. P. G., discussing among other things the clergy who had felt it necessary to quit their charges and return to England. He says of them,

I wish they could have stood their ground. ... If our Clergy were generally to quit their people at this time ... we should not have the appearance of a Church or people left. A conduct, ... of the most prudent nature is required of us. We need not widen the breach & yet we may wish well to (nay, in all decency & firmness contend for), the just rights of America; & so far indulge our people as to convince them that the Clergy of our Church are as true Friends to liberty & as much devoted to the constitutional & just rights of their Country, as any other men in America.

Of the two important sermons he was called upon to preach at this time, the first was on June 23, 1775, before the officers of the Third Battalion of the City of Philadelphia. Smith had been strongly suspected of Tory leanings, and it is probable that he had been asked purposely thus to speak in public since it was known he would take a decided stand if he did. It was made a great occasion, and the members of the Continental Congress were present. The sermon was published the same year in Philadelphia, and went through many editions abroad. In the preface to the Philadelphia edition, entitled, *A Sermon on the Present Situation of American Affairs*, the author declared that he wished

\[84\] Ibid., II. 476.

to shew, if peradventure he might be permitted to vouch for his fellow citizens, . . . that the idea of an independence upon the Parent-country . . . is utterly foreign to their thoughts; that they contend only for the sanctity of charters and laws, together with the right of granting their own money.

He chose as his text the passage from the book of Joshua, "The Lord God of Gods He knoweth . . . if it be in Rebellion, or in Transgression against the Lord—Save us not this Day." He says, to quote very briefly: 36

Having never sold our birth-right, we considered ourselves entitled to the privileges of our father's house . . . to be governed, . . . by our own laws . . . and to offer up our own sacrifices on the altar of British empire . . .

The question now is . . . must we tamely surrender any part of our birthright . . . I say, God forbid! For here, in particular, I wish to speak so plain that neither my own principles, nor those of the church to which I belong, may be misunderstood.

Although, in the beginning of this great contest, we thought it not our duty to be forward in widening the breach . . . nevertheless, as we know that our civil and religious rights are linked together . . . we neither have, nor seek to have, any interest separate from that of our country; nor can we advise a desertion of its cause. Religion and liberty must flourish or fall together in America.

It may be judged from this, despite everything, rather timid pronouncement that Smith, like his brother clergy, was essentially on the defensive against accusations of disloyalty that were commonly launched against them all, rather than being in any position of leadership of public thought, such as we know to have been the case with the Puritan pulpit to the north. What these Philadelphia clergymen had written to the Bishop of London concerning their having "neither interest nor consequence sufficient to take any lead in the affairs of this great country," was undoubtedly true.

Eight months later the Provost was again called upon to preach on an important occasion. This time it was the Continental Congress that asked him to deliver a sermon for the services held in honor of General Montgomery and the men who had fallen with him in the expedition against Quebec. Several Pennsylvanians were among the dead, and the emotions of the people were at a high pitch. It was a splendid opportunity for a man of the Provost's oratorical gifts, and he endeavored to take full advantage of it. Musicians were recruited from all over the province, that certain set quotations might be sung by the augmented choir. The oration was a masterpiece. Pericles,

36 Ibid., 13–14, 19–20
Pliny, Virgil and others were drawn upon to ornament the endeavor, in the most approved style, in fact, even for those times, it was all a bit overdone, and withal not tactful enough to meet the approval of everyone present. It was February 19, 1776, and the differences within Congress over the matter of independence were sharp. Moreover, the Pennsylvania legislature was present, and they were still opposed to independence, while the Massachusetts delegation was pressing impatiently for it. It was a very delicate situation, and the Provost had too decided opinions to deal delicately with it. John Adams spoke of the oration as "an insolent performance," no doubt on the strength of the passage in which Smith said,\(^{37}\)

I am happy in knowing . . . that the delegated voice of the continent, as well as of this particular province, supports me in praying for a restoration "of the former harmony between Great-Britain and these Colonies upon so firm a basis as to perpetuate its blessings, uninterrupted by any future dissensions, to succeeding generations in both countries."

In his own defense against the criticism launched upon this passage, Smith says in the foot-note to the Philadelphia edition of the printed sermon,\(^{38}\)

The above paragraph having been either misrepresented or misunderstood by some, the author does not think himself at liberty to make the least alteration in it. . . . The quotation from the last petition of congress as well as the reference made to the instructions of our assembly both point to past period; and the author cannot be considered, from thence, as taking upon him to make the least declaration concerning the present sentiments of either of these bodies.

What he said two paragraphs further on in his sermon, indeed should have satisfied the most ardent firebrand among the patriots.\(^{39}\)

But suppose these terms cannot be obtained? Why then, there will be no need of further arguments, much less of aggravations. Timid as my heart perhaps is, and ill-tuned as my ear may be to the din of arms and the clangor of the trumpet; yet, in that case, sounds which are a thousand times more harsh "even the croaking of frogs in the uncultivated fen," or the howling of wild beasts around the spot, where liberty dwelleth, would be "preferable to the nightingale's song" in the vales of slavery, or the melting notes of Corelli in cities clanking their chains.

It is but fair to Dr. Smith to note that he was really sincere in the position he thus publicly took on the question of American liberties.

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\(^{38}\) Ibid., 28–29 fn.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 30
The best evidence of that is in his correspondence with England at this time, in which he expresses himself just as clearly and forcefully to the same effect. Thus, in a letter dated August 28, 1775, to the Secretary of the S. P. G., he says,\(^{40}\)

Would to God that a suspension of hostilities & a negotiation could take Place before either side have proceeded too far. . . . For this I pray & for this I labor daily & in such a way perhaps as may subject me to the blame of the violent of both sides. But I look far beyond the present heated times. I know the dignity of the Parent state may be well supported without evading any essential right of the Colonies, & till a plan for this purpose is devised and executed we can never more expect a return of our former harmony.

At about the time of the memorial sermon for General Montgomery, there were appearing in Philadelphia a number of essays, in pamphlet form, arguing against the declaration of independence, an issue still in the balance. Some of these, signed “Cato,” although their authorship has never been definitely established, are currently ascribed to Dr. Smith, even by his biographer, who, calling attention to the fact that there was nothing disloyal about this, since it was some months before the declaration of independence was determined on, says further,\(^ {41}\)

In the opinion that to do so \(i.e.,\) separate from England \(\ldots\) would be impolitic, he was supported by the opinions \(\ldots\) of the most upright and intelligent men of the State—Robert Morris, James Wilson, \(\ldots\) John Dickinson, by a large part of the Congress of 1776 itself. \(\ldots\) But I have \(\ldots\) no knowledge of anything that he wrote after July 4th, seeking to show that the Declaration ought not to have been made, or to oppose the measures which it required to make it effective.

He also mentions the fact that Dr. Smith had suffered suspicion of Tory leanings because several members of his family—his father-in-law, William Moore, and especially his wife’s nephew, Phineas Bond—who were Loyalists outright. However that may be, it is a fact that on July 31, 1777, while General Howe was advancing on Philadelphia, Dr. Smith was one of forty-one well known persons to be arrested, under an order of the Supreme Executive Council that “all persons who have in their general conduct and conversation evinced a disposition inimical to the cause of America should be apprehended and secured.”\(^ {42}\) So much for his fellow-citizens’ opinion of the Provost’s


\(^ {41}\) Ibid., I. 573.

\(^ {42}\) Ibid., I. 572.
actual sentiments, however, he was not, like many others, taken into custody, but only asked to give his parole—this probably in view of the fact that he had several months previously taken the oath of allegiance to the new government. His papers were examined, but nothing found to implicate him in any offence, and nothing was taken away. Before the British entered Philadelphia, he withdrew with his family to his estate, Barbadoes Island, near Valley Forge, where he remained during the period of the occupation, after which he returned and resumed his efforts in behalf of his college. We may conclude that Dr. Smith proved himself throughout an upright and strong character, though perhaps too temperate to have much influence in those heated times, even had he been free of the stigma of disloyalty which, do what they would, was bound to be upon the Anglican clergy in the popular opinion of the day.

Of course, such opinion was largely justified. Two of the three ministers of Christ Church, Philadelphia, are cases in point. Thomas Coombe, who with William White was assistant to Jacob Duché, the rector, was another of the forty-one arrested when Dr. Smith was apprehended. Coombe, however, fared worse. He had never taken the oath of allegiance to the new government, and must have been well known to have Tory leanings. For when the rector, warden, and vestry of Christ Church appealed to the Council in his behalf, requesting that he be given a hearing, the Council replied that his case was wholly political; that before the Address from the Vestry, the Council had determined to send him away; and that his connection with their congregations could not be admitted as a plea in his behalf.

They never carried out that threat, probably because the near approach of General Howe gave the Council sufficient concern for their own safety to prevent their taking many steps against political prisoners, except potentially dangerous ones, whom they sent south just before they themselves fled the city. However, Mr. Coombe's stand was the result of deep conviction, and adherence to principle, as must be concluded from the following letter to the Vestry of Christ Church, which he wrote on July 7 of the next year, 1778:


I have given you the trouble of this meeting, to inform you of my having applied for, and obtained, leave from the council to proceed within the British lines at New York, and thence to England. . . . [He speaks then of his grief at leaving his native city and of the uncertainty of his prospects abroad.]

Having examined the subject in every point of view . . . I found that I could not take the oath to the new government, without the saddest violation of my own peace of mind. . . .

I have for some time had the present event in prospect, but was determined to tread with caution; accordingly I remained in town after the departure of the king's army, to give myself the further chance of continuing in my living, if it were to be done consistently with my principles; or if Great Britain had judged it proper to subscribe to the independence of America, my path would have been plain.

But since the sovereign still keeps up his claim of right upon this country, and every inhabitant is called upon by the late test law to renounce all allegiance to him, I had only to choose between my duty and my interest. . . .

Accordingly, he departed for England, bearing a letter of commendation to the Bishop of London from the vestry, and never returned to America. He resided in Ireland for some years as chaplain to Lord Carlisle, and was later given the degree of D. D. by Trinity College, and a parish by his patron—a fairly distinguished career despite its inauspicious beginning.

The case of the Reverend Mr. Jacob Duche, who had since 1775 been rector of Christ Church is not at all so simple or so straightforward. His is a story of shifting position and seemingly unaccountable changes of heart, of a degree of indecision which marked him from the first as doomed to trouble in those trying times. He is said to have been a person of pleasing personality and gentle disposition. Perhaps this very gentleness of soul, which made him so attractive in many respects, proved his undoing. At any rate, he was at first entirely sympathetic with the colonial cause, and when the Continental Congress met in 1774, appeared at the sessions of that body on September 7 and opened the deliberations with a prayer, for which he was thanked in a formal resolution. Like Provost Smith, he was several times called upon to preach on important public occasions. One of these sermons, on July 7, 1775, was entitled, *The Duty of Standing Fast in Our Spiritual and Temporal Liberties.* Delivered before the First Battalion of the city, and inscribed admiringly to General Washington as Commander-in-Chief of all the forces of the United English Colonies, it left nothing to be desired in ardor for the American cause. In the opening prayer, he used the petition, concerning the king, "Teach him,
that his highest temporal glory must consist in preserving to a free people their undoubted birth-rights as men, and as Britons." He calls attention to the fact that "submission to the unrighteous ordinances of unrighteous men can never be ‘for the Lord’s sake,’" and proceeds,

But, if we are to judge from the late ungenerous and ill-digested plans of policy, which have been adopted ... we cannot but think, that they began to be jealous of our rising glory, and were desirous of checking our growth.

He assures his hearers that "it will be no difficult matter to satisfy your consciences with respect to the righteousness of the cause, in which you are now engaged," though it lead to military conflict, if "submit or perish is the sanguinary decree."45

Again on the fast day decreed for July 20, he preached before the Continental Congress, calling his sermon the American Vine, and said in the course of it:46

The hedges of liberty, by which we hoped our vineyard was secured, are broken down. ... "Tis not now a foreign enemy ... but ... thou, Britain, that with merciless and unhallowed hands wouldst cut down and destroy this branch ... which Providence hath made strong even for thyself.

Despite these brave utterances, Mr. Duche must have felt himself to be increasingly out of sympathy with the whole trend of affairs, as the event was to prove. Yet, when he was appointed chaplain to the Continental Congress after the Declaration of Independence, he accepted, and evinced no sign of his disapproval of Congress or its policy. In his first prayer as chaplain, which is published in the journal of proceedings, he invoked God to47

defeat the malicious designs of our cruel adversaries; convince them of the unrighteousness of their cause; and if they still persist in their sanguinary purposes, Oh! let the voice of thine own unerring justice ... constrain them to drop the weapons of war from their unnerved hands in the day of battle.

Duche's loyalty was never questioned, even during the summer of 1777, when so many arrests were made in an effort to intimidate those

45 Jacob Duche, The Duty of Standing Fast in Our Spiritual and Temporal Liberties. A Sermon Preached in Christ-Church, July 7th, 1775 ... (Philadelphia, 1775), ii, 13, 14, 15, 18.
47 Washington at Valley Forge. Together with the Duche Correspondence (Philadelphia, 1858), 49–50.
who were thought to be wavering in adherence to the cause of the Revolution. One may then understand the consternation and surprise occasioned when, on October 8 of that year, he addressed a letter to General Washington, urging him in the strongest terms to forsake the colonial cause. The British were then in possession of Philadelphia, and the fortunes of the colonies at a very low ebb, and yet it is hard to understand what could have motivated such a step. With reference to his own course to date, he says in the letter, 48

I wished to follow my countrymen as far only as virtue, and the righteousness of their cause, would permit me. I was, however, prevailed on, among the rest of my clerical brethren of this city, to gratify the pressing desires of my fellow-citizens by preaching a sermon to the second city battalion. . . . Further than this I intended not to proceed. . . .

A very few days after the fatal declaration of independency, I received a letter from Mr. Hancock . . . acquainting me I was appointed Chaplain to the Congress, and desiring my attendance next morning. . . . Surprised and distressed, as I was, by an event I was not prepared to expect, obliged to give an immediate attendance, without the opportunity of consulting my friends, I easily accepted the appointment. I could have but one motive for taking this step. I thought the churches in danger, and hoped, by this means, to have been instrumental in preventing those ills I had so much reason to apprehend. . . . [Discovering] that independency was the idol they had long wished to set up, from this moment I determined upon my resignation, and, in the beginning of October, 1776, sent it, in form to Mr. Hancock, after having officiated only two months and three weeks.

The part of Mr. Duche's letter which his contemporaries found hardest to forgive was the section in which he assailed the Continental Congress. His attack, even to one long removed from the controversy, must seem most unreasonable and ill-advised. He speaks of 49

Confusion of councils, blunders without number. . . . The most respectable characters have withdrawn themselves, and are succeeded by a great majority of illiberal and violent men.

As to those of my own Province, some of them are so obscure, that their very names were never in my ears before, and others have only been distinguished for the weakness of their understandings, and the violence of their tempers. . . .

From the New England provinces can you find one that, as a gentleman, you could wish to associate with? . . . Bankrupts, attorneys, and men of desperate fortunes, . . . [and more in the same vein].

General Washington felt it necessary at once to communicate the matter to Congress, sending them the letter, whereupon it speedily became public property. Even Duche's closest friends and relatives

48 Ibid., 56–58. 49 Ibid., 59–60.
found it impossible to countenance what was naturally regarded as a traitorous act. Francis Hopkinson, Duché's brother-in-law, and one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, wrote to him, saying in part,

I find it impossible to reconcile the matter and style of this letter with your general conduct, or with the virtues of your heart. . .

I am perfectly disposed to attribute this unfortunate step to the timidity of your temper, the weakness of your nerves, and the undue influence of those about you. But will the world hold you so excused?

The upshot was that Duché decided, before the year was out, to depart for England. This resolution is recorded in the vestry-book of Christ Church, under date of December 9, as follows,

The rector informed the vestry, that upon a due consideration of the present state of affairs, and his own situation in particular, he had come to a resolution, with the permission of vestry, of going to England; as he apprehended he could more fully answer any objections the bishop of London might have to his conduct, and more easily remove the prejudices he has reason to think the bishop has imbibed against him.

The "prejudices" referred to were probably those arising out of the fiery sermons he had preached before his change of heart as to the justice of the American cause. He seems to have been successful in removing them, for he was given an appointment as preacher in the Lambeth Asylum shortly after reaching England, where he had, indeed, a sufficiently successful career, publishing several volumes of sermons, and enjoying high patronage.

Nevertheless, no sooner was the war over, than he did everything in his power, and urged his influential friends to help him, to obtain permission for his return. In particular, he wrote to General Washington, apologizing, rescinding, and asking his influence in his favor. He asked that Washington

. . . freely forgive what a weak judgement, but a very affectionate heart, once presumed to advise? Many circumstances . . . conspired to make me deem it my duty to write you. . . . I cannot say a word in vindication of my conduct but this, that I had been for months before distressed with continual apprehensions for you and all my friends without the British lines. I looked upon all as gone; or that nothing could save you, but rescinding the Declaration of Independency.

Washington answered courteously, but declined to support his plea. His other friends also discouraged the attempt to return, so that it

50 Sprague, op. cit., V. 182.  
51 Dorr, op. cit., 185.  
52 Washington at Valley Forge, 74—75.
was not until 1790, when the laws of Pennsylvania permitted the return of royalist refugees, that Mr. Duché again saw Philadelphia. He was then too ill to resume his rectorship, although Mr. White had accepted it in the meantime only with the proviso that he might resign in Mr. Duché’s favor if and when the latter returned. Mr. Duché finally died in Philadelphia in 1798, without having again served as rector. We must conclude, in all charity, that what influence he ever had certainly mitigated against, rather than to the glory of, the Church in America.

As against this story of vacillation and lack of singleness of purpose, it is with relief that one turns to the account of the last, but by no means the least, of the Philadelphia clergy of the period, William White. After Mr. Duché’s departure, and the subsequent resignation of Thomas Coombe, the vestry book of Christ Church reports, on October 22, 1778, “Mr. White had now the sole charge of both the churches; as there was no other Episcopal clergyman in the city.”

By this time, the British had again evacuated Philadelphia, and there was much turmoil and dissension. However, Mr. White had been throughout unflinchingly and whole-heartedly loyal to the American cause. Facing all the doubts and problems of his brother clergy, and equally conscientious in the face of them, he had nevertheless been able to set his course with firmness and courage on the side of the Revolution. He had, to be sure, the advantage during the early years of the conflict of being in a subordinate position as assistant to the rector of Christ Church, and hence was not called upon to express himself publicly upon the political questions that agitated the times. That same fact precluded the possibility of his having any great influence in the forming of policies, and also accounts for our having very little material except his own memoirs concerning these years of his life.

Since these memoirs were published many years later, we may well assume them to be colored by maturer reflection, not necessarily a part of Mr. White’s sentiment at the time. With that by way of qualification, however, and noting also that there is no trace of any act inconsistent with his professed feelings, we may quote from his memoirs to obtain a view of his course, and the opinions that justified it. As to his loyalty to the colonies, he says,

53 Dorr, _op. cit._, 194.  
54 Ward, _op. cit._, 28–30.
The late measures of the English government contradicted the rights which the colonists had brought with them to the wilds of America and were, until then, respected by the mother country. . . .

Perhaps had the issue depended upon my determination, it would have been for submission, with the determined and steady continuance of the rightful claim. But, when my countrymen in general had chosen the dreadful measure of forcible resistance . . . it was the dictate of conscience to take what seemed the right side. . . .

Although possessed of these sentiments, I never beat the ecclesiastical drum. My two brethren in the assistant ministry preached animating sermons, approbatory of the war, which were printed, as did the most prominent of our clergy Dr. Smith. . . . Being invited to preach before a battalion, I declined and mentioned to the colonel, . . . my objections to the making of the ministry instrumental to the war. I continued as did all of us, to pray for the King until Sunday [inclusive] before the 4th of July, 1776. Within a short time after, I took the oath of allegiance to the United States, and have since remained faithful to it. My intentions were upright, and most seriously weighed. I hope that they were not in contrariety to my duty.

Just as he reasoned his course politically, so also Mr. White had carefully justified to himself his stand on the matter of prayers for the king. To his Memoirs of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, we find the following significant note appended. 55

As the cessation of the public worship of the episcopal church was very much owing to scruples on this point; it may be thought important. . . .

In the northern states . . . the clergy generally declined officiating on the ground of their ecclesiastical tie to the liturgy of the church of England. As they were generally men of respectable characters, the discontinuance of their administrations had an unhappy effect on the church . . . as one cause contributing to the low state in which we were left by the revolutionary war.

With all possible tenderness to the plea of conscientious scruples, it will not be rash to affirm, that there was no ground for them in the promise . . . made previously to ordination in the church of England. It is as follows: The candidate declares—"That the Book of Common Prayer and of ordering of bishops, priests and deacons, containeth in it nothing contrary to the Word of God; and that it may lawfully so be used; and that he himself will use the form in the said Book prescribed, in public prayer and administration of the sacraments, and no other."

This promise ought to be taken in connexion with the pastoral duty generally; and with the discharge of it as stipulated for in the promises made at ordination; which require of the minister the reading of the prayers and the administration of the sacraments.

But there occurs a case, in which there is an external necessity of omitting a few petitions, not involved in any Christian duty; so far as civil rulers are identified by name, or other personal description. In such a case, it seems evident, that

the promise is the most nearly complied with by the use of the liturgy to the extent which the external necessity permits.

For such a view, Mr. White then quotes precedent from Cromwellian times in England. Thus it is evident that he not only pursued an unwavering course of loyalty to the colonies, but had good and sufficient justification in principle on every point which proved so much a stumbling block to his brethren among the colonial clergy, less endowed with courage—and shall we say, imagination—than himself.

In September, 1777, when the British were advancing upon Philadelphia, and the Continental Congress had fled to York, Mr. White withdrew with his family to the house of Mr. Acquila Hall, his brother-in-law, in Maryland. He says at this juncture,56

Just before breaking up . . . [the Congress] had chosen me their chaplain . . . Nothing could have induced me to accept the appointment, at such a time . . . but the determination to be consistent in my principles, and in the part taken. Under this impression, I divided my time between Congress and my family . . . until the evacuation of the city in the June following.

He accepted this chaplainship, in fact, during the very darkest days of the whole war. It was just before the capture of Burgoyne, at a time when it looked as if the British army might advance southward from the frontiers of New York and sever the eastern states from the southern. He continued as chaplain to Congress until it removed to New York, and when later the government was again established at Philadelphia, he was once more chosen, and also at each successive session until the removal of the government to Washington in 1801.57 Thus we see in him the picture of a patriot in the finest sense, holding bravely to the conviction of the righteousness of the cause, with faith in its ultimate success. The stand which Mr. White took drew him rapidly into prominence, as a national figure, and made him the logical one to look to some years later when it became possible to secure a bishop for the Church in Pennsylvania.

In conclusion, it is interesting to speculate what might have been the future of the Episcopal Church in America, had it been as free from the traditional conceptions of its relation to the crown, as Americans already had become in their political thinking. It is certain that in America there was little patience with anything that had the appear-

57 Ibid., 32.
ance of tying up church and state. While to most of these clergymen, and to some others, it was impossible to think of the Church existing apart from the sovereignty of the British crown, the temper of the American mind was uncongenial to any such view. The Revolution itself can be understood only in the light of the modes of thinking, the outlook, of men who were separated from England by things of far greater significance than the miles which intervened between them and the banks of the Thames. The essential rupture was in the attitude fostered on the colonial frontier, as against the thinking which dictated the policies of the British Ministry.

It may seem to us, indeed, an amazing thing that this whole controversy with reference to prayers for the king—an issue that can mean so little to us now—should have been the pivot on which a great situation turned; that the inability of clergymen of the Church of England to overcome the Erastian outlook upon their religion which makes prayers for the king of so great importance that they could not minister to Christian people without their inclusion in the liturgy, did seriously handicap the whole future of the Church in America. Of this latter there can be no question, and yet it is hard to blame them. One cannot read the soul-searching statements of the earnest men who espoused the Loyalist cause without feeling that, mistaken as they were at least on that point, they were living up to honest conviction. In many instances, too, one is bound to sympathize with them in the stand they took against unreasoning radicalism and mob excitement. It is perhaps that same temper that enabled Seabury, for instance, and many other pronounced Loyalists, to return so quickly to their ministry, and reclaim the lost confidence occasioned by the bitterness of conflict. It is certain that the very quality which seemed to cause the Church to fail up to and through the Revolution, furnished the background which stabilized and made more effective the influence of religion in the process of American reconstruction. In the very words of one of the martyrs to that cause, Mr. Barton, it proved true that the Church's "moderation and peaceableness must at length recommend her to the esteem of people, so soon as their prejudices cool." The conservatism so little valued in times of strife and conflict, was essential in establishing life on a sound basis in America after the Revolution.

Ocala, Florida

Edgar Legare Pennington
ROSTER OF THE ANGLICAN CLERGY OF PENNSYLVANIA IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING, AND DURING, THE REVOLUTION

The Rural Clergy:

Barton, Thomas  Ex-assistant in a Philadelphia academy, itinerant in York and Cumberland Counties, 1754-1758; Lancaster, 1759-1778; closed his churches in 1776, but continued to minister privately; escaped to New York, 1778; died in New York, 1780.

Batwell, Daniel  Educated Cambridge University; for many years a distinguished preacher in London; missionary in York and Cumberland Counties, 1773-1778; refugee in New York, 1778, returned to England, 1783.

Craig, George  Ex-curate in England to Dr. Bristowe; itinerant in Pequea, Lancaster, Caernarvon, etc., 1748-1757; Chester, 1758-1783. But cf. notice of his death in letter from Mr. Barton to the Secretary of the S. P. G., Jan. 8, 1779.

Currie, William  Ex-dissenting minister, Pennsylvania; missionary at Radnor, 1736-1783, continued at Radnor after the Revolution.

Illing, F. F.  Licensed 1772 by Bishop of London, to Juniata, served before and during Revolution in “back parts of Pennsylvania”; served after Revolution at Caernarvon and Pequea.

Magaw, Samuel  Educated Philadelphia College; missionary at Dover, 1767-1777; later became a leading clergyman in Pennsylvania; rector of St. Paul’s, Philadelphia, 1784; vice-provost of University of Pennsylvania, 1787.

Murray, Alexander  Missionary at Reading and Mulatton, 1762-1778; refugee in England, 1778.

Reading, Philip  Educated Winchester and University College, Oxford; missionary at Apoquiniminck, etc., 1746-1777; died about 1777.

Ross, Aeneas  Missionary at Bristol, 1740-1741; Philadelphia, 1741-1742; Oxford and Whitemarsh, 1742-1756; Newcastle, 1757-1782; died about 1782. But cf. notice of his death, Barton to Secretary of S. P. G., Jan. 8, 1779.

Tingley, Sam.  Born New York about 1745; licensed 1773; missionary at Lewes, etc., 1774-1783; died in Maryland, 1800.
The Philadelphia Clergy:

Coombe, Thomas
Duché, Jacob
Smith, William
Stringer, William
White, William.

Note:
Of the above list of rural clergy, Samuel Magaw and Samuel Tingley might perhaps be classed as belonging to Delaware, rather than to the Pennsylvania clergy, Dover and Lewes being within the present boundaries of Delaware; but these missionary clergy covered very extensive areas in their ministrations, and from their own accounts considered themselves as identified with Pennsylvania. Thus, Mr. Tingley, in a letter of March 5, 1782, to the Secretary of the S. P. G. speaks of his work in “that part of Pennsylvania formerly distinguished by the counties of Newcastle, Kent, and Sussex, but now called the Delaware State.” As for the boundaries between these states, a tentative line drawn in 1761 terminated in the town of Newcastle, while the work of drawing the present Mason and Dixon line, was not completed until 1768. See Report of the Joint Commissioners in Relation to the Boundary Lines of Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. (Washington, 1850.)