

A Fractured Body:
James Blair Begins Disestablishing the Church of England in Virginia, 1690-1785

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the development of freedom of religion in Virginia focusing on the Anglican Church in the century preceding the Constitutional Convention (May 25 to September 17, 1787). There are three main arguments in this study. First, I maintain that commissary James Blair's actions set the Anglican Church in Virginia on a unique trajectory that favored local control. He did this despite the hierarchical structure of the Church of England that encouraged uniformity. He gained strong influence in Virginia, used his power to weaken governors and clergy, along with their ties to imperial Britain. At the same time, he empowered vestries and local control. His actions set the Anglican Church on a path different from that of the Church in other colonies. Importantly for the path of the Anglican Church in Virginia, he established and was the first president of the College of William and Mary. Second, I assert that the College of William and Mary was responsible for further developing a unique Anglican Church in Virginia. The college provided an education for future leaders, allowing the colony to develop a clergy that had spent little or no time in England. In turn, the clergy became increasingly supportive of local power, and had a diminishing connection to England. Third, I maintain that the development of a unique Anglican Church in Virginia created a culture in which Anglicans there were more receptive of the First Great Awakening (1730s-1760s), and were supportive of the American Revolution, and religious freedom. In order to demonstrate these three points, I will argue that from Blair through the American Revolution, the Church of England in Virginia followed a unique path that was essential for securing religious freedom in Virginia, and the eventual United States.

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Introduction

Preparing for Religious Freedom: Virginian Anglicans Unique Path to End the Establishment

On August 15, 1772, graduating student, James Madison (cousin to the future president), gave “An Oration in Commemoration of the Founders of William and Mary College.” In his speech, the future Anglican bishop discussed the growing debate over religious dissent and toleration in Virginia. He pointed out the benefits of religious toleration both rationally and with historical examples. Madison stated:

Experience will show, that those Societies have ever enjoyed the greatest Share of Prosperity, where the Magistrate has most strictly confined his attention to civil Interests. Flanders, once the most flourishing Country in Europe, how was she reduced by the fanatic Attempts of Philip the Second? How was France depopulated? beggared, by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes? Does not Holland behold her Streets swarming with industrious, wealthy Citizens! Has not Britain, long since in Theory, found this to be the Nerve, support and Glory of the Land?¹

Madison’s historical examples demonstrated other societies that prospered following religious toleration like Holland, or struggled following an end to religious freedom, like France. At this point, toleration was not widespread in practice, only a few colonies, like Pennsylvania, granted religious toleration and none possessed freedom of religion, and few were publicly discussing religious freedom outside small Baptists circles.² Four years later, the 1776 Virginia Declaration of Rights provided religious toleration, but it took until 1786 for Virginia to ensure religious

¹ James Madison, “An Oration in Commemoration of the Founders of William and Mary College,” August 15, 1772, *Bulletin of the College of William and Mary in Virginia* 31, no. 7 (November 1937): 7-8, accessed August 28, 2014, <https://archive.org/details/orationincommemo317madi>. Unless it changed the context of the quote, spelling is updated.

² Jefferson did not develop his Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom until 1776. It was not until that same year that Madison attempted to insert greater religious freedom into the Virginia. Even once Virginia secured religious freedom in 1786, it was one of the first states to secure religious freedom, as several states did provide religious freedom for almost fifty years. Massachusetts was the last colony to grant religious freedom, doing so in 1833.

freedom. During that time, Madison took on responsibilities as the first Bishop of Virginia and president of the College of William and Mary, but he remained an ardent supporter of the colonists and encouraging religious toleration.³ His support of toleration was one of many voices of endorsement from members of the Church of England, but the Anglicans in Virginia did not secure religious freedom by themselves.

By 1786, Revolutionary War veterans, seasoned politicians, and rising leaders of Virginia supported religious freedom. Many advocates for religious freedom were members of the Church of England, which was the state sponsored church in Virginia since 1607. These same men fought alongside the patriots in the American Revolution, despite the Church of England's support of the Mother Country. They were able to support independence and religious freedom due to the unique development of the Anglican Church in Virginia. Madison was the culmination of the path taken by the Church of England that began almost a century before the founders signed the Declaration of Independence. I will argue that from the College of William and Mary founder James Blair (1655-1743) through the American Revolution, the Church of England in Virginia followed a unique path that was essential for securing religious freedom in Virginia, and the eventual United States.

My thesis will demonstrate three main arguments in this study. First, I maintain that Blair set the Anglican Church in Virginia on a unique trajectory. Besides founding the College of William and Mary, he served the Church of England as the commissary in Virginia for almost

³ I use the Church of England or Anglicans interchangeably throughout the paper. The process to become the Episcopal Church did not happen until the 1780s, which is outside the purview of most of the paper, and does not affect the development in Virginia in the years I examine. For more information on that process see David L. Holmes, *A Brief History of the Episcopal Church: With a Chapter on the Anglican Reformation and an Appendix on the Quest for an Annulment of Henry VIII*. (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993), 53-59.

fifty years.⁴ He gained strong influence in Virginia, used his power to weaken governors and clergy, along with their ties to imperial Britain. At the same time, Blair empowered vestries and local control. He did this despite the hierarchical structure of the Church of England that encouraged uniformity. His actions set the Anglican Church on a path different from that of the Church in other colonies. Importantly for the development of the Anglican Church in Virginia, after founding the College of William and Mary he served as the first president. Second, I assert that the College of William and Mary was responsible for further developing a unique Anglican Church in Virginia. The college provided an education for future leaders, allowing the colony to produce Virginia-born clergy. In turn, the clergy became increasingly supportive of local power, and had a diminishing connection to England. Third, I maintain that the development of a unique Anglican Church in Virginia created a culture in which Anglicans there were receptive of the First Great Awakening (1730s-1760s), supported the American Revolution, and sought religious toleration. While the Church of England followed its own path, church members in other colonies did not lose their connection to England. The work done on these subjects is immense but the scholarship still does not explain the Church of England's role in the development of religious liberty in Virginia during the eighteenth century.

The most comprehensive work on the Church of England in colonial Virginia is Rector George Brydon's, *Virginia's Mother Church and the Political Conditions Under Which It Grew*. Brydon served the diocese of Virginia for over the first half of the twentieth century and served as the diocese's historiographer for over a quarter of a century. While his examination provides a

⁴ The Bishop of London appointed commissioners who oversaw certain areas, like a colony. They did not have formal powers, which caused confusion throughout the colonial period. Some commissioners attempted to have ecclesiastical courts, and keep the clergy in their appointed colony in line. However, without the actual power to hold clergy accountable the commissioners could not maintain discipline. The commissioners called meetings of clergy to discuss issues, and provided an avenue for the Bishop of London to know of developments of the Church of England in a colony.

nuanced examination of individuals in the church, it portrays the Church of England in Virginia as tolerating dissenters and being early proponents of greater religious freedom beginning with the colony's founding. Brydon makes the Church of England the champion of religious freedom from the beginning of his analysis. He maintains that the Church of England did not oppress dissenters, but instead that the dissenters persecuted the Church of England.⁵ Although the Church of England did create a culture that allowed many members to support religious freedom eventually, it did so with the encouragement and support of dissenters and enlightened thinkers, and there were many examples of dissenter persecution in the decade preceding the American Revolution. Brydon's work is correct at several points, but he made arguments and points that made the Church of England the hero of religious freedom.

Although scholars have written a great deal on the development of religious freedom, most studies begin in the 1750s and focus on the dissenters. These studies omit essential events in the Church of England. By 1750, the clergy were no longer a unified group and by the time of the American Revolution, they were publicly divisive. Also by that time, the Church of England lost its connection with clergy in Virginia, and the church's hierarchical structure of church government had disappeared. Church of England studies on religious freedom that do not begin before 1750 also miss the importance of James Blair to religious freedom. The few biographies that exist on Blair focus on his achievement in establishing the College of William and Mary, and his power in Virginia politics. In *James Blair of Virginia*, author Parke Rouse, Jr. provides an in-depth study of Blair, which focuses on his political power.⁶ The Charter of the College of William and Mary named Blair the first president of the school and his forty years in the position

⁵ George M. Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church and The Political Conditions Under Which it Grew Volume 1* (Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, 1947) 43, 371.

⁶ Parke Rouse, Jr., *James Blair of Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1971).

allowed him to shape the direction of the college until the American Revolution. While president, he also served as the commissary for Virginia giving him additional influence. In addition, his marriage into the influential Harrison family provided him with the wealth and connections to be a member of the Virginia elite.⁷ Rouse and others document that this power allowed him to overcome uncooperative clergy and remove unfavorable governors. Rouse demonstrates Blair's influence throughout the book, with other authors supporting Rouse's arguments in their works.⁸ Historian Leonidas Dodson states, "That Blair was responsible for the removal of both Andros and Nicholson is well known."⁹ However, the scholars fail to connect Blair's influence in politics and at the college to the future of Virginia. His ability to overcome obstacles shaped the Anglican Church in Virginia and set the colony on a path toward toleration.

Studies on the Church of England focus on the church itself and do not connect the church to developments in Virginia. Two prominent examinations of the Anglican Church during this period are by historians Robert Prichard, and John Nelson. In *A History of the Episcopal Church*, Prichard examines the Church of England from before the founding of the colony in 1607 into 2014. He does not cover many details due to the long period he examines, leaving gaps in his analysis.¹⁰ In *A Blessed Company: Parishes, Parsons, and Parishioners in Anglican*

⁷ Descendents of the Harrison family included many politicians, including a signer of the Declaration of Independence and two presidents of the United States, William Henry Harrison (1773-1841), and Benjamin Harrison (1833-1901). By the 1780s the Harrisons were also one of the richest families in Virginia, possibly even the second wealthiest family in the colony. Jackson T. Main "The One Hundred." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (July, 1954): 364, accessed July 8, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1943311>.

⁸ Rouse; Leonidas Dodson, *Alexander Spotswood: Governor of Colonial Virginia, 1710-1722* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1932); Thad W. Tate, "Part I – The Colonial College, 1693-1782," in *The College of William and Mary: A History, Volume 1: 1693-1888* (Williamsburg, VA: King and Queen Press, 1993); and John F. Woolverton, *Colonial Anglicanism in North America* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1984).

⁹ Dodson, 193. Dodson is referring to Edmund Andros and Francis Nicholson who left Virginia in 1698, and 1705 respectively. Blair also helped remove Spotswood from office.

¹⁰ Robert W. Prichard, *A History of the Episcopal Church: Complete through the 78th General Convention*, 3rd ed. (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2014), 111-12.

Virginia, 1690-1776, Nelson examines church life, and the composition of the church membership. His examination provides strong numerical statistics and sound research throughout demonstrating the transition from European-bred clergy, to Virginia-bred clergy. However, his analysis stops before the American Revolution and does not include the fight for religious freedom.¹¹

Scholars focusing on the First Great Awakening tend to neglect the South, and the Church of England. Instead, the scholarship focuses on revivals in New England. The works that do mention Southern colonies predominately focus on religious dissenter groups, like the Baptists, that grew rapidly in the 1750s and 1760s. While these groups gained the most from the First Great Awakening, the Church of England did benefit from the revival. Historian Thomas Kidd is one of a few scholars who accounts for the Church of England in the First Great Awakening in *The Great Awakening: Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America*, Kidd describes how several clergymen developed positive relationships with the eminent itinerant preacher George Whitefield (1714-1770).¹² This relationship between Whitefield and the clergy was the most pronounced in Virginia, where he maintained an amicable relationship with several ministers. Most examinations of the First Great Awakening fail to highlight the importance of Anglican revivals to Virginia society, because they did not receive the same level of benefits as other religious groups.

A plethora of scholarship focuses on the prerevolutionary years of the 1750s and 1760s and Virginia is included in these studies. However, the majority of these works do not include

¹¹ John K. Nelson, *A Blessed Company: Parishes, Parsons, and Parishioners in Anglican Virginia, 1690-1776* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

¹² Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

religious development. Those that do mention religion focus on dissenter groups, like the Presbyterians and Baptists. The scholars often use the dissenter growth to explain the rise in popular power over the Virginian aristocracy. Historian Rhys Isaac makes this argument in *The Transformation of Virginia: 1740-1790*.¹³ This scholarship portrays Anglicans as a reactionary group seeking to maintain power. Few historians have disagreed with Isaac. Yale historian Jon Butler is an exception. In *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People*, Butler demonstrates that the Church of England maintained power in politics, and the power structures did not significantly change because of dissenter growth.¹⁴ If church members are included in these studies, the writers describe the Church of England as an organization torn over decisive issues. These were not widespread, but were local issues centered at the College of William and Mary where the masters (professors) frequently debated these topics, and publicly demonstrated their disagreements. The overwhelming number of clergy were not involved in these fights.

Although scholars have filled volumes on the American Revolution, most studies focus on the “heroes,” politics, and battles. Few deal with Virginia religious development during the war. The little research on religion deals with the Church of England throughout the colonies, or the rising power of religious dissenters.¹⁵ Most clergymen remained loyal to England, and many colonies lost the majority of their rectors. However, this generalization overshadows the high

¹³ Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia: 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

¹⁴ Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

¹⁵ Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, & the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

number of Anglican ministers who remained in Virginia, and served the revolutionary side in some capacity.¹⁶

Scholarship on religious liberty in Virginia focuses on either the dissenters, or prominent founders, like Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826). This scholarship does not give due attention to the Church of England. Studies that focus on the dissenters, like the Presbyterians or Baptists, give the impression that church members tried to appease the dissenters to maintain control.¹⁷ Studies on the founders frequently disregard their membership in the Church of England.¹⁸ Many prominent Anglicans, including Madison, moved toward supporting religious toleration and religious liberty. This is not to imply that the dissenters or founders were not instrumental in securing religious freedom. Indeed, the dissenters were essential due to their sheer numbers, and the movement needed the founders' leadership to implement legislation securing religious freedom. However, the studies of the founders and dissenters depict it as a battle of power with the Church of England ultimately losing. Instead of focusing on two groups, scholarship needs to incorporate advancements toward religious liberty by all three groups and begin the studies in the seventeenth century.

Including the Church of England into the narrative of religious freedom provides a better-balanced portrayal of these years in the colony. Virginian Anglicans were not a cohesive group with a solid hierarchical structure issuing down from England. Instead, local parishes maintained a high degree of autonomy. This system supported religious toleration by 1700. By the time

¹⁶ Prichard, 106-107.

¹⁷ Holton; Thomas E. Buckley, *Church and State in Revolutionary Virginia, 1776, 1787* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977); and Merrill D. Peterson, and Robert C. Vaughn, eds. *Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom: Its Evolution and Consequences in American History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

¹⁸ Lance Banning, *The Sacred Fire of Liberty: James Madison and the Founding of the Federal Republic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

Virginia passed the bill for religious freedom in 1786, it was not a groundbreaking change in the minds of Virginians, but a result of a hundred years of movement toward religious freedom.

The Church of England began with Virginia's founding in 1607. Initially, the Virginia Company took care of the colony's religious needs. Prichard states, "Since the Virginia Company created parishes in each of its settlements, set aside glebe lands to provide income, and directed that glebe houses and churches be built, it also claimed the right to nominate candidates for vacant positions."¹⁹ The company also filled parish vacancies. However, this system fell apart when King James I revoked the Virginia Company's charter in 1624. After the king revoked the charter, the colony experienced religious neglect for over a half century. To fill the void, Virginia Anglicans took matters into their own hands by recruiting ministers, establishing parishes, and building churches. Initially members of the House of Burgesses asserted their right to nominate clergy to the colonial governor.²⁰ However, within two decades of the Virginia Company's losing the charter, local vestries began designating their own clergy, and the House of Burgesses gave up the right to name clergy completely in 1643.²¹ The local vestries asserted greater control over clergy life by not offering lifelong tenure to rectors, as was the English precedent. Instead,

¹⁹ Prichard, 9. Glebe Lands were "Wherever the Anglican Church was formally established during the colonial period, legislative provision set aside farm lands (glebes) together with homes, barns and slaves for the support of the clergy." T.E. Buckley, "Glebe Lands," in *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, ed., Daniel G. Reid et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 483.

²⁰ The structure of the Virginia government did not change drastically throughout the colonial period. The House of Burgesses was the popularly elected lower body of the legislature. The higher and significantly smaller body was the Executive Council appointed by the lieutenant governor or the Council of Trade. The acting governor served as the chair of the Executive Council. The governor and acting governors were English, while members of the Executive Council were Virginians. The king, queen, or a representative of the monarch appointed the governor, but the governor did not usually govern the colony, preferring to stay in England. Instead, the lieutenant governor assumed the position of head of the colony. In the absence of the lieutenant governor, the senior member of the executive council served as acting governor.

²¹ William Walter Hening, *Hening's Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of all Laws of Virginia from the First session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619, vol. 1, 1619-1660*, transcribed for the Internet by Freddie L. Spradlin (New York, 1823), accessed February 2, 2015, <http://vagenweb.org/hening/index.htm>.

they offered one-year contracts.²² With England's lack of attention, the vestries assumed some of England's powers giving the Church of England in Virginia a local focus early in the colony's history. Despite several attempts to reassert the traditional church hierarchy into the eighteenth century, the local power over clergy remained throughout the colonial period.

The religious development in Virginia in the seventeenth century made the relationship between parishes and their rector different from the long process to match a clergyman to a parish in England. It began with the patron of the church nominating a clergyman, and presenting him to the bishop of the diocese. If the bishop deemed the clergyman acceptable, the bishop inducted the candidate into the parish. Nelson states, "Legally, induction provided life tenure in a parish."²³ This did not work the same in Virginia. With the absence of a bishop, the governor acted as a bishop and found clergymen a parish, and then inducted the clergy at the parish's request.²⁴ However, the parishes treated the governor's appointments as recommendations and dismissed clergy they did not support. The parishes rarely requested induction, forcing the clergy to agree to year-long contracts. Several governors tried to end the cycle of yearly contracts and enforce inductions on parishes but they were unsuccessful. Nelson asserts, "Even when the parsons performed to general satisfaction, the vestries procrastinated about induction as they discovered along the way that failure to secure induction enhanced their local control and produced no deleterious effects."²⁵ The commissaries also sought the power to induct clergy, but England did not clarify divisions of responsibilities between the governor and commissary, which led to feuds between the two positions. Despite the year-long contract, parishes seldom

²² Prichard, 14-15.

²³ Nelson, 127.

²⁴ Ibid., 127.

²⁵ Ibid., 130.

replaced rectors and rectors rarely left the parish. Further keeping the turnover rate low was colonial-wide payment of clergy.²⁶ Throughout the seventeenth century, the General Assembly enacted laws regulating the salaries of the clergy. In 1661, the General Assembly passed legislation requiring each parish to supply glebe lands to its clergy. In 1696, to provide further income the Assembly voted to establish 16,000 pounds of tobacco as salary for each clergy.²⁷ The consistent pay rate throughout the colony encouraged rectors to remain in their parish, instead of looking for other posts in Virginia. Although the pay rate caused controversy in the 1750s, it remained the same until the American Revolution. The clergy's continual service in a parish demonstrates the sound relationship between most parishes and clergymen. It also demonstrates that despite the number of issues that Anglican clergy fought over, most were local issues that did not apply to the whole colony.

The accession of King William III (1650-1702) and Queen Mary II (1662-1694) in 1689 began a period of renewed English interest in the religious development of Virginia, and other North America British colonies. William and Mary's efforts led to the establishment of the Church in many southern colonies and the creation of first parishes in the New England colonies.²⁸ When England founded the other southern colonies in the late-seventeenth century, they created a better system to control the Anglican Church. Despite England's developing a better system to assert its religious power over the colonies, England failed to regain its authority in Virginia. Although England did not create the strong hierarchical oversight they desired in Virginia, this period witnessed the beginning of the commissary system, and the establishment of

²⁶ For an examination on clergy's service to parish and the colonial custom on tenure, see Nelson, 127-33.

²⁷ Hening, *Hening's Statutes at Large*, vol. 3, 1684-1710, 1511-13.

²⁸ Massachusetts (1688), Pennsylvania (1694), New York (1697), Rhode Island (1698), New Jersey (1703), and Connecticut (1707) all founded their first parish of the Church of England, Prichard, 41.

the College of William and Mary. Their successor, Queen Anne (1655-1714), shared William and Mary's commitment to the religious development of the colonies, and during her reign (1702-1714), England came close to appointing a bishop to the colonies.²⁹ However, following her death, and the accession of the Hanoverian kings in 1714, a new era of colonial religious neglect began.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, a common system of local parish dominance developed in Virginia. Due to the geographically large size of the colony with few concentrations of people, parishes varied in size with some being quite large, which forced rectors to make regular circuits to their churches. The dispersed population caused the average parish to consist of four churches and some had as many as eight.³⁰ Due to the elastic population, the parish sizes were in constant states of flux, with the addition of new parishes and the disunion of old ones. The House of Burgesses was responsible for establishing parishes, changing parish lines, and dissolving parishes based on a parish's number of communicants.³¹ The House of Burgesses exercised this right with no oversight from the commissary, governor, or an English representative.

A group of twelve vestrymen ran each parish. Although there were variations, usually freeholders elected the first set of vestrymen, and after that, the vestry members themselves filled any vacancies. The vestrymen were responsible for managing the business aspect of the parish. This included raising funds for new churches and finding ministers. Out of the vestry, two were selected as churchwardens who handled more responsibility, such as providing poor relief, and

²⁹ Ibid., 43-44.

³⁰ Nelson, 25-30.

³¹ For legislation that changed parishes, see Hening, *Hening's Statutes at Large*, vol. 1-13. For more information on how the size of parish affected legislation, see Nelson 20-25, 33-40.

supplying the bread and wine for communion.³² Vestrymen frequently held power beyond church business. Nelson states, “When the General Assembly in the 1720s sought to manage tobacco production by limiting the number of seedlings that could be planted and tended, the parish vestries—not the county justices—were responsible for appointing and supervising inspectors.”³³ In addition, a vestryman frequently served as the county justice, and was a representative to the General Assembly.³⁴

The vast size and large number of churches further benefited from the support structure throughout the parishes. To assist the clergy, each church had a reader who helped the rector with the service, or in the rector’s absence, led the divine service and read the homily. The readers could not absolve sins, preach, or celebrate communion.³⁵ This system encouraged lay activity in the church, as church members sometimes went weeks without seeing their rector.

Despite the colony’s existence for almost a hundred years, there was uncertainty concerning the oversight of the Anglican Church in the colonies for much of the seventeenth century. The Bishop of London, Henry Compton (1632-1713), decided to rectify the lack of hierarchical structure by appointing a commissary for each colony. The commissaries provided a level of oversight of the clergy and supported the hierarchical structure. However, the bishops did not clearly define the commissaries’ duties. The Church of England did not successfully implement commissaries in all the colonies and Virginia was the only colony that maintained a commissary throughout the colonial period. Compton appointed Reverend James Blair as

³² For more information on vestry duties, and the composition of vestries, see Nelson, 37.

³³ Ibid., 14.

³⁴ Ibid., 15.

³⁵ Ibid., 58.

Virginia's second commissary, who will be the focus of the first chapter.³⁶ Besides serving as commissary, he was also the first president of the College of William and Mary. His accumulation of power allowed him to guide the religious development in the colony. His influence shaped the Church of England in Virginia and its culture until the American Revolution.

The second chapter will focus on differentiating factors in Virginia that the other colonies lacked. Factors like the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPGFP), the First Great Awakening, and the College of William and Mary uniquely shaped Virginia's religious life. The SPGFP helped most of the colonies recruit ministers from England, and provided money for other activities, like establishing Native American schools, but Virginia received little aid from the society. While many Anglican ministers in the colonies did not support the First Great Awakening, and several had open disagreements with Whitefield, several ministers in Virginia encouraged the revivals that resulted from the First Great Awakening. Commissary James Blair maintained a warm relationship with Whitefield. In other colonies, Whitefield frequently had hostile dealings with the clergy, and the clergy often denied access to their pulpits. Beginning in the 1720s, the College of William and Mary began to graduate more men who went into the clergy and began developing a colonial-bred clergy instead of an immigrant European clergy. All of these developments reinforced a locally controlled Church of England, weakened ties to the Mother Country, and provided an environment for religious toleration.

The third chapter will focus on the two decades preceding the American Revolution and the years during the war, and the fight for religious freedom. These years witnessed increased

³⁶ "In 1684 Compton appointed John Clayton (1656 or 1657-1725) as his first commissary," Prichard, 41. Clayton left Virginia in 1686, Prichard, 42.

debates over clergy salaries and establishing a resident bishop. Although, these issues were not widespread among the clergy, they demonstrated divisions among the clergy and the move toward independence and toleration. The masters at the College of William and Mary predominately argued these debates. Most masters supported England during the American Revolution, along with most Anglican ministers in the colonies. However, in Virginia the overwhelming number of Anglican clergy supported the patriots. During the American Revolution, the dissenters and sons of the enlightenment capitalized on the loose church structure and the colonial Church of England's push for religious freedom.

Finally, this thesis will conclude with an analysis of how and why the Virginia Anglicans moved toward religious freedom, and the impact for the development of religious freedom. The move toward toleration and religious freedom during the colonial period gave the Church of England in Virginia a unique path from the Church of England. This path allowed for the success of religious freedom in Virginia, and for the implementation of religious freedom in the Bill of Rights.

Chapter 1

The Episcopal Pope in Virginia: James Blair Sets Virginia on a Path Toward Religious Toleration

James Blair combined ambition, influence, and power to set Virginia on a path toward religious toleration, and eventual religious freedom. He married into the influential Harrison family providing him with wealthy political allies. In addition, the Bishop of London, Henry Compton (1632-1713), selected Blair as commissary of Virginia. Blair also helped found the College of William and Mary and served as the college's first president. The combination gave Blair a rare accumulation of power that he used to work around governors, and disregard clergy in support of the local vestries. Blair's championing the vestries resulted in an increase of local power and a gradual diminishing importance of the Church of England's traditional hierarchical power structure throughout the colonial period.

Blair was born in the seventeenth century during a politically and religiously turbulent period in Scotland's history. The Presbyterian movement centered in the southwest and the Anglican supporters in the northeast religiously divided Scotland.³⁷ The power shifted between the two groups based on transitions in the monarchy throughout the seventeenth century. With the accession of Charles II (1630-1685) in 1660, a new period of Anglican support began that defined the Church of Scotland. In July of 1661, Charles began weakening the Presbyterian establishment. Charles maintained that the Presbyterian Church was not supportive of the monarchy, and that the Anglican Church was the best choice for the state. By the end of 1661, Charles appointed bishops across Scotland.³⁸ Historian J. H. S. Burleigh states:

³⁷ J. H. S. Burleigh, *A Church History of Scotland* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 238.

³⁸ Ibid.

Throughout this period there was in fact little difference between Episcopalian and Presbyterian worship, except that the bishops encouraged the reading of Scripture lessons in place of the lecturing that had tended to replace it and stressed the need for shorter sermons, and for greater decorum on the part of the congregations. The great divergence between the new system and the old was in the matter of church government.³⁹

The difference in government led to the dismissal of hundreds of Presbyterian ministers in the 1660s as they refused to recognize the church hierarchy with the king at the top. In 1669 and again in 1672, Charles made several accommodations to tempt ministers to return but most did not.⁴⁰ The lack of ministers was exacerbated in the 1680s. In 1681, James II (1633-1701), heir to the Scottish throne, urged his Parliament to pass a Test Act, which required state and church office holders to take an oath to the king.⁴¹ The Test Act was too reaching for some ministers, so many, including Anglican supportive ministers (including Blair), refused to participate and they were removed from their parishes. Blair's removal set him on a path to leave his homeland in Scotland, and forge a new life in Virginia that became crucial for the development of religious freedom.

Blair was born sometime in 1655-1656, on the north coast of Scotland in Banffshire. Blair's father, Robert, was a minister for the local Alvah parish, supported the Anglican Church, like most of the town. In 1667, James began Marischal College at Aberdeen, but went on to the University of Edinburgh in 1669. He finished his Master of Arts in 1673, but continued his

³⁹ Ibid., 244.

⁴⁰ An Act of Parliament required that all ministers must apply by September 20 1662 to the bishop for collation by February 1, 1663. By seeking collation, the ministers acknowledged the hierarchy and 270 ministers left their parishes instead. In June 1669, the king issued a royal Indulgence that allowed ministers to return with a more moderate version of acknowledging the hierarchy, which the King followed with a second indulgence in 1772. The two indulgences brought back about forty and fifty ministers, respectively. Ibid., 246-49.

⁴¹ Ibid., 250.

theological studies there until 1679.⁴² Scholar Parke Rouse, Jr. explains that in the summer of 1679, Blair “was ordained a minister of the Church of Scotland, upon presentation of Robert Macgill, Viscount Oxfourd.”⁴³ Blair began serving the parish of Cranston on July 11, 1679, and served until he refused to take the Test Oath in 1681.⁴⁴ The following year, Blair left Scotland but his fellow colonists used his Scottish origins against him. In London, he built connections that proved beneficial for his future in Virginia. He developed relationships with John Tillotson (1630-1694), who became archbishop of Canterbury in 1691, and Bishop Compton. At the time, Compton was recruiting ministers for North America. However, due to the lack of English clergy, he turned to Protestant refugees from Scotland. After a few years in London, Blair went to Virginia to minister in the most western parish, Henrico. Despite the Church of England never ordaining Blair, Compton accepted the letter of endorsement from Blair’s former bishop.⁴⁵ Blair arrived in Virginia in late 1685.

Within two years of arriving in Virginia, Blair began developing useful connections. On June 2, 1687, Blair married Sarah Harrison (1679-1713), daughter of Benjamin Harrison, Jr. (1645-1712). The marriage provided Blair with a family that was emerging into the burgeoning planter aristocracy and an increasingly powerful family.⁴⁶ Sarah’s sister, Hannah (1678-1731) married Philip Ludwell II (1671-1726), which connected Blair with another powerful family in

⁴² Parke Rouse, Jr. *James Blair of Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1971), 8-15.

⁴³ Ibid., 15.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 16-17.

⁴⁵ “A Copy of the letters of Orders produced by the Comry,” William Stevens Perry, *Historical Collections Relating to the American Colonial Church*, vol. 1, Virginia (New York: AMS Press, 1969), 21.

⁴⁶ Rouse, 33.

Virginia, and he was loyal to his new family, even after his wife's death.⁴⁷ Although he never forgot his duties as a clergyman, and remained loyal to the Bishop of London and the archbishop of Canterbury, Blair frequently placed family and political ambition above church governance concerns.

In 1690, the new Lieutenant Governor, Captain Francis Nicholson (1655-1728), arrived with a commission for Blair from Bishop Compton. Dated December 15, 1689, the commission made Blair the commissary of Virginia. The commissary's power was vague, with limited explanation of power and responsibility. A commissary oversaw the clergy, providing them with information from England, and reported updates to the bishop on the clergy in the colony. Commissaries did not have the power to prevent clergy from preaching, nor did they have power to ordain ministers, but as commissary, Blair's influence continued to grow. His initial actions and thoughts did not stay constant throughout his fifty years as commissary, but despite his changes in opinions, he continually bested the men who stood in his way. Blair's new position also provided him with an opportunity to build a relationship with Nicholson.

With his new power, Blair began to build relationships with the clergy. During Blair's life, most clergy were European born and had few connections to Virginia. While Blair was alive, most clergy were well educated, and were concerned about creating a stable life in the colony, with little political influence or ambition. Blair called his first convocation in the summer of 1690 to discuss a variety of issues. He pushed for developing a structure of supervision over the local parishes, establishing ecclesiastical courts, and seeking induction over the ministers. The clergy did not share Blair's enthusiasm for increased supervision of the clergy or ecclesiastical courts. The group of clergy supported Blair's call for inductions, but the issue

⁴⁷ Ibid., 35.

became a divisive topic over the next thirty years as Blair stopped fighting for inductions within a few years, leading many clergymen to work against Blair.

Significantly, the convocation also called for the creation of a college in Virginia.⁴⁸

Although colonists talked of establishing a college in Virginia since earlier in the century, the talks were not fruitful. Blair came to the meeting with ideas for the college in mind. The convocation petitioned the General Assembly asking for their support, and the General Assembly passed legislation in support of the college. In May 1691, the General Assembly authorized the creation of the college, and petitioned William and Mary for approval.⁴⁹ Within a few months, Blair sailed to England to ensure the college's creation. Although an unintended result, the creation of the college was key for the shift away from the Church of England, which allowed Virginia to develop its own religious identity.

In London, Blair progressed slowly through the legal process of gaining permission for the school. It took months dealing with the Lord Commissioners of Trade and Plantations (Board of Trade) and even longer to secure the funds for the college.⁵⁰ Fortunately, Blair's connections with Archbishop Tillotson, and Bishop Compton helped Blair gain the charter. After a year, Blair accumulated enough revenue to found the college, but still had to create the charter. The monarchs granted the charter on February 8, 1693.⁵¹ Among other details, the charter outlined

⁴⁸ H.R. McIlwaine and J.P. Kennedy, eds. *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, vol. 2, 1659-1693* (Richmond: Colonial Press, 1914), 343, accessed July 15, 2015, <http://galenet.galegroup.com.er.lib.k-state.edu/servlet/Sabin?dd=0&af=RN&locID=ksu&srchtp=a&c=1&ste=11&stp=Author&dc=fhc&d4=0.33&docNum=CY112370813&ae=CY112370813&tiPG=1&an=SABCPA2H92601>.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 368.

⁵⁰ The Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations appointed governors, and other high colonial officials as well as recommend legislation to the colonies and to Parliament for laws regarding the colonies.

⁵¹ *The Charter, Transfer, and Statutes of the College of William and Mary* (Williamsburg: William Hunter, 1758), 67, accessed May 25, 2015, http://phw01.newsbank.com.er.lib.k-state.edu/cache/evans/fullsize/pl_012052015_1120_39996_706.pdf. Regarding the original charter, Frank B. Evans states, "A copy which the

two important aspects about the college that affected the development of the Church of England in Virginia.

First, the charter included the purpose of the college was “to the end that the Church of *Virginia* may be furnished with a Seminary of Ministers of the Gospel, and that the Youth may be piously educated in good Letters and Manners, and that the Christian Faith may be propagated among the Western *Indians*.⁵² It further outlined the college was “a certain Place of universal Study, or perpetual College of Divinity, Philosophy, Languages, and other good Arts and Sciences”.⁵³ The charter signified that the college was responsible for educating future clergy, and future civil leaders making it possible for more Virginians to gain an education without leaving the colony. Without the college, clergy, and planters’ sons made the dangerous and expensive journey across the Atlantic Ocean and then had to pay to attend college and live in England. With a Virginian college, more colonists became clergy, and fewer Virginians sent their sons to England for education.⁵⁴ As fewer colonists were educated in England, the relationships between the Virginians and the English dwindled.

Second, the charter outlined the governance of the college, which included the creation of the chancellor position.⁵⁵ The chancellor served a seven-year term but did not have specific

College possessed during the eighteenth century disappeared, during or just after the American Revolution, in a way that has never been satisfactorily explained. The puzzle is compounded by the fact that we cannot even be certain exactly what was lost at that time, as there is no description of a specific formal copy of the charter at the College in its early years.” Frank B. Evans, ed., *The Story of the Royal Charter of the College of William and Mary*, Botetourt Publications, no. 4 (Williamsburg: Botetourt Bibliography Society, 1978), 1.

⁵² *The Charter, Transfer, and Statutes of the College of William and Mary*, 5.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵⁴ It was not required for clergy to receive a college education, but most did. In addition, the wealthiest Virginians, like Robert “King” Carter, still sent their sons to England for an education as it helped them build business contacts.

⁵⁵ *The Charter, Transfer, and Statutes of the College of William and Mary*, 37-39.

duties. Compton served as the first chancellor, and until the American Revolution, the chancellor was an English bishop or archbishop. This provided the college an advocate in England, and tied the college to the Church of England. The charter also named Blair as president for life.⁵⁶ Before the charter named him as president, Blair wrote to Nicholson about issues regarding the presidency of the college. Blair stated, “There was one thing that was forgot in my Instructions (& ‘twas my fault, for I was not sensible of the necessity of it at this time), that is, that I should have ordered to provide a President of the College.”⁵⁷ Blair did not immediately seek the position outright, and offered to find someone from England.⁵⁸ He also carefully worded that if the General Assembly desired, he was willing to become the president. Blair maintained that “though I never sought a place in my whole life time, I could find it in my heart to seek this.”⁵⁹ He elaborated that “there are many men in England much fitter for it upon the account of Learning, prudence and authority, yet perhaps there is none to be found that has a greater zeal for the Country, or that is more concerned in point of honour to see this work prosper than I am.”⁶⁰ The inclusion of Blair as president did not cause problems in Virginia, but with Blair’s new position gave him a more influential voice in the development of the colony, and the religious development that set it apart from the Church of England.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 17-18.

⁵⁷ Blair to Francis Nicholson, December 3, 1691, “Papers relating to the Administration of Governor Nicholson and to the Founding of William and Mary College,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 7, no. 2 (Oct. 1899): 160, accessed September 5, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4242241>. For more on Blair’s tact in gaining the presidency, see Rouse, 75-77.

⁵⁸ Blair to Francis Nicholson, 161.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 161.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 161.

Blair returned to Virginia from England in 1693, with the charter in hand. In the same year, the General Assembly selected Middle Plantation, the future city of Williamsburg, as the location of the college. While Blair was in England, Nicholson became governor of Maryland in 1692, and Edmund Andros (1637-1714) filled the governor vacancy in Virginia. In 1692, Nicholson became governor of Maryland, and Andros replaced him in Virginia. Despite living in Maryland, Nicholson and Blair maintained a strong relationship, while in Virginia Andros and Blair quickly developed a sour relationship. In 1693, Blair joined the Executive Council. Although he did not have the level of wealth associated with most members of the Executive Council, Blair's role as commissary and founder of the College of William and Mary gave him gravitas, and his relationship with the Harrison family provided him with allies on the Council. In 1695, Blair accepted the rector position at James City parish at Jamestown, which allowed him to continue to minister and run the college.⁶¹

Increasing problems between Blair and Andros developed and their relationship continued to deteriorate. Andros and Blair blamed each other over the college's slow start, and the lack of religious growth in the colony. The majority of the Executive Council supported Andros, and they "Suspended" Blair "from Sitting, Voting, & Assisting" in 1695.⁶² Blair challenged his suspension to the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations and they ordered Blair reinstated in 1696.⁶³ The following year, Parliament enacted, "Act for preventing Frauds and regulating abuses in the plantation trade," which ordered only Englishmen to hold major colonial positions such as Judges in the General Court, who were the councilors. Since Blair was

⁶¹ Jamestown and Williamsburg were less than seven miles apart.

⁶² H.R. McIlwaine, ed., *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, vol. 1, June 11, 1960 – June 22, 1699 (Richmond: The Virginia State Library, 1925), 324-25.

⁶³ Ibid., 352.

a Scotsman, the Executive Council suspended Blair again.⁶⁴ His identity as a Scot temporarily slowed his accumulation of power. That same year, Blair left for another trip to England to raise funds for the college, and with a mission to remove Andros.

Once in England, Blair spent his time and energy toward removing Andros and he forgot about his obligations for the Church of England the College of William and Mary. Blair addressed the Board of Trade on the state of Virginia. In response to questions from the Board of Trade, Blair, along with College trustee and Councilor Henry Hartwell (circa 1636-1699), and former Virginia attorney general, Edward Chilton (1658-1707) wrote, “An Account of the Present State and Governance of Virginia.” Their work championed imperial policy, criticized the weak institutions of Virginia, and blamed Andros for the problems, especially regarding religious growth and the college. In addition, the authors blamed Andros for not insisting the vestry present ministers to the governor, for inductions.⁶⁵ Furthermore, Blair accused Andros of not ensuring that the college received money to keep it open.⁶⁶ Blair used this work as part of his move to replace Andros, which he further encouraged with his work, “Memorial Concerning Sir Edmund Andros.” In the memorial, Blair wrote favorably of Nicholson in his comparison of Andros stating “he [Nicholson] failed not to give notice what number of ministers was wanting, and earnestly to solicit for a suitable Supply.”⁶⁷ Blair further demonstrated Nicholson’s positive work maintaining, “After ministers were arrived in the Country, he commonly defrayed their

⁶⁴ Ibid., 364.

⁶⁵ Henry Hartwell, James Blair, and Edward Chilton, “The Present State of Virginia and the College” (London: 1727), 64-67, accessed September 5, 2015, [⁶⁶ Ibid., 68-70.](http://galenet.galegroup.com.er.lib.k-state.edu/servlet/Sabin?dd=0&locID=ksu&d1=SABCP04798200&srchtp=a&c=1&an=SABCP04798200&d2=1&doCNum=CY3803095256&h2=1&af=RN&d6=1&ste=10&dc=tiPG&stp=Author&d4=0.33&d5=d6&ae=CY103095256.</p>
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⁶⁷ James Blair, “A Memorial Concerning Sir Edmund Andros, Governor of Virginia,” Perry, 10.

charges till they were settled in livings, which by his ready recommendations to the vestries of the vacant Parishes was quickly done.”⁶⁸ Blair also maintained that Nicholson, unlike Andros, respected the right of the vestry.⁶⁹ In his critique of Andros, Blair went to lengths to differentiate Nicholson from Andros. Blair argued:

In all this matter of providing ministers for the Country, Sir Edmund Andros (who hates every thing that looks like an imitation of Governor Nicholson), has acted a quite contrary part … the Governor who neither urges them [vestries] to provide ministers, nor goes about to provide them for them.... At present for 50 parishes there are but 22 ministers and most of those tired out with the unkindness of the Government.⁷⁰

Blair blamed the lack of inducted ministers on Andros asserting, “By the Law the vestries ought to be present, and by the King’s instructions the Governor ought to induct; and if the vestries fail in presenting, he may both present and induct *jure devoluto*.⁷¹ At this point, Blair still supported induction of the clergy. Blair later changed his position on induction, but still used it against governors.

Blair formally addressed his grievances in a hearing before Thomas Tenison (1636-1715) who became the Archbishop of Canterbury following Tilltoson’s death in 1694, and Compton. Blair represented himself while William Byrd II (1674-1744), son of an Andros ally on the Executive Council, represented Andros.⁷² Although the hearing began as examination of Blair’s conduct on the Executive Council, it quickly turned to accusations against Andros. There were two accusations against Blair summarized by Tenison: “One is, that he has filled the Church and

⁶⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 10.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 11.

⁷¹ Ibid., 13.

⁷² Blair’s brother-in-law, Benjamin Harrison III, aided him, while Ralph Marshall, an English attorney, aided Byrd. Neither Harrison, nor Marshall contributed significantly to the proceedings. “A True Account of a Conference at Lambeth,” Dec 27, 1697, Perry, 36-65.

the College with Scotchmen and endeavored to make a national faction by the name of the Scottish party. The other is that he has misapplied and squandered away the money that should have gone to the building of the College.”⁷³ Blair argued that there was a lack of options filling college positions, and that his selection of Master Ingles was an excellent choice, which Byrd agreed stating, “Mr. Ingles, is a very good schoolmaster. He has made several good scholars and I believe all people are very pleased with him.”⁷⁴ Regarding the selection of ministers, Blair argued, “It is not I that provide Ministers for the Country.”⁷⁵ Compton accepted the blame for the ministers, and turned the issue against Andros stating:

My Lord, whatever there is in this, I must take it upon me. Your Grace knows the circumstances of the poor Men in their own Country, and I must confess I thought it both a Charity to the Men and that it was a piece of good service to the plantations, to send them thither. And I think it unkindly done in Sir Edmund Andros to make a noise about this, for I wrote him an account of all that I sent and told him the Characters I had of them and told him if any of them did not behave himself well, he should be as easily turned out as ever he had been put in. He makes me no returns to this but raises a clamour against these Men only on account of their country.⁷⁶

With Compton accepting responsibility for the foreign ministers, Blair was free from guilt, and it brought attention to Andros’ negative attitude. Then they moved on to the second point, which was that Blair took his salary before the building of the college was completed. In response, Blair stated that “at the very first Meeting of the Governors of the College in Virginia,” that although he was the first president he told the meeting “if you think the business of the President unnecessary at present, I have a good plantation and a good Living where I am... I will stay there and not put you to one farthing charge till you shall say the attendance of a president is necessary

⁷³ Ibid., 37.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 39.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 39.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 39.

at the College.”⁷⁷ Blair continued maintaining that the Governors of the college decided, “I should presently leave my Parish and remove myself to the place where the college should be built and carry it on with all diligence”⁷⁸ At which point, Blair began receiving his salary. At this point Tenison and Compton heard enough and moved on to Blair’s accusations against Andros.

Blair accused Andros of not supporting the college financially, stating, “When the Governor Nicholson left the Government of Virginia there were subscriptions for near £3000. In that Gentleman’s [Andros] time there has not been a subscription for one penny.”⁷⁹ Blair also accused Andros of blocking bills that provided revenue for the college.⁸⁰ In addition, Blair continued to blame Andros for the lack of ministers in the colony asserting,

the Vestry in that Country are the Patrons, and they are to present, and the Governor, by the King’s instructions, is ordinary as to Inductions. But your Grace knows that if a patron fails of presenting, so many months, then the right of presentation for that time devolves upon the Ordinary, so that it is really in the Governor’s power to make presentations *jure devoluto*, which he never does, and that is the reason the Ministers are left in such precarious circumstances.”

In defense of Andros, Byrd read minutes from the Executive Council meeting that included reference to a letter from Compton to the Governor. However, Blair asserted, “It [the minutes] is said that afterwards he read My Lord of London’s Letter, wherein these expressions were contained; tho’ my Lord of London’s Letter was not read, but only the Governor pretended to repeat or recapitulate two or three Lines out of it.”⁸¹ Compton further supported Blair’s comments maintaining, “Mr Blair might very well say the expressions were strange; for indeed,

⁷⁷ Ibid., 41.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 42.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 44.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 44-46.

⁸¹ Ibid., 50.

my Lord, I wrote very frankly and warmly to Sir Edmund Andros, and, instead of giving me any satisfaction it seems he carried my Letter to the Council, and made a noise of it there.”⁸² Compton’s support and acceptance of Blair’s account made a convincing argument against Andros.

In 1698, Nicholson replaced Andros as governor, but the Board of Trade did not reinstate Blair. During his trip to England, Blair did not address the college or the trip. Historian Thad Tate states, “Sir Edmund Andros became the first but not the last governor who could blame Blair for his dismissal, but the commissary’s success had come at the cost of some subordination of the religious and educational concerns for which he presumably spoke to political self-interest.”⁸³ Blair’s fellow clergy began to work against him, as he did not work for their needs. Despite questions of Blair’s sincerity about the college, it was open in 1694 with the Grammar School, and the building was complete and in use by 1700, but the school still did not have a full faculty.

In 1697, with the case against Andros over, Byrd wrote to Nicholson defending his part in the case, and speaking highly of Nicholson. Byrd stated, “I hope your Excellency will please to forgive this confidence and assure yourself, Sir, that my intermeddling in this matter, is out of a sincere inclination to doe [sic] you service.”⁸⁴ Byrd further wrote to encourage Nicholson not to be thankful to Blair. Byrd wrote to Nicholson stating that, “you’re very little beholden to Mr Blair for remonstrating Sir Edmonds enmity to your Excellency: since tis apparent twill be

⁸² Ibid., 51.

⁸³ Tate, 29.

⁸⁴ “William Byrd II to Governor Francis Nicholson,” Oct 3, 1697, *The Correspondence of the Three William Byrds of Westover, Virginia: 1684-1776*, vol. 1, ed. Marion Tinling (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1977), 1:203.

followed by no very agreeable consequences.”⁸⁵ Byrd’s warning served a political purpose to benefit his family. His father served on the executive council that removed Blair, and he remained loyal to England through his life. The letter made Blair the opposition and made it clear that the Byrd family supported Nicholson. Despite the warning, Nicholson did not heed the advice, and their initial partnership turned to enemies.

Besides recruiting students and securing more money for the college, one of their first achievements was transitioning the capital from Jamestown to Middle Plantation. The General Assembly voted in favor of moving the capital on June 7, 1699, and on October 27, 1699, Nicholson and the council proclaimed all government functions after May 10, 1700, were to happen at Middle Plantation, and changed the name to Williamsburg.⁸⁶ The college and government’s location in Williamsburg helped Blair gain influence as he shaped students, and worked with politicians. It had a high concentration of clergy, and when in session, most of the Burgesses attended church at the local Bruton Parish, which Blair became rector of in 1710.

Elevating his power, the Board of Trade put Blair back on the Executive Council in 1701, which had significantly altered since he left five years prior. Five of the eight Councilors who favored Blair’s suspension were no longer on the Council, and Blair was related to four of the five new Councilors.⁸⁷ This transition gave Blair a significant number of allies on the Council.

Although Blair and Nicholson worked together for founding the college, their opposing views on the British Empire made their cooperation short lived. Nicholson consistently

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ H.R. McIlwaine, ed., *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, vol. 2, August 3, 1699 – April 27, 1705 (Richmond: The Virginia State Library, 1927), 21.

⁸⁷ The five new members were “Benjamin Harrison II, his father-in-law; Philip Ludwell II, his brother-in-law; the powerful Robert ‘King’ Carter of Lancaster, Matthew Page of Gloucester, and William Bassett of New Kent... Bassett was linked with the Harrisons through the Burwells, and Carter’s daughter Elizabeth was to marry Nathaniel Burwell, another connection.” Rouse, 133.

supported the imperial agenda, which contributed to the resentment against him during his governorship in New York, and Maryland. Historian Stephen Saunders Webb states, “Governors were the instruments who united military and civil authority in the interests of the Crown.”⁸⁸ Nicholson continually supported the interest of the empire over the local colonial interest, and above the interest of the developing planter class. Blair and Nicholson managed to avoid a conflict during Nicholson’s first period in Virginia because of their focus on the clergy and the college. Nicholson supported the Church of England and was an early proponent of the college, which benefitted Blair. However, by Nicholson’s second period as governor, Blair was accustomed to his role as commissary, and the college had a charter. In addition, Blair’s political power had grown through the Executive Council and he began to work against Nicholson.

In 1702, Blair framed his position as always being a constant friend to Nicholson in “Mr. Commissary Blair’s Memorial against Governor Nicholson.” Blair stated, “I need not put your Grace in mind how faithfully and diligently I served Governor Nicholson in the business of his promotion to that Government.”⁸⁹ Blair also accepted responsibility for supporting Nicholson arguing, “I am mightily ashamed of my own error & much more in having had an hand in leading your Grace into it. But certainly now after 4 years experience of Governor Nicholson, never people were more deceived or disappointed in any man than we have been in him.”⁹⁰ Blair accepted some responsibility for initially championing Nicholson, but put the real blame on Nicholson.

⁸⁸ Stephen Saunders Webb, “The Career of Francis Nicholson,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 23, no. 4 (October 1966): 517, accessed January 2, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1919124>.

⁸⁹ “Mr. Commissary Blair’s Memorial against Governer Nicholson,” Perry, 75.

⁹⁰ “Mr. Blair to the Archbp of Canterbury,” July 13, 1702, Perry, 125.

Further causing the conflict between Nicholson and Blair were their competing ideas of Virginia's place in the empire. Nicholson put Virginia as a colony of the British Empire, while Blair supported Virginia with more local focus. Blair maintained that Governor Nicholson said, “‘If I had not hampered them in Maryland & kept them under I should never have been able to have governed them.’”⁹¹ Blair states that he responded, “‘I don’t pretend to understand Maryland but if I know anything of Virginia they are a good natured tractable people as any is in the world and you may do what you will with them by the way of civility but you will never be able to manage them in that way you speak of by hampering and keeping them under.’”⁹² Nicholson wanted to enforce his rule and expand the empire while Blair wanted to support local rule among Virginians.

During Nicholson’s governorship, the majority of clergy still came from Europe and did not support the planter class. Webb maintains, “Next to the army, the church was royalism’s strongest bulwark.”⁹³ The clergymen were among Nicholson’s strongest supporters. The clergy became increasingly dissatisfied with Blair, and they turned to Nicholson for support. While the clergy were involved in this political fight between Nicholson and Blair, they remained focused on the church and were concerned about inductions, and were not seeking political power. Nicholson called his own convocation of clergy in March 1700, where he received most of their support. He further gained their support in 1703, by fighting for induction, instead of annual contracts. By 1703, Blair had changed his mind on inductions. He stopped trying to enforce inductions and began supporting parishes’ choice of annual contracts. Blair still supported

⁹¹ “Mr. Commissary Blair’s Memorial against Governer Nicholson,” Perry, 77.

⁹² Ibid., 77.

⁹³ Webb, 520.

inductions when the vestry presented the minister for induction. Blair championed a vestry's position that they had to present a clergyman for induction, and that the governor could not deny the presented clergyman. Several governors tried to assert power to appoint and induct clergy to vacant parishes, induct without appointments, and deny induction, but each governor ultimately failed. Blair's change in attitude helped him politically, but it also allowed for a form of oversight with the clergy. Rouse maintains, "Lacking powers to direct the clerical establishment and frustrated by the division of authority between himself and the governor, Blair may have concluded that life tenure was too great a risk for the church to take."⁹⁴ The Church of England never granted the commissary powers that a bishop possessed to reprimand clergy, and the clergy were not receptive of Blair's idea for ecclesiastical courts ten years earlier. This decision made him more unpopular with the clergy.

The induction process itself remained clouded through the next several governors. The English Attorney General, Edward Northeby (1652 -1723), wrote the opinion that the governor "must induct on the presentation of the Parishioners," but if they do not present a minister then the "Governor may also [induct] in their default collate a minister."⁹⁵ In 1703, Colonel Robert Quary (1644-1712), surveyor general of the colonies, wrote to Bishop Compton for further support for clarifying the induction process. Quary states that although Northeby did give power for the governor to induct if the Vestry did not present an individual, he did not provide what "processes or methods ought to be used in case the Vestry did refuse to obey or should shut the

⁹⁴ Rouse, 150. For more information on Blair's reversal on induction read Rouse, 150-51.

⁹⁵ "Sir Edward Northeby's Opinion concerning induction of Ministers in Virginia," Perry, 128.

church doors against the ministers inducted.”⁹⁶ The induction matter did not resolve but continually became an issue that Blair won over each governor.

Matters for Nicholson worsened when he attempted the courtship of Lucy Burwell (1683-1716), daughter of Colonel Lewis Burwell (1652-1710).⁹⁷ When Lucy did not share Nicholson’s feelings and Lewis did not force the courtship, Nicholson became violent, which was the end for Nicholson in Virginia.⁹⁸ The Burwell’s were relatives of the Harrison family. In addition, Lewis served on the Executive Council and supported Blair.

The contest ended between Blair and Nicholson with Blair and five other councilors petitioning the queen for Nicholson’s removal on May 20, 1703. The petition stated that they made “private complaints & representation” to Nicholson but they achieved nothing.⁹⁹ Furthermore, the petition asserted, “The particular instances of the Mal-administrations of your Majesty’s said Governor are so many that we fear the very enumeration of the several sorts of them would be an encroachment on your Majesty’s patience & goodness.”¹⁰⁰ It also requested “that the government of this your Colony and Dominion of Virginia may be put into such hands” who will observe the law and lead to “unspeakable Satisfaction of all your Majesty’s subjects of this Colony.”¹⁰¹ Shortly after helping write the petition, Blair left for England and appeared before the Board of Trade in 1704.

⁹⁶ “Col. Quarry to the Lord Bishop of London,” Oct., 15, 1703, Perry, 86.

⁹⁷ Rouse, 135.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 135.

⁹⁹ “Council of Virginia to the Queen,” May, 20, 1703, Perry, 81.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 81.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 81.

Like Andros before him, Nicholson was not able to defend himself and was not able to provide written response addressing the accusations in a timely matter. Thus, on April 5, 1705, the Board of Trade replaced Nicholson with Edward Nott (1657-1706), who died the next year.¹⁰² The Board of Trade assured Nicholson his removal was not due to the accusations, but that it was time for a change:

H.M. having ordered that the complaints against Governor Nicholson be transmitted to him that he might have an opportunity of justifying himself, and meantime having appointed Major Nott to succeed him, *prays* a letter from H.M. that this is not out of any regard to the complaints against him nor out of any dissatisfaction to his administration but he doth stand in fair in H.M. favor for any other post of trust.¹⁰³

Nicholson did counter the points, and received support from the General Assembly.¹⁰⁴ However, it was too late for him to retain the governorship, but it did help save his reputation in England.¹⁰⁵ Blair successfully outlasted another governor, and during his trip to England, he once again ignored his religious and educational responsibilities.

Due to the premature death of Nott, and the French capturing his successor, Robert Hunter (1666-1734), during Queen Anne's War, the governorship of Virginia was vacant until filled in 1710 by Alexander Spotswood (1676-1740). In the interim, the president of the council, Edmund Jennings (1659-1727) served as acting governor, and Blair spent his energy on the college.

¹⁰² J.W. Fortescue and Cecil Headlam, eds. *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 1704-1705*, (London, 1916), 477-78, 485, accessed July 15, 2015, <http://galenet.galegroup.com.er.lib.k-state.edu/servlet/Sabin?dd=0&af=RN&locID=ksu&srchtp=a&c=1&ste=11&stp=Author&dc=f1c&d4=0.33&docNum=CY111835078&ae=CY111835078&tiPG=1&an=SABCPA2F85701>.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 479.

¹⁰⁴ *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 1704-1705*, 397-402, 411-37; McIlwaine, *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia*, vol. 4, 1659-1693, 107-8.

¹⁰⁵ After leaving Virginia, Nicholson served for a period as the governor of Nova Scotia and later South Carolina.

While working on the college's growth, Blair's political influence continued to grow in Virginia. By 1712, Blair was related to six of the twelve members of the Executive Council. The following year, Compton died and John Robinson (1650-1723) filled the Bishop of London vacancy. In 1715, Archbishop Tenison died and William Wake (1657-1723) filled the position of Archbishop of Canterbury. These transitions weakened Blair's influence in England.

In Virginia, Blair enjoyed an initially fruitful relationship with Spotswood. Blair wrote, "We are exceedingly happy in a vigilant good Governor Col. Spotswood, who is a true friend to the Clergy."¹⁰⁶ However, by 1718, their relationship was quickly deteriorating, as issues over inductions continued to cause issues between the commissary and governor.¹⁰⁷ Spotswood followed his predecessors thinking that governors possessed the authority to appoint clergy to vacant parishes without the vestry presenting a minister. He also thought he could ignore a vestry's choice of minister and did not necessarily need to induct ministers presented before him. Spotswood did not initially assert his authority for inductions, even letting Blair move to Bruton Parish in 1710 without inducting him. However, in 1718 Spotswood challenged the idea that vestries did not need to induct ministers, by inducting ministers regardless of a vestry's thoughts on the clergyman. Blair challenged Spotswood by having his vestry put him forward for induction, which Spotswood denied.¹⁰⁸ The Board of Trade supported Spotswood's decision, and the clergy who grew increasingly unsupportive of Blair, favored Spotswood, but Blair was not done fighting governors over the issue.

¹⁰⁶ "Mr. Blair to the Bishop of London," November 18, 1714, Perry, 131.

¹⁰⁷ Robert Raymond, "The Case of the Vestries of Virginia," Perry, 197.

¹⁰⁸ "An Answer to the Accusations contained in the Governour's Letter to the Convention; which Letter is to be seen in the Journal of the Proceedings of the Said Convention," Perry, 226.

During the fight over induction, the clergy were able to challenge Blair at a convocation in April 1719. The purpose of the convocation was to respond to Bishop Robinson's inquiry of the validity of the clergy's ordination to ensure all clergy held proper licenses to minister. Robinson wrote, "Whether any ministers be settled among you, who have not a license from my predecessor or my self, I must leave to the enquiry of your Governor, who is instructed in that case; and will (I believe) upon notice give be ready to act accordingly, as also in reference to institutions & inductions."¹⁰⁹ The convocation of clergy deemed all of the clergy's ordination proper except for that of Blair. Many accused Blair of a Presbyterian ordination instead of an Anglican one. In 1719, Rector Hugh Jones wrote, "Several concurring circumstances induce most here to believe Mr. Commissary never had any but Presbyterian Ordination."¹¹⁰ In defense, Blair provided his letter from his former Bishop in Scotland, and the proof Compton used to justify Blair's ordination. Blair's "Letter of Orders" stated:

TO ALL CONCERNED, these are to certify & declare, that the bearer hereof, Mr. James Blair, Presbyter, did officiate in the Service of the Holy Ministry as Rector in the Parish of Cranston, in diocese of Edinburgh for several years preceding the year 1682, with exemplary diligence, care and gravity, & did in all the course of his Ministry, behave himself Loyally, Peaceably, & Canonically, & that is a truth I certify by these presents.¹¹¹

However, the letter did not satisfy the convocation of clergy. The clergy responded to Robinson maintaining, "We are fully satisfied, that all of us are Episcopally ordain'd, except Mr. Commissary, of whose Ordination a major part [of clergy] doubt."¹¹² Due to Blair no longer championing induction, the clergy did not support Blair. However, the letter to Robinson did not

¹⁰⁹ "To the Reverend the Clergy of Virginia," Perry, 201.

¹¹⁰ "Mr. Jones to the Bishop of London," May 30, 1719, Perry, 246.

¹¹¹ "A Copy of the Letters of Orders produced by the Comry," Perry, 247.

¹¹² "May it Please Yr Ldship," April 10, 1719, Perry, 212-13.

lead to further questioning of Blair's ordination. Neither Robinson nor succeeding Bishops of London questioned Blair's ordination, or Compton's acceptance of Blair.

At the convocation, the issue of induction arose, and in a letter to Robinson, the clergy stood behind Spotswood. The letter stated, "The people in General are averse to the Induction of the Clergy, the want of which exposes us to the great oppression of the Vestries."¹¹³ Regarding Spotswood's record, the clergy supported the governor stating:

Our Governor, who is under God our chiefest support here, has never been wanting to us, in redressing our Grievances to the utmost of his power; and would willingly act in our favour with respect to Institutions and Inductions, according to the King's patent and Instructions; but he imputes the opposition he meets with this affair, to some of the Council and particularly to Mr Commissary.¹¹⁴

The clergy increasingly found the governors, and especially Spotswood, their champion, and increasingly opposed Blair. At the convocation, Blair responded that inductions are out of his control, and that inductions "are in the Governour's hands, who does not fail to institute & induct, when Presentations are duly made."¹¹⁵ The clergy also took the opportunity of their meeting to address Spotswood's accusations against Blair. Spotswood stated:

For none more eminently, than Mr. Commissary Blair, sets at naught those Instructions, which your Diocesan leaves you to be guided by, with respect to Institutions & Inductions; he denying by his practice, as well as discourses, that the King's Governor has the Right to collate ministers to Ecclesiastical Benefices within this Colony; for when the Church he now supplies, became void by the death of the former Incumbent, his Solicitation for the same was solely to the Vestry, without his ever making the least application to me for my collation; notwithstanding it was my own Parish Church.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Ibid., 213.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 214.

¹¹⁵ "Mr. Commissary's Speech to the Convention," April 8, 1719, Perry, 217.

¹¹⁶ "An Answer to the Accusations contained in the Governour's Letter to the Convention; which Letter is to be seen in the Journal of the Proceedings of the Said Convention," Perry, 226.

Blair's own Bruton parish became a focal point for the induction controversy. Not only was Bruton parish Spotswood's parish, it was the one that Burgesses and Councilors attended when they were in town. Blair responded to the accusation that Spotswood was assuming power he was never given and broke the colony's traditional practices. Blair maintained, "And before this Gentleman's time, it was never known that ever a Governor either refused to induct upon any such Presentation; or gave Collation & Institution without it."¹¹⁷ Blair also wrote a response that Northeys opinion demonstrated the practice in England, but it did not directly relate to the colony.¹¹⁸ As the debate grew, and England still did not provide an answer, Blair sailed for England in 1721.

Although Blair did not have strong connections in Britain any longer, he still succeeded in removing Spotswood as governor. Hugh Drysdale (1672/73-1726) took over the governorship in 1722, and served until his death in 1726. William Gooch (1681-1751) became governor in 1727, and served until 1749. Neither Drysdale nor Gooch attempted to assert their authority in church matters, nor combat with Blair, so Blair's thoughts on induction remained the precedent. They both maintained positive relationships with Blair, and neither governor reinitiated the debate over inductions.

In 1724, the new Bishop of London, Edmund Gibson (1669-1724), sent questions to every minister in the colony to answer.¹¹⁹ Their responses provide insight into their induction status. The parish determined the difference between inducted and non-induced clergy. Some, like James Cox of Westminster Parish, had served the parish for one year, and the vestry

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 226.

¹¹⁸ "Mr. Commissary's Remarks on the Governour's Letter to the Parish of St Anne's, relating to Collations; which he promised the Convention to Answer. The Full copy of the Said Letter is inserted in the Minutes of the Convention," Perry, 239.

¹¹⁹ Bishop Robinson died in 1723.

presented him for induction six months into his ministry.¹²⁰ Others, like George Robertson of Bristol Parish, served thirty-one years without induction.¹²¹ Besides stating if the parish supported induction or not, some members provided explanations for their lack of induction. Thomas Dell of Hungar's Parish stated, "I have been here 3 years. The parish will not induct me because they will not be confined to a Minister."¹²² John Warden of Lawn's Creek wrote, "I am not inducted into my parish, because the Vestries are not inclineable to have Ministers inducted."¹²³ Lawrence De Butts maintained, "Of late years induction has been disused in this Government, but the reason of it I cannot assign."¹²⁴ James Falconer of Elizabeth City Parish asserted, "I have not been inducted, it not being customary. The Governor's recommendatory Letter and the parish's Compliance hath hitherto been the method."¹²⁵ Blair himself responded, "I have had this living 13 years but without induction."¹²⁶ Thomas Hughes of Abingdon Parish wrote, "Have not been inducted. I know of but 3 or 4 that are, the people being averse to have a Minister ... imposed upon them."¹²⁷ The length of time these men served their vestry varies but it demonstrates that despite vacant parishes in the colony most stayed despite the lack of inductions.

¹²⁰ James Cox, "Queries to be Answered by every Minister," Perry, 261-62.

¹²¹ George Robertson, "Queries to be Answered by every Minister," Perry, 266-68.

¹²² Thos. Dell, "Queries to be Answered by every Minister," Perry, 272-73.

¹²³ John Warden, "Queries to be Answered by every Minister," Perry, 289.

¹²⁴ Lawrence De Butts, "Queries to be Answered by every Minister," Perry, 291.

¹²⁵ James Falconer, "Queries to be Answered by every Minister," May 27, 1724, Perry, 293.

¹²⁶ James Blair, "Queries to be Answered by every Minister," July 15, 1724, Perry, 298-99.

¹²⁷ Thos. Hughes, "Queries to be Answered by every Minister," Perry, 308-9.

Blair attempted to finalize the induction issue writing a lengthy explanation in 1724 to Bishop Gibson. Blair stated, “As to the Custom and practice upon this law, the most general practice has been that the Parishes made no Presentation, and then there was no Induction; for we have no instance where ever a Governor collated or inducted *jure devoluto*.¹²⁸ Attempting to rectify the issue, Gibson wrote to the King to attempt to remedy the induction issue and give the powers outright to induct.¹²⁹ However, England never answered the induction issue so the tradition of vestry control continued throughout the colonial period.

Following the removal of Spotswood, Blair began focusing his energy on the college, which contained few students and teachers. Besides Blair’s renewed enthusiasm for the college, a growing group of Virginia planters supported the college. The developing planter aristocracy now had flexible resources to donate funds to the college, and the influence to pass laws to generate new funds. For example, in 1726, the General Assembly passed an act levying a duty of one pence per gallon on liquors imported to the colony, except if they were exported from England. The money raised from the duty went to the college.¹³⁰ To secure royal consent and to finalize the transfer of the college Blair travelled to England once again.

Blair helped draft a new charter for the college to complete the transfer of the college. The charter kept the plans for an Indian School, a Grammar School, a Philosophy School, and a Divinity School. In addition, the masters did not have to be Anglican clergymen, despite the custom that developed of the masters being clergymen, but they did have to take an oath of allegiance to the king and queen of England.¹³¹ For the presidency, the charter stipulated that the

¹²⁸ “Mr. Commissary Blair to the Bishop of London,” July 17, 1724, Perry, 320.

¹²⁹ “Petition of Edmond Bishop of London to the King,” Perry, 345.

¹³⁰ Hening, *Hening’s Statutes at Large*, vol. 4, 1711-1736, 143-50.

¹³¹ *The Charter, Transfer, and Statutes of the College of William and Mary*, 147.

president had to be a clergyman, and be thirty years old.¹³² Blair also removed several of the president's powers. Future decisions required more interaction from the faculty and the Board of Visitors.¹³³ Blair left for Virginia in 1727, leaving the transfer of the Charter to attorney John Randolph (1693-1737). To complete the transfer Blair still had to fill all six faculty positions. On August 15, 1729, Randolph presented Blair the charter, and the next day Blair and the masters met the requirements of the statutes, subscribing to the thirty-nine articles, and swearing allegiance to the king.¹³⁴ The college faculty swearing allegiance to the king put the clergy faculty in a position to be a defender of the monarchy and England. Until the American Revolution, the faculty's support of England increasingly put them on an opposing side of their fellow clergy, and the colony's leadership.

Throughout his life Blair preached regularly, riding to the churches within his parish dutifully. Blair was broad in his views, tolerating dissenters. Rouse maintains, "Having felt the whiplash of persecution in Scotland, he was indulgent of religious differences, even while he deplored them. Blair's permissive views thus enabled Virginia's Anglicans to give ground gracefully to the sects that new emigrants brought into the colony."¹³⁵ This tolerant view served the Church of England in Virginia to push toward religious toleration in the eighteenth

¹³² Ibid., 139.

¹³³ Ibid., 119, 121, 123, 125, 127; 139, 141, 143, 145, 147, 149, 151, 153, 155, 157.

¹³⁴ "Journals of the Meetings of the Presidents and Masters of William and Mary College, *The William and Mary Quarterly* 1 no. 3 (Jan 1893): 130, accessed May, 12, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1939690>; *The Charter, Transfer, and Statutes of the College of William and Mary*, 147.

¹³⁵ Rouse, 230.

century.¹³⁶ Blair's stature and influence provided an outlet for religious toleration to develop in Virginia.¹³⁷

Blair also set the Anglican Church on a different path by his acceptance of emotional revivals and his relationship with George Whitefield. In his first tour, Whitefield managed to create disharmonious relationships with the majority of Anglican clergy throughout the thirteen colonies. Many commissioners, like Alexander Garden (1685-1756) of South Carolina, William Vesey (1674-1746) of New York, and Roger Price (1696-1762) of Massachusetts all developed poor relationships with Whitefield.¹³⁸ Blair's acceptance of Whitefield was one of several rare fruitful relationships Whitefield maintained with clergy in the colonies.

After transferring the charter, Blair kept the faculty positions largely full and built student enrollment into the sixties where it averaged for the remainder of the colonial period. For the development of the Virginia clergy this was an important accomplishment. The successful continuation of faculty, specifically the divinity chairs, allowed the college to educate, and train clergy without having to send them to England for education, which was much more expensive. In addition, growing the student population allowed for more educated populace of planter elites, politicians, and clergy with ties to the college, and the colony.

Although Blair never relinquished his positions, even insisting on serving as acting governor in 1740 while Gooch was on a military expedition, but Blair's health was failing. Master William Dawson (1704-1752) began to act as president and rector, and William Byrd II began to take on most of his court duties, and assist him as a councilor. By 1738, other

¹³⁶ Although Blair was tolerant, he worried about the Quakers and Catholics, "Mr. Commissary Blair to Mr. Rudd," Perry, 147.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 147.

¹³⁸ Prichard, 70-71.

clergymen were concerned. Rector Anthony Gavin, wrote to Bishop Gibson noting Blair “can not act in his commission as it is required.”¹³⁹ Gibson did not remove Blair, and Blair continued to serve until his death on April 18, 1743. In his lifetime, Blair was a fixture of colonial Virginia society. He served as commissary of Virginia and president of the College of William and Mary for over fifty years, and served on the Executive Council for over forty years. He won contests over governors and the clergy. His long tenure and political power allowed him to shape the influence of the religious and political life in Virginia. His continual victory in the battle over induction gave the vestries power to shape the Church of England in Virginia. The battle over induction did not conclude after Blair’s death, as the local parishes continued the custom to choose to induct or not induct. This set the Anglican Church of Virginia on a path of local power over the church. In the following decades, the clergy and politicians followed this system of local control.

Following Blair’s death, the First Great Awakening began in earnest, and the number of Virginia-bred clergy took off. Both these developments began in the end of Blair’s life, but made important developments in the decades after his death. Whitefield was able to use the relationships he built with other rectors in Virginia to help bring the First Great Awakening to the colony. The College of William Mary began to fulfill its mission of educating members to become clergymen. The next chapter will cover the Great Awakening in Virginia, and the transformation of clergy in Virginia following Blair’s death.

¹³⁹ Anthony Gavin, “Mr. Gavin to the Bishop of London,” Aug. 5, 1738, Perry, 361.

Chapter 2

Staying on the Path: Transitioning to Religious Toleration

As influential as Blair was, other events, developments, and people also uniquely influenced the Church of England in Virginia, and further set the colony on the path toward religious freedom. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts helped develop the Church of England in the colonies but did not provide significant support for the Church of England in Virginia, and competed against Virginia's attempts to gain ministers. The lack of help from England meant that the colony was responsible for its own religious needs. In the last five years of Blair's life, the College of William and Mary began to fulfill its initial promise of developing clergy to serve Virginia parishes. Last, Blair's relationship with George Whitefield influenced the First Great Awakening in the colony and shaped the development of the Church of England in Virginia.

Following the appointment of Blair as commissary several years later, Thomas Bray (1656-1730), became the first commissary to Maryland when Compton appointed him in 1696. Bray arrived in the colony in 1700, but the Maryland legislature did not provide any funds for his salary, so after only a few months, Bray returned to England.¹⁴⁰ Before he left for Maryland, he wrote *A General View of the English Colonies in America with Respect to Religion*, which told of the terrible position of the Church of England in North America. The situation was dire in most of the colonies: New England, Pennsylvania, and the Carolinas each had a parish. Virginia, Maryland, and the Caribbean Islands fared better. Virginia had thirty ministers for fifty parishes, Maryland had sixteen ministers for thirty parishes, Jamaica had eight ministers in fifteen parishes

¹⁴⁰ Prichard, 46-47.

and Barbados had a minister for each of its fourteen parishes.¹⁴¹ His work, and experience in the Maryland legislature made it evident that England needed to provide more support for the religious growth in the colonies. In his work, Bray further outlined suggestions to help the church grow in the colonies. He suggested the creation of libraries and books for the clergy, in addition to helping recruit ministers to the colonies.¹⁴² With aid from several other Church of England members, they successfully lobbied King William III to issue the charter for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPGFP) in 1701.

From the organization's founding to the American Revolution, SPGFP sent over 300 clergy to the thirteen colonies, but Virginia only received two clergy, and Maryland five, with most of the other colonies receiving at least thirty, and some, like New York receiving as many as fifty-eight.¹⁴³ With the backing of the Church of England, and the English government, the SPGFP was able to recruit ministers effectively and send them to needy areas in the colonies. Thomas Nelson demonstrates the problem this caused for Virginia parishes. Nelson asserts that with the SPGFP's lack of support, "Virginia's informal, unorganized, and haphazard recruiting after 1701 would have to contend and compete with the organized, centrally located, and

¹⁴¹ Thomas Bray, *Apostolick charity, its nature and excellence consider'd: in a discourse upon Dan. 12-3., preached at St. Paul's, at the ordination of some Protestant missionaries to be sent into the plantations: to which is prefixt, A general view of the English colonies in America, with respect to religion, in order to shew what provision is wanting for the propagation of Christianity in those parts: together with proposals for the promoting the same, and to induce such of the clergy of this kingdom, as are persons of sobriety and abilities to accept of a mission: and to which is subjoin'd the author's circular letter lately sent to the clergy there* (London: 1700), 3-6, accessed December 10, 2015, <http://galenet.galegroup.com.er.lib-k-state.edu/servlet/Sabin?dd=0&locID=ksu&d1=SABCPA2G69600&srchtp=a&c=1&an=SABCPA2G69600&d2=3&docNum=CY3812090453&h2=1&af=RN&d6=3&ste=10&dc=tiPG&stp=Author&d4=0.33&d5=d6&ae=CY112090451>.

¹⁴² Ibid., 6-8.

¹⁴³ Prichard, 49. The SPGFP also benefited colonies outside of those colonies of the future United States, and developed into a worldwide organization. For more on the organizations' work in other colonies, see Prichard, 49.

politically well-connected SPGFP.”¹⁴⁴ Filling the void of clergy was difficult until Virginia began transitioning from European clergy to local clergy that came from the College of William and Mary. By 1730, a transition in the origins of Virginia clergy began as fewer came from England and more came from within the colonies.

Besides not sending clergy to Virginia, the SPGFP was unsupportive of Virginia’s religious development in other ways. During his tenure as Virginia governor, Spotswood attempted to gain aid for an Indian School he established and mainly paid for himself.¹⁴⁵ In 1712, Spotswood wrote to the aging Compton maintaining, “I hope this design will meet with encouragement both from the Society for propagating the Gospel and from the Nobility and Gentry of England who cannot, in my opinion, employ their Charity to better purpose than by laying such a foundation for bringing a great many souls to the Christian faith.”¹⁴⁶ Although Compton supported Spotswood’s plan, he was not in good enough health to help secure support from the SPGFP or other sources, and with his death in 1713, Spotswood lost an ally. Compton’s replacement, Bishop John Robinson, was not receptive to Spotswood’s plans. Spotswood also failed to form a Virginia SPGFP that he designed with hopes of maintaining funds for the Indian School.¹⁴⁷ Robinson and the SPGFP remained unsupportive of Spotswood’s plan. In October 1715, Spotswood continued to ask Robinson for assistance gaining additional resources from either the king, or the SPGFP to keep the school open, but Robinson failed to support

¹⁴⁴ Nelson, 123.

¹⁴⁵ “Spotswood, to the Bishop of London,” January 27, 1714, *The Official Letters of Alexander Spotswood, lieutenant-governor of the colony of Virginia, vol. 2, 1710-1722*, ed. Archer Anderson et al. (Richmond: Virginia Historical Society 1882-1885), 90; “Spotswood to the Bishop of London,” October 26, 1715, 138.

¹⁴⁶ “Alexander Spotswood, Extract out of Col. Spotswood’s Letter to the Bishop of London,” May 8, 1712, Perry, 191.

¹⁴⁷ “Spotswood, to the Bishop of London,” January 27, 1714, *The Official Letters of Alexander Spotswood*, 292-93.

Spotswood.¹⁴⁸ The SPGFP also did not provide funds at Spotswood's direct request, but was not alone trying to gain financial aid from the SPGFP.

Virginia received almost no financial aid from the SPGFP through its colonial period. Historian James Bell maintains that together, Maryland and Virginia received less than half a percent of the funds the SPGFP sent to the colonies.¹⁴⁹ The lack of financial support made Virginia more reliant on colonists to fill parish vacancies, and required the colonists to pay for their own rectors.

Despite the lack of enthusiasm from the SPGFP, the College of William and Mary continued to gain support in Virginia. Although the college had a slow start, it began to fill the void left from the lack of ministers coming from England. Before he died, Blair was optimistic of the college's future for developing Virginia clergy. Blair wrote, "I doubt not your Lordship's encouraging our Virginia students. It is a great advantage that we have them from their infancy. They generally prove very sober good men."¹⁵⁰ Blair's goal to develop Virginia-bred clergy took time, but in the decades following his death, the number of clergy from Virginia grew significantly. When Bishop Edmund Gibson requested information from all of the ministers in 1724, one of the questions was, "How long is it, since you went over to the Plantations as a Missionary?"¹⁵¹ Out of the twenty-nine responses, all of them had immigrated to Virginia.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ "Spotswood, to the Bishop of London," October 26, 1715, *The Official Letters of Alexander Spotswood*, 138. For more information on Spotswood's relations with Native Americans and the development of the school, see Dodson, 70-111.

¹⁴⁹ James Bell, *The Imperial Origins of the King's Church in Early America, 1607-1783* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 218-19.

¹⁵⁰ James Blair, to the Bishop of London, February 19, 1741, Perry, 364.

¹⁵¹ "Queries to be Answered by every Minister," Perry, 261-318.

¹⁵² Ibid., 261-318.

This meant that none had local connections to the colony, but instead remained connected to England. The shift away from European clergy to colonial clergy was important for ending the hierarchy of governance within the Church of England and supporting local control. In *A Blessed Company*, Nelson provides statistical data that makes the shift from European-raised to Virginia-raised clergy evident. Nelson stated:

Of thirty-two Virginia-bound men licensed by Bishop Gibson between 1723 and 1729, seven (22 percent) were Virginia recruits, i.e., men born in Virginia and men who resided in the colony prior to their decision to seek ordination and a parish. Gibson licensed another thirty between 1730 and 1739, of these ten (33 percent) were local recruits. There were thirteen (39 percent) Virginia recruits among the final thirty-three Gibson authorized in the 1740s.¹⁵³

The shift to colonial clergy was possible for several reasons. First, by 1720, Virginia developed as a colony for a planter aristocracy to arise who could support sending sons to school, but not afford to send their sons to England. Second, the trip to England and back had become safer and cheaper over the years, and continued to do so through the colonial period. This meant more men were able to travel to England for ordination. Third, the College of William and Mary possessed a full faculty and was able to educate students to become ministers.

The transition to a colony born clergy had consequences for the clergy's role in Virginia. By the 1750s, the clergy developed a social standing in society. In addition, their families, and local relationships kept them loyal to Virginia. In the 1750s, a series of conflicts began that divided the clergy in Virginia. Without a commissary with Blair's fortitude and influence to shape the Church of England in Virginia, the parishes gained power over their local church.

Following Blair, none of the future college presidents, or commissaries accumulated his level of power for several reasons. First, when Blair successfully transferred the charter he

¹⁵³ Nelson, 125.

ensured that future presidents had limited power.¹⁵⁴ Second, future presidents and commissioners did not have Blair's influential family members. Third, there were growing political issues in the colony that stymied commissioners' and presidents' attempts at gaining influence and power.

Following Blair as president of the College of William and Mary, Master William Dawson served from 1743 until his death. Gibson also appointed Dawson as commissary on July 18, 1743. Dawson worked well with Governor William Gooch throughout his tenure. Further leading to an easygoing relationship was Dawson's support of imperial policy, and the ecclesiastical governance. However, his lack of power, and brief tenure did not cause a change in the local parish control that developed in the five decades preceding Dawson's accession. The debate over clergy control was complete and the power predominately resided with the parish vestry.¹⁵⁵ Further hurting Dawson's attempt to conform to ecclesiastical and political power was the replacement of Gibson by Bishop Thomas Sherlock (1678-1761) following Gibson's death in 1748. Although Sherlock supported Dawson, he did not have the same political and ecclesiastical influence as previous bishops. Summarizing Dawson's presidency, Tate states, "If William Dawson had not added significantly to what Blair had accomplished, neither had he lost any ground, apart from the weakening of the faculty of the School of Philosophy."¹⁵⁶ Dawson died in July 1752 and the Board of Visitors replaced him as president with Master William Stith (1707-

¹⁵⁴ *The Charter, Transfer, and Statutes of the College of William and Mary*, 119, 121, 123, 125, 127; 139, 141, 143, 145, 147, 149, 151, 153, 155, 157.

¹⁵⁵ The General Assembly maintained the power to change clergy pay rates and set parish boundaries. In rare cases of serious misconduct, a governor exercised the power to bring a rector to court for dismissal, but that was rare and the power the governor exercised in those cases was undefined.

¹⁵⁶ Tate, 83. William Preston filled the vacancy of chair of moral philosophy, opened when Dawson became president.

1755) and as commissary by his brother, Thomas Dawson (1715-1760).¹⁵⁷ Governor Robert Dinwiddie (1693-1770) accepted the post following Gooch's death on December 17, 1751. The death of William Dawson, and Gooch ended a period of harmony, both politically and ecclesiastically. Through the remainder of the colonial period, strife surrounded the commissaries and faculty at the College of William and Mary. Frequently the drama placed the faculty at odds with the colonial leadership and caused divisions among the clergy.

Blair ensured no other college president attained his power, so the masters were able to outvote the president during meetings. The charter's wording over authority also increased tension between the Board of Visitors and the masters. With the death of Commissary and President William Dawson, conflict quickly arose over his successor. William Dawson's brother, Thomas, and William Stith were the contenders for the positions. Governor Dinwiddie supported Thomas Dawson, along with most of the faculty who worried over Stith's colonial ties, but the Board of Visitors, who was comprised of prominent colonists, selected the president, and they selected Stith. However, enough significant opposition arose to lead Bishop Sherlock to name Dawson as commissary, as Stith came off as latitudarian in his religious beliefs and supported the rights of Virginians.¹⁵⁸ Stith served only briefly, before dying on September 10, 1755, and Dawson took on the role as president of the College of William and Mary in November.

Dawson quickly found himself embroiled in arguments over clergy pay. Beginning in 1755, there were several years over the next decade that yielded poor quantities of tobacco, and this caused the value of tobacco to increase. Parish members paid the clergy salaries in tobacco

¹⁵⁷ For information on the transition of commissaries, bishops, governors, and presidents of the College of William and Mary, see Tate 82-84.

¹⁵⁸ For more on the sour relationship between Dinwiddie and Stith, see Tate, 86-88.

so the clergy stood to make a significant profit from the tobacco. Due to the high cost of tobacco, the General Assembly passed “An act to enable inhabitants to discharge their tobacco debts in money, for the present year.” This legislation also known as the Two-Penny Act, allowed for salaries of public officials and public obligations to receive payment from colonists in money at the normal price of tobacco, which was two pence per pound. Several clergy voiced concerns over the legislation, and the growing argument over the Two-Penny Act became the Parsons Cause. Following Dinwiddie’s lack of veto of the legislation, the clergy sought for Dawson to call a convocation of the clergy, but he did not. In response, eight clergy signed their own petition to Bishop Sherlock, and ten rectors followed up with a second petition a few months later with only one rector signing both.¹⁵⁹ The majority of rectors who signed the first petition were members of the faculty at the College of William and Mary.¹⁶⁰ Out of the eighteen rectors who signed, only two of the twelve with known locations of birth were born in Virginia and had no connection to the College of William and Mary.¹⁶¹ Out of the twelve with known colleges attended, none matriculated from a college in the colonies.¹⁶² The clergy with ties to the colony did not cause issues over the salaries.

Further hurting the relationship between the College of William and Mary clergy and the colonies leadership was the removal of Rector John Brunskill Jr. in 1757 from Hamilton Parish.

¹⁵⁹ “The Clergy of Virginia to the Bishop of London,” November 19, 1755, Perry, 434-40; “The Clergy of Virginia to the Bishop of London,” February 25, 1756, ed. Perry, 440-46. Alexander White signed both petitions.

¹⁶⁰ Rectors John Camm, William Preston, Thomas Robinson, Richard Graham, and William Robinson were faculty members of the College of William and Mary.

¹⁶¹ Rectors Chicheley Thacker and John Brunskill were born in Virginia. Rector William Robinson was also born in Virginia, but he was a faculty member of the College of William and Mary. The birthplace of Rectors Thomas Robinson, Richard Graham, Thomas Warrington, John Robertson, Alex Finnie, and John Barclay are unknown.

¹⁶² The education of Rectors Thomas Robinson, Thomas Warrington, John Robertson, Alex Finnie, John Barclay, and William Willie is unknown.

The Hamilton Parish vestry accused Brunskill “of Drunkeness, Profane Swearing, Immoral Practices, frequent Neglect of Duty, and indecent Behaviour in Church.”¹⁶³ Dinwiddie and the Executive Council oversaw the case and sided with the parish.¹⁶⁴ Commissary Dawson was a member of the Executive Council, but did not believe he had the power as commissary to get involved.¹⁶⁵ The governor and council decided to keep Brunskill “from officiating as a Minister, in any Church within this Dominion.”¹⁶⁶ The faculty sided with Brunskill, and considered it a stretch of power of the Executive Council and Dinwiddie.¹⁶⁷ The faculty became increasingly combative with the colonial leadership.

The colonial leadership and the Board of Visitors began to take steps to assert greater authority over the college as the conflicts grew. In May 1756, the Board of Visitors assumed power not explicitly stated in the statutes and moved to remove Master Thomas Robinson. When the Visitors asked for a replacement for the Master of the Grammar School from Bishop Sherlock, they asked for a layman. They wrote:

And because the Visitors have observed that the appointing a Clergyman to be Master of this Grammar-School, has often proved a Means of the School’s being neglected, in Regard of his frequent Avocations as a Minister, That therefore his Lordship will be pleased that the Person to be sent over be a Lay-Man, if such a one may be procured, but if not a Clergyman.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ Council Meeting, April 21, 1757, Perry, 449.

¹⁶⁴ Council Meeting, May 20, 1757, Perry, 450.

¹⁶⁵ “Governor Dinwiddie, to the Vestry of Hamilton Parish,” May 20, 1757, Perry, 451-52.

¹⁶⁶ Council Meeting, May 20, 1757, Perry, 450. Brunskill was one of the few rectors removed in colonial Virginia, for more information regarding the rarity of clergy removal, see Nelson, 151-58.

¹⁶⁷ “Governor Dinwiddie, to the Bishop of London,” Perry, 454-58.

¹⁶⁸ “At a Meeting of the Visitors and Governors of the College of William and Mary, the 20th of May, 1757,” “Documents Relating to the Early History of the College of William and Mary and to the History of the Church in Virginia,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 20, No. 4 (October 1940): 537, accessed January 5, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1919937>.

However, it was uncommon for the Master of the Grammar School to serve a parish. In 1757, Robinson wrote to the bishop in his defense, “I myself have now been fifteen Years Master of that School, and that’s longer than most of them have been Visitors, and in all that Time never had and Parochial Duty, except they mean taking a Ride on Sunday Morning to a Country Church, preaching for a Friend, & returning the same Evening.”¹⁶⁹ However, the Board of Visitors was not concerned about the role at the Grammar School, but about the Church of England’s role in Virginia and by the end of 1757, the Visitors were working to replace all the masters’ positions.

Masters John Camm (1718-1779) and Richard Graham supported Robinson, and argued the Visitors took on power not granted to them in the statutes. However, the Board of Visitors was determined and moved to remove the Camm, Graham and for good measure, Emmanuel Jones. The Visitors ultimately allowed Jones to remain after he acknowledged the Visitors had the power to inquire into the masters’ behavior.¹⁷⁰ The Visitors succeeded in forcing Graham, Camm, and Robinson out in 1758, but they appealed their decision to the Privy Council. The Visitors filled the Philosophy Chairs, and the Master of the Grammar School, but left the Divinity Chairs vacant, while the removed masters appealed the decision.¹⁷¹ The move to rid the college of influence from the Church of England did not begin during the American Revolution, nor was it a result of the Declaration of Independence. Instead, the movement toward separating

¹⁶⁹ “Thomas Robinson, to the Bishop of London,” June 30, 1757, “Documents Relating to the Early History of the College of William and Mary and to the History of the Church in Virginia,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 20, No. 4 (October 1940): 539, accessed January 5, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1919937>.

¹⁷⁰ “At a Meeting of the Visitors and Governors of the College of William and Mary,” December 14, 1757, “Documents Relating to the Early History of the College of William and Mary and to the History of the Church in Virginia,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 20, No. 4 (Oct., 1940): 544, accessed January 5, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1919937>.

¹⁷¹ Tate, 94.

the College of William and Mary from the Church of England began almost two decades earlier. The colonial leadership moved against the faculty clergy to assert the colony's control over the college and over the Church of England in Virginia, which the vestries already possessed in their parishes. The process of transitioning power was not quick or smooth, but required a strong president of the College of William and Mary to finalize the separation from the Church of England.

A new round of controversy began when the tobacco crop failed again in 1757 leading to the legislature and new governor, Francis Fauquier (1703-1768), enacting the Two-Penny Act once again. Camm, who was appealing his removal as master, once again urged Dawson to call a convocation of the clergy, and when Dawson did not, about thirty-five clergy gathered on their own. With one vote against, the group voted to send Camm to England to seek the repeal of the legislation. While there, Camm also sought reinstatement for him and Master Graham.¹⁷² On August 10, 1759, the Privy Council struck down the Two-Penny Act, and reinstated Camm and Graham.¹⁷³ Despite the best attempts of the Visitors, the College of William and Mary continued to contain clergymen.

Commissary and President Dawson's death on November 29, 1760, led to a new struggle between the colony's leadership and the clerical faculty. The Board of Visitors wanted to reshape the College of William and Mary to distance the school from the Church of England. While the Board of Visitors succeeded in putting a man who shared their interest into the presidency, William Yates (1720-1764), they failed to make Yates commissary. Instead, the commissary position fell to William Robinson (1716-1768). Despite a rapid succession of bishops between

¹⁷² "Thomas Robinson, to the Bishop of London," Perry, 463.

¹⁷³ For more information on the Parsons' Cause, See Tate 95-97.

1761 and 1764, the Board of Visitors continued to fail to place a friendly man into the position as commissary.¹⁷⁴ The Board of Visitors' brief success in hiring no divinity chairs also failed as a long-term solution to limit the influence of the Church of England. In 1763, the Privy Council mandated the reinstatement of Camm and Graham, and thus filling one of the still-vacant divinity chairs. Late in 1764, Yates died, the Visitors selected James Horrocks (1734-1772) as president, and following the death of Robinson in 1768, Horrocks took responsibility as commissary. Governor Francis Fauquier also died in 1768, and Norborne Berkeley, Lord Botetourt (1717-1770), became governor. Although colonial leaders were still not satisfied with the College of William and Mary, their attention shifted toward English rule and developments in the other colonies. With the shift to the English political climate, the controversy around the faculty at the College of William and Mary changed to questions of loyalty.

Further pushing the Church of England in Virginia on a different path than the Church of England in other colonies were developments in the First Great Awakening. Whitefield was a colonial-wide figure of the First Great Awakening, and his different relationships with clergy throughout the colonies demonstrates how the clergy in Virginia were different in their attitudes from clergy in other colonies. The Church of England ministers expected other ministers to follow the Book of Common Prayer, to respect other clergy, and to conduct orderly services. Whitefield did not agree with their thoughts and irritated many Anglican ministers. He actively and publicly criticized the Church of England, and questioned the souls of the ministers. Furthermore, historian Robert W. Prichard states of Whitefield, "He was not consistent in his use of the Book of Common Prayer for public worship, he didn't subscribe to the high church

¹⁷⁴ Thomas Hayter (1702-1762) succeeded Bishop Sherlock's following Sherlock's death in 1761. Hayter died in 1762 and Richard Osbaldeston (1691-1764) served as bishop until his death and was replaced by Richard Terrick (1710-1777). Bishop Terrick remained bishop until 1777. For more on Robinson's tenure as commissary through the succession of bishops, see Tate, 98-99.

version of covenant theology with its emphasis on Episcopal succession, and he questioned the salvation of those who could not attest to conversion.”¹⁷⁵ This caused many clergymen to close their doors to Whitefield during his first few tours of the American colonies, which helped Whitefield’s name spread and popularity grow.¹⁷⁶ Prichard states, “Most Church of England clergy outside of Virginia and Maryland rejected Whitefield by the end of his 1739-1740 tour.”¹⁷⁷ During this tour, Whitefield met Blair and began a cordial relationship. Blair invited Whitefield to preach at Bruton Parish, which Whitefield accepted and did not attack Blair. Whitefield took seven trips to America, and although it took several decades, views toward Whitefield among Anglicans began to improve. Several developments allowed Whitefield to be more accepted. Whitefield was no longer a new development in the Church, but a fixture of the Church setting for a couple of decades, and younger ministers grew up with him. In addition, Whitefield had tempered his attacks on the Church of England and clergymen, making it easier for Anglican rectors to maintain relationships with Whitefield.¹⁷⁸ Even after Blair’s death, Whitefield continued to keep positive relationships with rectors in Virginia, and attracted new rectors with sympathy for the emotional preaching that came with the First Great Awakening.

One of the new rectors was Devereux Jarratt (1733-1801). Jarratt’s life demonstrates the change of culture of the Church of England in Virginia from the 1690s to the 1750s and 1760s. His life also shows the dynamics between the Church of England and the dissenters. Jarratt’s

¹⁷⁵ Prichard, 78.

¹⁷⁶ For more information on Whitefield’s use of controversy and the press to build an audience see Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991).

¹⁷⁷ Prichard, 78. Exceptions included Rectors Lewis Jones and Thomas Thompson in South Carolina.

¹⁷⁸ For more on the transition of Whitefield’s treatment of Anglican clergy and the Church of England see Stout.

family did not have the resources to send their children to college but they did ensure their children received some formal schooling. After his parents died, Jarratt worked for his older brothers as a carpenter, and a farmer, and continued his education by himself with the occasional help from local preachers. In his teens, a local family invited him to open a school and board with the family. Jarratt experienced the emotional revivals of the First Great Awakening when he boarded with a family of New-Light Presbyterians.¹⁷⁹ Despite coming to accept the emotional aspect of the First Great Awakening from Presbyterians, and initially training to become a Presbyterian minister, he decided to become an Anglican minister. After further educating himself, with the help of local ministers he went to England to seek ordination.¹⁸⁰ Most examinations of the First Great Awakening in Virginia focus on the conversion of Anglicans to Presbyterians or Baptists, but the First Great Awakening was also an opportunity for the Church of England to gain new members. The expectations for clergymen led most clergy to attend college before they were ordained. However, it was possible to gain the knowledge without college. Jarratt demonstrates that it was not necessary to attend college to be ordained despite most clergymen attending college before ordination.

Jarratt's trip to England was the most time he had spent in England, and he had no other connection to England. He was one of a growing number of ministers who had no English connection, as Virginia continued to develop more of its own clergy. When he returned to Virginia, he did not go to the governor or commissary, but instead he went home until there was a parish opening. When Bath parish became available, Jarratt travelled to the parish, preached a

¹⁷⁹ Devereux Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt, Rector of Bath Parish, Dinwiddie County, Virginia* (Baltimore, MD: Warner & Hanna, 1806), 31-55. “The term *New Light* emerged in New England during the Great Awakening (1740-1743) to describe the evangelical supporters of George Whitefield and the mass revivals he inspired.” H.S. Stout, “New Lights,” in *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, 816. Jarratt’s circuits were smaller than Whitefield’s tours as Jarratt mainly stayed in Virginia, but he preached in a similar style to Whitefield.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 53-55.

few times, and the vestry offered him the rector position.¹⁸¹ The arguments over induction and the role of the commissary and governor that Blair had with several governors was an issue of the past. The vestries won the power over rectors.

Jarratt started preaching the new birth, began circuit preaching, and initiated a religious revival in the area. He was concerned with the heightened emotionalism and questioned the commitment of some rebirths. Despite frequently working with future Methodist preachers, he never joined the Methodists and did not support them. The awakening that Jarratt and other ministers in Virginia participated in the 1760s and 1770s was not the First Great Awakening Whitefield preached in the 1730s. Prichard maintains, “While advocates of awakening of the 1760s and 1770s never did abandon Episcopal succession or the fixed liturgy in the way that Whitefield had been willing to do in 1739, they did adopt sentimental styles of preaching and Whitefield’s call for adult conversion.”¹⁸² This movement helped shape the Church of England in Virginia until the American Revolution.

The SPGFP did not provide Virginia the same level of aid that other colonies received from the organization. This forced Virginia to recruit its own clergy, which was possible due to the growing population, and the number of families that could financially support their sons’ path to joining the clergy. Further supporting the development of a unique Virginia clergy was the completion of the College of William and Mary, allowing the colony to educate local men. Last, the First Great Awakening gained momentum for the Church of England in Virginia. The developments in the mid-eighteenth century ensured that the Church of England in Virginia solidified a path that distanced it from the Church of England.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 88.

¹⁸² Prichard, 87.

As the years crept toward the outbreak of the American Revolution, local vestry increasingly possessed the power in Church of England in Virginia and the clergy lost their cohesion. The clergy's journey ended with their support of the patriots and seeking religious freedom, the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 3

Standing on the Church of England's Shoulders: Baptists and Presbyterians

Join the Fight for Religious Liberty

Beginning during the French and Indian War (1754-1763), the Virginia clergy entered a state of turmoil that lasted through the American Revolution (1775-1783). Not only did the growing conflict between the colonies and England force the clergy to take sides, but also the clergy became more divided as arguments over pay and establishing a bishop became more frequent. The masters at the College of William and Mary were at the center of these arguments, especially arguments over the bishop. While not necessarily new arguments, the timing of them, and their publication in the prominent Virginia newspapers, did not do the college, or the masters any favors. The masters predominately kept closer ties to England, while the growing body of clergy remained loyal to their parishes. With the outbreak of war, most clergy in Virginia favored the patriots and the move toward religious toleration. The Presbyterians and Baptists seized the opportunity caused by the American Revolution and capitalized on the decentralized state of the Anglican Church to make freedom of religion a reality.

In 1771, a new issue arose that brought the faculty at the College of William and Mary at the forefront of discussions over loyalty between England and the colonies. Commissary James Horrocks called a convocation of clergy to discuss the possibility of a Virginia bishop. This did not go over well with the colonial leadership, and many clergy did not get involved. The clergy were so unenthusiastic about the topic that there was barely enough clergymen to form a committee of rectors to create a petition demonstrating support of the idea to the Bishop Richard Terrick (1710-1777). However, the whole faculty of the College of William and Mary did not agree on creating the episcopate and they took their disagreement to the *Virginia Gazette*. On

June 6, 1771, editors Alexander Purdie and John Dixon published the first piece regarding the episcopate debate in their *Virginia Gazette*.¹⁸³ Masters Samuel Henley (1740-1815) and Thomas Gwatkin (1741-1800) made seven arguments against the Episcopate in “The Protest against the Proceedings of the Convention holden at William and Mary College on the 4th Day of June 1771.” Three of the arguments focused on the improper form of the convention. They also maintained that twelve clergy did not represent the hundred clergy in the colony.¹⁸⁴ The other four protests against creating the Episcopate centered on Virginia’s relationship with England, and colonial rights.

Of the four remaining arguments, two focused on the colony’s place in the English empire. One reason the authors protested the creation of an American Episcopate was that they feared the bishop of London would view the move negatively.¹⁸⁵ The authors also voiced concern for the negative impact the creation of the Episcopate posed to the relationship between Virginia and England. They stated, “Because the Establishment of an American Episcopate, at the Time, would tend greatly to weaken the Connection between the Mother Country and her Colonies; to continue their present unhappy disputes, to infuse Jealousies and Fears into the Minds of Protestant Dissenters.”¹⁸⁶ Despite their opposition to the creation of the episcopate, their arguments were ill timed. They wanted to ensure that England kept a close relationship with the colonies to make the empire stronger, and they remained open to the idea of creating an episcopate at a future time. Tensions were high between the colonies and the mother country,

¹⁸³ There was more than one *Virginia Gazette* during the period. The debate over creating an American Episcopate all took place in the *Virginia Gazette*, ed., by Purdie and Dixon.

¹⁸⁴ Samuel Henley, and Thomas Gwatkin, “The Protest against the Proceedings of the Convention holden at William and Mary College on the 4th Day of June 1771,” *Virginia Gazette*, June 6, 1771, microfilm.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

and many colonial leaders were uneasy about English power, and the Board of Visitors had sought to weaken the influence of the Church of England at the College of William and Mary for over a decade.

The other two of the four arguments expounded colonial and individual rights. Regarding colonial rights they maintained, “Because the Expression, an *American Episcopate*, includes a Jurisdiction over the other colonies, and the Clergy of Virginia cannot with any propriety, petition for a Measure which, for ought that appears to the contrary, will materially affect the natural Rights and fundamental Laws of the said Colonies, without their consent and approbation.”¹⁸⁷ On the topic of individual rights they asserted, “Because we cannot help considering it as extremely indecent for the Clergy to make such an Application without the Concurrence of the PRESIDENT, COUNCIL, AND REPRESENTATIVES of this Province; on Usurpation directly repugnant to the Rights of Mankind.”¹⁸⁸ Due to the political climate in the decade preceding the Declaration of Independence, the arguments over colonial and individual rights resonated with readers. However familiar the readers were with the arguments, they were using them to attack their fellow clergy, publicly demonstrating the divisions in the clergy, and among the masters at the college.

Within a week, the *Virginia Gazette* published Camm’s response: “An Answer to the Protest of the Reverend Samuel Henley, Professor of Moral Philosophy in William and Mary College, and the Reverend Thomas Gwatkin, Professor of Mathematics, and Natural Philosophy, in William and Mary College.” Camm asserted that the convention proceeded properly. The continual debate on convention procedures allowed the readers to witness the division among the

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

clergy. Camm maintained that creating an American Episcopate did not weaken the connection between England and Virginia.

Camm took considerable space to explain that creating an American Episcopate did not trample on colonial or individual rights. He asserted that the “Expression *American Episcopate* does not necessarily *include a Jurisdiction over other colonies*. It includes a Jurisdiction over none but the Clergy of one or more Colonies, as may be thought proper.”¹⁸⁹ From that point on powers of jurisdiction, Camm delved into the relationship between the Church of England and the colony. He elaborated, “How an American Episcopate … can materially affect the natural Rights and fundamental Laws of the Colonies in general, I cannot apprehend, because I think the colonies in general to be, in this, a happy Copy of the Parent Country, that Episcopal Government in the Church is interwoven with the Constitution of the State.”¹⁹⁰ Although the Church of England was still the established church of Virginia, the number of dissenters was growing, and colonial leaders were beginning to question the establishment.¹⁹¹

The debate did not end there, and poorly reflected the Church of England in Virginia. On June 27, the *Virginia Gazette* published a letter under the pseudonym Martin Luther. Aghast at the drama the debate caused, Luther wrote:

Pray Sir, through the Channel of your useful Paper, let me advise the Reverend Gentlemen engaged in the present Dispute about the Expediency of an American Bishop to confine themselves for the future, in what they may have to offer to the Publick upon that Subject, to the Rules of Decency. You cannot imagine the real injury it does to Religion and Morality.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ John Camm, “An Answer to the Protest of the Reverend Samuel Henley, Professor of Moral Philosophy in William and Mary College, and the Reverend Thomas Gwatkin, Professor of Mathematics, and Natural Philosophy, in William and Mary College,” *Virginia Gazette*, June 13, 1771, microfilm.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ The Church of England being the established church in Virginia meant that the state collected taxes for the benefit of the Church of England.

¹⁹² Martin Luther [pseudo], *Virginia Gazette*, June 27, 1771, microfilm.

Despite the negative perception the issue caused for the Church of England in Virginia, the debate continued, and it became increasingly focused on the possible impact for the relationship between Virginia and England.

Horrocks and Camm continued to champion the creation of an American bishop. Masters Henley and Gwatkin continued to oppose the idea fearing that a Virginia bishop distanced the colony from England.¹⁹³ Neither argument was reassuring for the public in the years leading up to the American Revolution. Establishing an American Episcopate threatened the Virginians typical relationship with their clergy. Virginians were used to maintaining the power, through parish vestries, but a resident bishop threatened their power. A bishop possessed power to initiate ecclesiastical courts to handle clergy issues instead of leaving the responsibility to the local vestry.

The public debate finally ended when the *Virginia Gazette* refused to publish any more pieces on the subject. By which time, the arguments on both sides were repetitive. On March 12, 1772, the paper released a statement, “Many of our Readers, for some Time, have complained of their being tired with the Dispute about an American Episcopate; and we begin to *sick* of it likewise.”¹⁹⁴ The debate lasted for nine months and demonstrated the divisiveness among the clergy in the colony and the masters at the college. The masters’ concern with keeping Virginia close to England made it evident that the masters at the College of William and Mary focused on the empire and not the colony.

Despite the issues with the masters, the College of William and Mary continued to receive aid. Governor Berkeley supported the college, and the students. In 1770, he announced

¹⁹³ For more information on the episcopate debate, see Isaac, 181-89.

¹⁹⁴ Alexander Purdie and John Dixon, *Virginia Gazette*, March 12, 1772, microfilm.

“His intention to give, annually, two gold medals for the honor and encouragement merit in that seminary.”¹⁹⁵ James Madison, future president of the College of William and Mary, won one of the medals awarded in 1772.¹⁹⁶ Madison’s speech, *An Oration in Commemoration of the Founders of William and Mary*, spoke for colonial rights and religious toleration. He began by examining human rights and the source of government power. Madison states, “That Part of his natural Liberty, which not only Necessity but Justice required, he therefore appropriates to the Safety and Prosperity of Society. What he thus donates becomes the Right of the Legislature; what he reserves constitutes that civil Liberty which cannot be diminished either by the Ruffian Hand of the self-deputed Tyrant.”¹⁹⁷ Madison went on to speak of patriotic zeal and the importance of individuals asserting their rights. He states:

When the authority, which ought to be the Fountain of Truth, Justice, and Mercy, becomes the Source of Falsehood, Oppression and Cruelty, it is then Time to rouse the strongest Passions of the Soul, to call into Action every public, every private Virtue. Distress, like Merit, will interest the generous Mind. A People, struggling with their Fate, though the Victims of their own Error must kindle into Life the Patriot’s Fire.¹⁹⁸

In 1772, colonial Americans were not new to the idea of standing up to oppression, but it was still gaining wider traction throughout the colonies. For the growing political revolutionary leaders, Madison’s thoughts echoed their own. However, as a young man preparing for life as a clergyman his language went against the traditional role for clergy. Church of England clergy owed allegiance to the Church of England and England. When the Revolution began, the clergy had to choose between their colony and England. Madison’s speech set an important tone for the

¹⁹⁵ Purdie and Dixon, *Virginia Gazette*, March 22, 1770.

¹⁹⁶ Dixon and Purdie, *Virginia Gazette*, August 20, 1772.

¹⁹⁷ James Madison, “An Oration in Commemoration of the Founders of William and Mary College,” August 15, 1772, *Bulletin of the College of William and Mary in Virginia* 31, no. 7 (November 1937): 7-8, accessed August 28, 2014, <https://archive.org/details/orationincommemo317madi>.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 9.

clergy of Virginia when deciding their loyalty, opening the possibility for them to be patriots instead of loyalists.

In the same speech, Madison also talked about the importance of religious toleration and the benefit for society. He used historical examples of Flanders, France, and Holland to demonstrate how religious toleration benefitted society.¹⁹⁹ Madison's speech came months after the debate over the Episcopate ended, where the masters were concerned over keeping a close relationship with England and her church. Within five years, Madison became the president of the College of William and Mary. Throughout colonial Virginia, the masters and president of the College of William and Mary were the most vocal advocates of imperial policy, but with Madison as president, the college became a place that championed civil rights and religious toleration. While Madison's statements on toleration stopped well short of religious freedom, it was progressive at the time when dissenters faced oppression in several Virginia counties, and few societies allowed religious toleration. He also publicly pushed for toleration before future revolutionaries Thomas Jefferson, or the more famous, James Madison made their views known.

Two years later, the better-known Madison, was at home in Orange County, in western Virginia, in close proximity to the persecution of Baptist preachers in nearby counties. He was privately stating his views, but he had not yet become the public figure for religious freedom. In 1774, distressed by the lack of religious freedom, the future president wrote his college friend, William Bradford:

That diabolical Hell conceived principle of persecution rages among some and to their eternal Infamy the Clergy can furnish their Quota of Imps for such business. This vexes me the most of any thing whatever. There are at this [time?] in the adjacent County not less than 5 or 6 well meaning men in close Gaol for publishing their religious Sentiments which in the main are very orthodox. I have neither patience to hear talk or think of any thing relative to this matter, for I have squabbled and scolded abused and ridiculed so

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 12.

long about it [to so lit]le purpose that I am without common patience. So I [leave you] to pity me and pray for Liberty of Conscience [to revive among us].²⁰⁰

Officials in many western counties in Virginia arrested dissenter preachers, which helped galvanize Madison into politics. Madison did not succeed in his fight for religious freedom in Virginia until 1786 when the Virginia General Assembly passed Jefferson's "Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom." Madison had gained his views on religious liberty from Enlightenment thinker, and President of the College of New Jersey, John Witherspoon (1723-1794).²⁰¹ However, Madison's view on the General Assembly's ability to enact legislation supporting toleration in 1774 was bleak. In his letter to Bradford, Madison elaborated:

Our Assembly is to meet the first of May When It is expected something will be done in behalf of the Dissenters: Petitions I hear are already forming among the Persecuted Baptists and I fancy it is in the thoughts of the Presbyterians also to intercede for greater liberty in matters of Religion. For my part I can not help being very doubtful of their succeeding in the Attempt.²⁰²

The persecution and the General Assembly's inability to end it led Madison to become involved in politics. Within a couple years, Madison began his political career when the men of Orange County elected him to the Virginia General Assembly. Once there he pushed for full religious freedom, an idea few were articulating, and it took a decade for him to accomplish it with the help from Anglicans, Baptists, and Presbyterians.

Despite the growing influence of the revolutionary leaders, like the Madison cousins, the challenges to gain religious toleration, let alone religious freedom were hard to overcome. The

²⁰⁰ Madison, to William Bradford, January 24 ,1774, *The Papers of James Madison*, vol. 1, ed. William T. Hutchinson et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 106. "JM left a blank between "this" and "in" and when Bradford transcribed the letter into his notebook, he took the "in" to be "and," the editors decided "this" was the best option." "The bracketed words in this and the preceding sentence, illegible in the original letter, were taken from Bradford's copybook version," 107-8. "Gaol" is an older term for jail *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Gaol."

²⁰¹ College of New Jersey became Princeton in 1789.

²⁰² "Madison, to William Bradford," April 1, 1774, *The Papers of James Madison*, vol. 1, 112.

Church of England had been entrenched in Virginia for over 150 years, and it took a greater shake up of society than a few idealistic men. The Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution provided the catalyst to make the ideas a reality.

College president Madison's commencement speech showed that in Virginia, the clergy were breaking from the Church of England. The American Revolution made the growing differences between the Church of England in Virginia and the Church of England in the mother country more evident. The College of William and Mary was the last true defense of the political and social hierarchy connected to England, as the masters made clear in their frequent pieces in the newspaper. Lord Dunmore, John Murray, became governor in 1771, and served until the American Revolution. When Dunmore fled Williamsburg, Master Gwatkin went with him, and Master Henley returned to England at about the same time.²⁰³ Madison briefly filled the chair of natural philosophy before going to England for ordination in 1775, and upon his return in 1776, he took up the chair again. On November 29, 1776, Madison moved to remove the king's name on survey licenses issued by the College of William and Mary. Camm refused, maintaining that he was bound by royal oath. In 1777, the Board of Visitors sacked Camm, and two other masters for questions over loyalty and without the English to appeal to the decision was final. This left only Madison, and Master John Bracken (1747-1818), who started the year before.²⁰⁴ The Board of Visitors selected Madison as president, a post he retained until his death in 1812.²⁰⁵

As president of the College of William and Mary, Madison severed ties with England, and changed the structure of the college that weakened connections with the Church of England.

²⁰³ Alexander Purdie, and John Dixon, *Virginia Gazette*, June 30, 1775, microfilm.

²⁰⁴ Alexander Purdie, and John Dixon, *Virginia Gazette*, September 5, 1777, microfilm.

²⁰⁵ For more information on the transition of faculty, see Tate, 126-30.

To support the college, Madison used the school's proximity to the capital and his relationship with his cousin and Jefferson to reshape the College of William and Mary with a focus on Virginia's future. On December 4, 1779, the Board of Visitors, which included Jefferson, enacted statutes eliminating three chairs, including the two divinity chairs. The changes weakened the already feeble connection between the Church of England and the College of William and Mary. However, the changes were not a result of the American Revolution, but the result of decades work by the Board of Visitors to achieve this end. The American Revolution provided the opportunity for the Board of Visitors to finalize their goal of ending the Church of England's influence at the college.

During the American Revolution, Virginia clergymen overwhelmingly supported the colonists. Although most clergy left the rebelling colonies, some stayed, especially in Virginia. Few Virginia clergymen returned to England, as they overcame objections regarding their loyalty to England as clergymen. The Book of Common Prayer included several praises to the king.²⁰⁶ During ordination, the clergy also swore to obey the king, which put the clergy in a position to stay loyal to England. Further pushing the clergy to remain loyal was that the SPGFP recruited many from England, causing most clergymen to have ties to England. Historian Richard Prichard states, "The clergy in the middle colonies and New England, who received instruction and, in many cases, salaries directly from England, were particularly clear about their allegiance. The vast majority sided with the British."²⁰⁷ North of Maryland, Connecticut was the only colony to retain even half of its clerical population. Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and South

²⁰⁶ Baskerville, John ed., *The Book of Common Prayer and administration of the Sacraments, and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, According to the use of the Church of England: Together with the Psalter or Psalms of David, Pointed as they are to be sung or said in Churches* (Cambridge: 1760).

²⁰⁷ Prichard, 103.

Carolina retained a better percentage of their clergy than the other colonies, save Connecticut. During the English Civil War (1641-1652), the Virginia government removed the references to the king in the liturgy, and during the American Revolution, Maryland, North Carolina, and South Carolina legislatures followed the Virginia precedent. With the long-standing practice of not having a reference to the king in the liturgy, the clergy in Virginia were able to maintain their loyalty to the colony.²⁰⁸ The parishes in Virginia paid for the clergies' salaries and few clergy had ties to England. The clergy in Virginia receiving their salaries from their local community allowed them to build closer relationships with the colony and have a decreasing relationship with England. In Maryland, one-third of the clergy supported the patriots, five of the eleven in North Carolina, and thirteen of the eighteen in South Carolina. Prichard states, "Of the one hundred and five clergy in the state in 1776, eighty-five of the Virginia clergy took the oath of allegiance that had been prescribed by the legislature."²⁰⁹ Virginia's high retention rate resulted from a century of a dwindling relationship between the Virginia clergy and England, and the prominence of Virginia-grown clergy. In Virginia, not only were the clergy patriots, but they were great resources for the colonies. At least five clergymen served in the militia, or Continental Army. In addition, the churches served as a great resource for information. Prichard states, "In Virginia, vestries served as one of the most effective communication networks for the patriots."²¹⁰ Most Virginia clergy remained loyal to the colonies throughout the war.

In 1776, the Virginia government suspended pay for the clergy, and yet most of the clergy still remained in the colony. The government retained small measures of power over the

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 106-7.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 106.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 106.

church allowing the Anglican Church to be the established church. However, the clergy did not wish to remain as the established church. Prichard states, “The remaining legislation was a continuing reminder that the church was under the authority of the state. Church of England lay and ordained leaders were, therefore, among the most vocal advocates of a total repeal of establishment. They wanted to be able to regulate their own affairs, free of outside control.”²¹¹ This development was essential as the clergy needed to support their place in society to maintain their role as the state established church, and yet they did not. The clergy had over a century of practice in coming together at meetings and defending their beliefs. They wrote petitions and letters on numerous subjects to advance their cause. Then when petitions and letters were necessary to keep the establishment, there was an overwhelming lack of support.

During the Revolution, the push to disestablish the church increased dramatically in Virginia. Although it took until 1785, steps limiting the church’s connection to the state began shortly after the start of the American Revolution. The Church of England in Virginia made these steps possible by 1775. The Church of England in Virginia did not succeed alone in ending the religious establishment. Their movement for religious freedom needed aid from the dissenting religious groups of the Presbyterians and the Baptists. Although there were Presbyterians and Baptists in Virginia decades before the American Revolution, their numbers increased rapidly in the decade preceding the Revolutionary War.

Since the 1750s, dissenting religious groups, such as the Presbyterians and the Baptists, made regular efforts to disestablish the Church of England in Virginia, but they failed consistently before the American Revolution. The dissenters’ predominant opponent was the government, not the Anglican Churches. Many Anglican Churches did not have dealings with

²¹¹ Ibid., 113.

dissenters, and several clergy, like James Madison (1751-1836), supported ensuring greater religious toleration as early as 1772. Once the American Revolution began, the colony moved swiftly to distance itself from the Church of England. It removed the chairs of theology from the College of William and Mary.

Although Presbyterians and Baptists were present in Virginia before 1700, it was not until the turn of the century that they began to grow and affect the traditional Anglican society. The Presbyterians were the first to give the colonial leaders alarm. By the 1740s, the role of confessional and piety divided Presbyterians.²¹² New Side Presbyterians who supported the piety faction benefited from the First Great Awakening.²¹³ New Side Presbyterians did not adhere to the Westminster Confession of Faith and supported itinerant preachers.²¹⁴ The issue over itinerant preaching became an increasing problem for the colonial government in Virginia and the colonial authorities used it to persecute Presbyterians and Baptists over the next few decades.

The perceived threat from itinerancy preaching was evident from the status given to the established Presbyterian churches and the New Side Presbyterian churches, and was the same issue faced by Baptists years later. The colonial government attempted to enforce that preachers had the necessary license to preach and thus end itinerant preachers. Authorities did not persecute against Presbyterian churches with licensed preachers. In 1738, Governor William

²¹² A.C. Guelzo, “New Side Presbyterians,” in *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, 821. A.C. Guelzo, “Old Side Presbyterians,” in *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, 844.

²¹³ “In general terms Pietism represents a reaction against the lack of religious fervor, the moral laxity, the tendency toward cultural accommodation and the interconfessional bickering of the representatives of orthodoxy within the established Protestant communions. It laid stress on the religious renewal of the individual (New Birth) as evidenced through a life of piety. Pietists were given to a more or less literal interpretation of Scriptures, guided by common sense, as well as a deep sense of Christian fellowship which minimized confessional, national ethnic boundaries. As a result they were prone to hold convectiles, members of which were addressed as ‘brother’ or ‘sister,’ irrespective of social class or church affiliation.” F.E. Stoeffler, “Pietism,” in *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, 903.

²¹⁴ Guelzo, “New Side Presbyterians,” 821.

Gooch gave the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians assurance that they did not need to fear persecution. Despite the license, it often did not keep preachers free from persecution in the beginning. When licensed preacher Samuel Davies (1723-1761) settled in Hanover County in 1748, Rector Patrick Henry attacked Davies and other itinerants.²¹⁵ Davies continued to preach, and was invited to preach in neighboring counties with audiences of up to a thousand.²¹⁶ He argued that the 1689 Act of Toleration provided protection for religious groups, while the colonial leadership disagreed. The argument over the power of the Act remained ongoing until the American Revolutionary War, and became increasingly argued as Baptists numbers grew.

There were two groups of Baptists in Virginia before the American Revolution: Regular Baptists and Separate Baptists. Although there were several differences between the two groups, there were two key differences for the development of religious freedom. The Separate Baptists embraced the emotional revivalism of the First Great Awakening while the Regular Baptists rejected it. The Separate Baptists used itinerant preachers and did not get their licenses to preach while the Regular Baptists did get licenses. Initially the Regular Baptists settled in the Piedmont and in North Virginia, while the Separate Baptists began in the South and West. As the number of Separate Baptists swelled and moved east, they began to have increasingly frequent issues with local authorities. The colonial leaders deemed the emotional revivals a threat due to the disturbances that followed the Separate Baptist meetings.

The decreasing authority of England during the 1760s and early 1770s provided opportunity for Virginia to circumvent the 1689 Act of Toleration. The Virginia government's interpretation of the 1689 Act of Toleration allowed for the persecution of dissenters. Historian

²¹⁵ Kidd, 236.

²¹⁶ Kidd, 237.

Rhys Isaac states that the Virginia attorney general “took the view that toleration implied only a respect for the status quo—a right of persons to continue practicing doctrine with which they had been nurtured, not a right to disturb existing social arrangements by embracing and propagating new beliefs.”²¹⁷ In an attempt to limit itinerant preaching, the government began tying preaching licenses to a specific church, however, most Separate Baptist preachers refused to get licenses.²¹⁸ On grounds of preaching without a license, or older laws like disrupting the public peace, county officials occasionally arrested Separate Baptists preachers. Isaac asserts, “By the end of 1771 itinerant preachers in at least twenty cases had been bound over to keep the peace, and having refused to give bonds, were remanded to county jails.”²¹⁹ Although the Regular Baptists preachers received their licenses, and their preaching did not arouse the emotionalism that disturbed the public peace, they still supported Separate Baptists in the fight for religious freedom.

Within the decade preceding the outbreak of the American Revolution, the number of Separate Baptist churches exploded. In 1769, there were seven Separate Baptist churches in Virginia, but five years later, there were fifty-four Separate Baptist churches in Virginia.²²⁰ The increasingly active group ran into more issues with local authority during these years, and the authority arrested many preachers. At the same time authorities persecuted dissenting preachers in the western counties, the Church of England clergy caused angst in Williamsburg. It was during these same years that the clergy at the College of William and Mary were arguing in the

²¹⁷ Isaac, 152.

²¹⁸ During a Separate Baptist meeting in 1771, many preachers supported censuring preachers who received a license to preach. For more information, see Isaac, 192.

²¹⁹ Isaac, 193.

²²⁰ Isaac, 173.

Virginia Gazette over the need of a bishop in the colony. The persecution quickly ended with the beginning of the American Revolution and the colony's need for men.

Although the war ended the mandatory taxes to pay clergy, it did not guarantee religious freedom. The need for men put the colonial leaders in a difficult position, as they needed the dissenting men to fight. Despite the past persecution, the dissenters in Virginia overwhelmingly supported the patriot cause and tried to use the war to their advantage. The dissenting groups tried to trade their support for religious freedom.²²¹ Historian Woody Holton elaborates, "Thus free farmers in Virginia discovered that Independence promised them both a greater role in government and broader religious toleration."²²² Although religious freedom came for the dissenters, they did not accomplish it until after the American Revolutionary War.

Despite the Anglican Church losing its role as the established church, the fight over establishment was not over. For the establishment to end, dissenters needed political allies, like future United States President Madison. Three years after the establishment ended, the General Assembly began discussing a general assessment bill, which required everyone to pay a tax to support religion, but all the churches received money. However, the widespread opposition among Baptists and Presbyterians ended the establishment discussion for another five years. On November 11, 1784, the General Assembly introduced a general assessment bill, "A Bill for Establishing a Provision for Teachers of the Christian Religion." If passed, the bill required the people to pay tax for religion, but they could designate the church that received the money.²²³ The Presbyterians abandoned the Baptists in the fight for religious freedom and supported the

²²¹ Holton 198.

²²² Ibid., 198.

²²³ Buckley, 188.

general assessment. However, Madison and others in the General Assembly were able to postpone the vote on the bill until 1785.²²⁴ Madison used the months before the vote to build opposition, and to write the petition, “Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments.” Madison states:

1. Because we hold it for a fundamental and undeniable truth, ‘that religion or the duty which we owed to our Creator and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence.’ The religion then of every man; and it the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate. This right is in its nature an unalienable right. It is unalienable, because the opinions of men, depending only on the evidence contemplated by their own minds cannot follow the dictates of other men: It is unalienable also, because what is here a right towards men, is a duty towards the Creator.²²⁵

Madison elaborated for another fourteen points, reiterating the importance of liberty of conscience. He elaborated about the general assessment bill risked an abuse of power, and how liberty of conscience benefitted society, like his cousin in 1772.²²⁶ Although Madison’s “Memorial and Remonstrance” is the most well known, it was not the only petition against the bill. Out of the eighty petitions against the bill, only thirteen were copies of Madison’s “Memorial and Remonstrance.”²²⁷ Dissenters wrote the majority of other petitions as the Presbyterians once again allied with the Baptists. Due to widespread opposition, the General Assembly did not reintroduce the bill. Instead, the General Assembly reintroduced and passed

²²⁴ *Journal of the House of Delegates of Virginia*, Dec. 24, 1784, 78-79, accessed February 27, 2016, [http://infoweb.newsbank.com.er.lib.k-state.edu/iw-search/we/Evans?p_action=doc&p_theme=eai&p_topdoc=1&p_docnum=1&p_sort=YMD_date:D&p_product=EVAN&p_text_direct-0=u433=\(%2019353%20\)|u433ad=\(%2019353%20\)&p_nbid=U57V46QDMTQ4NzU1ODA2My45NTExNzY6MToxNToxMjkuMTMwLjI1Mi4yMjI&p_docref=..](http://infoweb.newsbank.com.er.lib.k-state.edu/iw-search/we/Evans?p_action=doc&p_theme=eai&p_topdoc=1&p_docnum=1&p_sort=YMD_date:D&p_product=EVAN&p_text_direct-0=u433=(%2019353%20)|u433ad=(%2019353%20)&p_nbid=U57V46QDMTQ4NzU1ODA2My45NTExNzY6MToxNToxMjkuMTMwLjI1Mi4yMjI&p_docref=..)

²²⁵ Madison, “To the Honorable the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia A Memorial and Remonstrance,” *The Papers of James Madison*, vol. 8 ed. William T. Hutchinson et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 298-304.

²²⁶ Ibid., 298-304.

²²⁷ Isaac, 284.

Jefferson's "Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom." The bill's passage finally granted religious freedom in Virginia.

Not one person or group was responsible for the victory of religious freedom. Anglicans, Baptists, Presbyterians, and founders accomplished freedom of religion due to the numbers of Baptists and Presbyterians who actively supported Madison, the loose system of control developed by the Church of England, and the lack of opposition provided by the Church of England. Although Jefferson was in Philadelphia attending the Continental Congress in 1776, and in France during the fight over the religious freedom bill in 1784-1785, the House passed the bill Jefferson initially wrote in 1776 because of Madison's hard work.

The other issue facing the Church of England in Virginia during the fight for religious freedom was the debate over restructuring the church under a new name. Beginning in 1780, clergy in Maryland began meeting to discuss restructuring, and by 1783, their numbers grew large enough and they took the name Protestant Episcopal Church. In the same year, they also developed a church government and put forth individuals for ordination, and a candidate for bishop.²²⁸ Rector William White (1748-1836) began actively working in the other states for them to organize as the Episcopal Church following the example in Maryland, and forming a national body. The states were not successful throughout in forming state bodies, but they did succeed in forming a national body and gained approval from England to keep a relationship with the Church of England. On June 26, 1786, the British Parliament passed legislation allowing for the creation of three bishops in America. One of these three was James Madison, President of the College of William and Mary.²²⁹

²²⁸ Rectors Mason Lock Weems, Edward Gantt, Jr., and William Smith were elected as candidates for bishop but England did not ordain them.

²²⁹ Rectors Samuel Seabury and William White were the other two bishops. Holmes, 53.

The Church of England in Virginia also had other issues that required attention besides the fight over disestablishment. One of the struggles that faced the Church of England was the growing Methodist movement that had separated from the Church. Although the Methodists started in the Church of England, it developed into its own movement during the American Revolution.

Rector Devereux Jarratt's relationship with the Methodists demonstrates the development of the Methodist movement and its impact on the Church of England. When Jarratt first encountered the Methodist movement in Virginia, he supported the movement, and helped others see its benefit.²³⁰ He was convinced of their attachment to the Church of England and the "American cause."²³¹ Jarratt noted that the shape of the clergy changed during the American Revolution. Due to the lack of new ministers, and the loss of a few ministers, there were vacancies. Methodist preachers began filling these vacancies. Jarratt states, "To remedy this inconvenience [churches with no minister], some of the *lay preachers* undertook to ordain themselves, and make priests of one another. This, I remember, they called a *step*—but I considered it as a prodigious *stride*—a most unwarrantable usurpation, and a flagrant violation of all order."²³² The split significantly shrunk Jarratt's audience, and he suffered attacks from Methodists.²³³ Jarratt withstood the attacks and continued as a member of the Church of England, and then the Protestant Episcopal Church.²³⁴ Looking back on his life in the 1790s, Jarratt was a

²³⁰ Jarratt, 110.

²³¹ Ibid., 111.

²³² Ibid., 111-12.

²³³ Ibid., 119-24.

²³⁴ With the end of the Church of England in the colonies, the Anglican communities came together and created the Protestant Episcopal Church. While the Protestant Episcopal Church shared similarities with the Church of England, like communion, and a similar *Book of Common Prayer*, it ended the hierarchical governance of the

proud member of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and thought the church's future was bright.²³⁵

Jarratt dwelled over the consequence of the growth of Methodism, and the development of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

The fights over tobacco and establishing a bishop demonstrated the rupturing of the clergy in the Church of England. Future Bishop James Madison fully exemplified how far the Church of England in Virginia came since James Blair and how little it shared with the Church of England at large. The American Revolution provided the catalyst to finalize the loose control of church governance that Blair started in the seventeenth century. With religious freedom granted shortly after the war's end, the people gained complete control over their church.

Church and was not government supported. R. Webber, "Protestant Episcopal Church in the U.S.A.," in *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, 949-951.

²³⁵ Jarratt, 130.

CONCLUSION

Why the Church of England Lost Power: The Rise of Religious Freedom

Thomas Jefferson's tombstone reads "Here was buried, Thomas Jefferson, Author of the Declaration of American Independence, of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, & Father of the University of Virginia."²³⁶ Out of Jefferson's many and illustrious accomplishments in his life, he lists his authorship of Virginia's statute for Religious Freedom as one of the most noteworthy. However, he did not do it alone. The statute finalized a process a century in the making.

Blair's relationships, ambition, and resourcefulness set the Anglican Church in Virginia on a unique trajectory that favored local vestry control over the rectors. His winning of fights over the induction issue placed the power of rector assignment and length of service in the vestries' hands. His ability to stay in power as commissary and president of the College of William and Mary while actively working in the removal of three governors was a sign of his power that was not repeated during the colonial period by a Virginia clergyman. He gained strong influence in Virginia, and used his power to weaken governors and clergy, along with their ties to imperial Britain. At the same time, he empowered vestries and local control. His actions were important because it set the Anglican Church on a path different from that of the Church in other colonies and led to decentralized control of the churches, which was key for the development of religious freedom and the rise of the Baptists and Presbyterians. The decentralized power structure and the lack of connection between the Church of England in

²³⁶ "Jefferson's Tomb," Thomas Jefferson Foundation, accessed March 18, 2016, <https://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/jeffersons-gravestone>.

Virginia and the Church of England in the Mother Country is why the Church lost power in Virginia. It was a slow process, but Blair took the first steps in the 1690s.

Blair was also the only commissary in the colonies to have an amicable relationship with George Whitefield, demonstrating Blair's latitudinarian thoughts and his open mind on different views. Importantly for the path of the Anglican Church in Virginia, he established and was the first president of the College of William and Mary, which was responsible for further developing a unique Anglican Church in Virginia. The college provided an education for future leaders, allowing the colony to develop a Virginia-born clergy. In turn, the clergy became increasingly supportive of local power, and had a diminishing connection to England. This change is significant for why the Church of England lost power in Virginia. The development of a local clergy was a defining step away from the Church of England and an embracement of the local parish. The clergy were no longer a part of the bureaucratic hierarchy within the Church of England, but were comprised of Virginia sons. The families in their parish were their neighbors, and they saw other clergy rarely. The transition encouraged decision making at a local level. As the years passed, and more clergy came from Virginia, the centralized hierarchy of the Church decreased and with it the power of the Church of England.

In addition, after Blair left, the masters at the College of William and Mary had a better relationship with the Church of England in England and became a bulwark for imperial policy. However, the shift in focus to England caused the colonial leadership to have increasing problems with the clergy at the College of William and Mary. The masters' views on imperial policy agitated the colonial leadership, and the governing board of the college. Their arguments on establishing a bishop, the Board of Visitors' authority, and clergy pay shaped the future of the

church. Despite the efforts of the masters, the rest of the Virginia clergy and the colonial leaders eventually won the debates at the expense of the unity of the Church of England in Virginia.

Moreover, the unique Anglican Church in Virginia created a culture in which clergymen there were more receptive of the First Great Awakening. Beginning with Blair and Whitefield's association, Whitefield maintained several relationships and shaped several clergymen like Devereux Jarratt. The First Great Awakening in Virginia pushed the Church of England in the colony toward accepting emotional revivals, and moved the church away from a rigid form of church structure. The acceptance of Whitefield further pushed the Church of England in Virginia away from the Church of England in England and led to a loss of control of the Church of England in Virginia. Further, it also had a significant impact concerning why the Baptists and Presbyterians rose to power in the colony. Whitefield presented an option for emotionalism that was atypical of the Church of England, but became a prominent feature in the worship of Baptists and Presbyterians. The emotionalism of the Baptists and Presbyterians helped their numbers swell in the colonies because it appealed to the common people. In Virginia, the increasing number of Baptists and Presbyterians also gave them political voice. Their ability to capitalize on the decentralized nature of their churches is why they rose to power and ended the establishment.

Many clergy in Virginia supported the American Revolution, and religious toleration, while clergy in other colonies did not sever their connection with England. The Anglican Church in Virginia was a disunited church that permitted a great deal of freedom to each parish, and allowed for the slow development of religious toleration, and eventual religious freedom. This slow development inside the church is what allowed for founders like George Washington, and

James Madison to support religious freedom, while they remained members of the Church of England.

For founders and religious freedom advocates like Jefferson and Madison, their education and proximity to the persecution of Baptists near their homes also helped to shape their thoughts on religious freedom. However, neither Jefferson, Madison nor other sons of the Enlightenment accomplished their goals by themselves. Their numbers were too few, and their arguments not widespread. Instead, they accomplished their objectives by recognizing the opportunity presented by a century of development in the Church of England in Virginia, and with the help of the Baptists and Presbyterians.

For dissenting religious groups like the Baptists and Presbyterians the promise of religious freedom ended decades of persecution. Their systems of religious practice went against the standard dictated by the Virginia government and had much to gain by ending the religious establishment. However, they were not successful by themselves. They lacked political power, and too few in the state had witnessed the persecution, or had seen a dissenting church. They succeeded with the help of politically active allies, like Jefferson and Madison, and the disinterest on the topic by Church of England clergy. Furthermore, they capitalized on the decentralized power of the Church of England in Virginia that opened avenues for the growth of religious freedom. It is important to note that the dissenters did not fight against the Church of England to gain influence and power, but they achieved it by taking advantage of the decentralized power structure of the Church of England in the colony.

Active clergy like James Blair, the development of Virginia's own college, and involved vestry made Jefferson's accomplishment possible. During the American Revolution, the additional support from dissenters and enlightened thinkers like Jefferson and Madison who

capitalized on the culture developed by the Church of England in Virginia hastened the transition to religious freedom.

This study significantly alters the discourse on the development of religious freedom in Virginia, and the United States. Beginning studies of religious freedom two or three decades before the Declaration of Independence is an injustice to the role of the Church of England. Although enlightened founders like Madison and Jefferson, and the Presbyterians, and Baptists were necessary to secure religious freedom, they only succeeded because of developments in the Church of England begun by James Blair in the last decade of the seventeenth century. Religious freedom was a huge success in legal and constitutional thinking when it became a right in Virginia in 1786, but its significance marked the end of a process in Virginia, not a revelation from a few decades' work.

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