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FIGHTING FOR A PLACE:
CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACTIVISM
IN VIRGINIA, 1752-1774

by
Harvey Brent McIntosh
B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1981

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
in the Department
of
History

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
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Fighting for a Place: Church of England Activism in Virginia, 1752-1774

Author: Harvey Brent McIntosh

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ABSTRACT

Between 1752 and 1774 the Two Penny Act crisis, a dispute over control of the College of William and Mary, and a conflict over resident bishops placed a small contingent of clergy in confrontation with local lay authority. Although separated in time, each issue is connected by a single pressing concern: which sphere, lay or clerical, would control Virginia's legally established Church?

Circumstances combined to make this question pressing during the period under consideration. Religious revival among nonconformist denominations and centralization of political authority in the House of Burgesses created an environment which was hostile to Church of England autonomy. The Bishop of London's 1752 decision not to grant power to his local representative also weakened the Church's position during this period.

This study examines clergy activists' attempts to obtain autonomy for their institution. In each controversy clerical action conformed to objectives within the tradition of Virginia's Anglican Church. Clergy defences were at first aimed at restoring what the activists saw as the status quo in place before 1752. After this solution eluded them, the clerical minority agitated for a resident bishop in a final bid to maintain the integrity of their institution.
In the final analysis, this thesis demonstrates that the clerical activists lost in their bid for Church autonomy because they could neither receive essential support from England nor build a common front among the Virginia clergy.
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INTRODUCTION

Between 1752 and 1774 the Parsons' Cause, a dispute over control of the College of William and Mary, and a conflict over resident bishops placed a small contingent of Virginia's Anglican clergy in confrontation with local lay authority. Although separated in time, each issue is connected by a single pressing concern: which sphere lay or clerical would control Virginia's legally established Church? Circumstances combined to make this question critical during the period under consideration. Religious revival among nonconformist denominations and centralization of political authority in the lower House of Assembly created an environment which was hostile to Church of England autonomy.

Although this study is concerned with twenty-two years of Virginia history, the issue of control of the Church was much larger. Since the creation of the Church of England, the amount of secular authority had waxed and waned.
In immediate terms problems in Church government stemmed from political turmoil surrounding the monarchy. During the reign of each monarch bishops who supported the prevailing administration were appointed. The bishops were created from among a select body of Anglicans. Many were nobles, all were gentlemen. Family connections and Whig or Tory affiliation were the prime determinants in election to a diocese. The relatively rapid succession of James II, William and Mary, and Anne created some instability in the Convocation of Bishops. But the accession of the Hanovers in 1714 signalled the rebirth of firm lay control over the Church. The long reign of the house of Hanover created homogeneity among the bishops. Beginning with George I, the Church was used increasingly "as an instrument of social and political control." This usage reduced the Anglican hierarchy's power. The reduced role continued until the 1830s when the "Oxford" or "Tractarian" Movement began to reassert Anglican autonomy based on the Church as a divinely inspired institution.

In Virginia the identification of the Anglican Church with the home government became a liability in the period following the French and Indian War. As conflict emerged between London and local lay authority, clerical appeals to the colony's diocesan in London and through English political connections appeared to have sinister overtones for those supporting the idea of colonial autonomy in internal matters. The subordination of Church to State in England, therefore,
served as the catalyst for attempts to increase lay control of the institution in Virginia. The response of a small activist element among the colonial clergy followed the lines of similar battles over Church government that had cropped up periodically since the creation of Anglicanism and were to reemerge in England during the 1830s. The five faculty members of the College of William and Mary and a varying number of supporters defended the rights of the clergy against what they saw as secular attempts to increase lay control of their Church.

The nonconformist upsurge in Virginia paralleled a similar occurrence in England. Beginning in the late 1730s the Methodist movement, under the leadership of John Wesley, called for a recommitment to spiritual rebirth as the underpinning of Anglican faith. Attempts at internal purification among protestant denominations were also not new. Periodic fears that the various churches were back-sliding into meaningless forms or that popery was encroaching had led to reaction in the past. There is mixed opinion over the impact of the Methodists on the eighteenth-century Church of England. What is important for a study of the Virginia clergy is that the revival was not limited to the Anglican communion.

One of Wesley's early disciples, George Whitefield, included Virginia in a preaching tour of the American colonies. Following a 1738 appearance in Williamsburg, a group of Anglicans in Hanover County studied six of
Whitefield's printed sermons. In 1741, under the leadership of Samuel Morris, this group left the Anglican Church. At first unsure what to call themselves, they settled on Lutheran as appropriate to the reform spirit of their religion. They were, however, without a minister trained in "New Light" methods. In 1743 Morris and his followers applied to a New Light faction of the Presbyterian Church, the New York Synod, for a parson familiar with the revival's message. Samuel Davies was dispatched in 1743 and the former Anglicans became Presbyterian.

This development was to say the least disturbing to both the Church of England clergy and the colony's lay authorities. The lowest level of church organization and of secular government was the parish. By law each parish was to have a settled minister and a vestry whose twelve members usually doubled as local government representatives. The New Light Presbyterians and later a similar group of Baptists ignored parish boundaries. Although Davies conformed with the law by applying to the government for preaching licences, his request's crossed parish lines. Other ministers of the nonconformist revival were less scrupulous about observing Virginia law. They preached wherever the faithful assembled to hear them. Private houses, open fields and even the pulpits of settled ministers were used to spread the revival.

Both the Virginia Church and government agreed that this upsurge was a threat to the colony's stability. They
disagreed, however, on the solution to the problem. Lay authorities maintained that more conscientious attention to duty on the part of the Anglican ministry would defeat the revivalists. The activist clergy asserted that better working conditions, by which they meant higher wages and increased Church autonomy, would attract ministers of the quality necessary to combat the nonconformists. This disagreement was to have considerable impact on the political disputes between the activist clergy and the lay elite.

Political power in Virginia was divided between a Governor, who generally delegated his authority to a resident Lieutenant Governor, and members of the colonial gentry. The local elite dominated most avenues of political expression. The vestries, parish and county offices, the House of Burgesses and the Council of State, or upper house, were firmly in the hands of this propertied and at least locally well-connected group. The Bishop of London also had a deputy in the colony known as a commissary who was expected to represent Church interests. In Virginia the College presidency and a seat on the Council were usually combined with the commissaryship. The three offices gave the Church some influence in local affairs.

In 1752 Thomas Sherlock, the colony's diocesan, changed the way in which the Church in his bishopric was governed. Normally the commissaries exercised some of the Bishop's authority through commissions granted by the crown. In an
effort to force the creation of colonial bishoprics, Sherlock failed to apply for the necessary commissions. He reasoned that the Church would become ungovernable and that local Anglicans would then petition for their own bishops. He was partially correct. The Church became nearly ungovernable. But until the late 1760s there were no demands, at least from Virginia, for a resident bishop.

Specific reasons as to why Sherlock's attempt failed are not known. But his decision had momentous implications for the Virginia clergy. The emasculation of the office of commissary created a power vacuum. The Church had no officially sanctioned voice to argue its case against changes in the establishment introduced by the local elite. The College clergy and their allies stepped into the vacuum in place of the now powerless commissary. In so doing they ran headlong into the Burgesses. The Parsons' Cause, the fight for control of the College, and the dispute over resident bishops were in part the result of this collision.

The clerical search for autonomy has been variously interpreted. The historiography reveals two extremes: first, older coverage presents the activists as a clique of Tory usurpers who precipitated a constitutional crisis; second, a newer view ascribes clerical actions to a drive for gentlemanly status and authority through economic independence. Neither construction is exclusive and each has merit in light of surviving evidence. But the activists also identified defence of the Church as a primary goal.
In addition to the Church autonomy issue this study is based on a number of interrelated questions. Clerical activism was strongest among the faculty of the College of William and Mary. With each succeeding crisis parish clergy support for the activists declined. Why did clerical collective action subside? Activist concentration in Williamsburg also requires examination in order to appreciate participants' willingness and ability to engage in confrontation with secular power. Finally, was there a connection between clerical political activity in Williamsburg and parish ministry attempts to control the nonconformist revival?
INTRODUCTION


CHAPTER I

CHURCH GOVERNMENT AND CLERICAL SECURITY

In order to appraise clerical activism following 1750 it is important first to examine the political environment within which the Church operated. After 1689 changes in Church government and Virginia law helped to clarify the role of the Church, its governing hierarchy, and the rights of individual ministers. Changes such as the creation of the office of commissary and the 1748 "Act for the Better Support of the Clergy" gave the appearance of at least limited autonomy for the Anglican ministry. But division of authority on Church matters remained unclear, with the colonial government's various parts acting more or less independently as new problems arose.

Conditions in Virginia forced adaptations in the The Church of England's structure and the way it functioned. Settlement patterns in the colony required the Church to adopt enormous parish boundaries in order to provide affordable service. As some parishes were as much as sixty miles long, compulsory attendance rules placed unusual
hardships on the clergy. As a result the Church adopted a number of expedients intended to lighten the burden. Principal among these was the extensive use of chapels of ease, and the employment of well educated parishioners of "good conversation" to serve as lay readers. Although this practice was employed in England, lay readers were far more necessary in Virginia.

Colonial vestries also had an expanded role. In addition to Church responsibilities the lay board determined annually all property boundaries within the parish. Further integration of secular and Church government officials also occurred at the parish level. Vestries were usually controlled by the most prominent members of the community. The same elite also supplied the county peace commissions and dominated the colony's lower house of Assembly, the House of Burgesses.

The practice of vestries nominating their own parsons, a right known as advowson, was formalized through Assembly legislation in 1662 to a period of six months following the date at which a benefice became available. Although this practice was common in England, it served as a deterrent to clerical emigration; few ministers were willing to risk the hazardous journey without a guarantee of employment. In addition, the right of advowson theoretically allowed local authority to avoid the appointment of substandard ministers. Vestry control of clerical appointments became the basis of lay control over the clergy.
Once an approved minister had been accepted by a parish, the vestry was supposed to present him to an ecclesiastical authority for induction. In Virginia that authority was given to the Lieutenant Governor. Ministers usually failed to receive the security of life tenure owing to vestry refusal to present their incumbents. Instead parsons were hired on the basis of one-year contracts. Failure to induct ministers resulted in a reduction of the Crown's patronage and further subordination of ministers to their vestries. Clearly the potential existed for vestry abuse of power. The same circumstances show that clerical attempts to reform the Church had to meet with the approval of prominent parishioners.

The Church in Virginia had a tenuous existence until the election of Thomas Compton to the see of London in 1675. For years colonial citizens, including the various lieutenant governors and some clergymen, had complained about the quality of some of the parish ministry. The colony was caught in a dilemma consisting of an established church without a local hierarchy and vacant parishes in combination with some poor-quality clergymen. Compton determined to exercise the Bishop of London's authority to resolve these problems. Power resided with the Bishop as a result of usage rather than from the King's or Archbishop of Canterbury's specific mandate.

In 1689 Compton appointed Commissaries who were to be diocesan representatives in each of the colonies. Compton applied to the King for commissions of office for his
appointees in order to allow them to exercise the Bishop's delegated authority. Their power included the right to call the clergy into convention, discipline the local ministers, punish parishioners who failed to meet the minimum attendance requirements and, in cooperation with the Lieutenant Governor, recommend candidates for holy orders to the Bishop. The Commissaries were an innovation in Church government. As such, Compton probably intended them to be a stopgap measure to control the Church and clergy until the colonies could support a resident diocesan."

James Blair, Virginia's first Commissary, took up residence as a missionary in 1685. He was appointed Commissary in December 1689. His objectives were in part declared in a proclamation issued in 1690:

Whereas the Right Reverend Father in God Lord Bishop of London taking into consideration the great contempt of Religion and dissoluteness of life and manners which are too visible, within this Colony of Virginia to the dishonour of God, reproach of the Church & the Scandal of all good men....

I [as his Commissary] intend to revive and put into execution the Ecclesiastical laws against all cursers, Swearers & blasphemers, all whoremongers, fornicators and adulterers, all drunkards ranters and profaners of the Lords day and Condemners of the Sacraments, and against all other Scandalous Persons....

Upon his arrival, Blair found a willing ally in Lieutenant Governor Francis Nicholson. Virginia's governors had always exercised some authority over the Church and that role had been reinforced by Compton. But Blair's presence allowed Church reforms to take place from within the ranks of the clergy. Cooperation between Blair and Nicholson was
short-lived, however, for in 1692 the Lieutenant Governor was transferred to Maryland. His replacement, Edmond Andros, was far less amenable to Blair's plans for reform.

In 1691 Blair began his drive for change. He proposed ecclesiastical courts to control the sinners identified in his proclamation. He also erected a governing structure that would allow him to exercise some central authority over a decentralized ministry. Virginia was divided into four districts, each controlled by a clergyman deputized by the Commissary. Blair's appointees were to report on irregularities in the conduct of clergymen and parishoners and to ensure quick corrective action in the event of canon law violations. In addition, Blair's deputies were empowered to call semi-annual clerical conventions. These gatherings, in much the same manner as the Commissary's proposed annual conventions of the entire clergy, were intended to reinforce general Church discipline, publicly reward exemplary clergymen and identify and correct specific problems in Church administration.

Through these measures the Commissary sought to bring the Church's structure more into line with that of the English model. Both Nicholson and the Council of State supported his actions. Neither measure was, however, put into place.

One historian has attributed the failure of Blair's initiatives to widespread apathy. There is some validity to this argument. It also appears likely that the vestries responded negatively to the changes as they infringed
directly on lay control of the Church. It is also probable that the reforms were resisted by those ministers who were the targets of Blair’s tightened discipline.

In 1701 Blair again promoted changes in Church structure. The centerpiece of this package was an increase in vestry control of advowson from six months to one year, although clergymen were actually to be hired on a trial basis for eighteen months. In exchange for this increased control over hirings, the Commissary expected the vestries to present their choices, after nearly three years service, to the Lieutenant Governor for induction. Over the space of ten years Blair had learned that Church reform required allowances for the vestries. After his first defeat Blair never again proposed direct ecclesiastical control over Church laws governing the laity.

In the 1690s the Commissary attempted to resolve the twin problems of too few ministers and the poor quality of many who were available. The shortage exacerbated the discipline problem. Blair found that he could not exercise his most potent weapon, suspension, because to have done so would have left the affected parish without a parson. In addition, a recent salary increase was not enough to entice higher quality clergymen to emigrate. Part of Blair’s solution was to encourage colonists to enter the ministry. As clerical training and ordination took place in England, distance was a deterrent to those who might seek holy orders. Blair could do nothing about the journey necessary for ordination.
He did, however, lobby for the creation of a college to educate clerical aspirants.

Blair's efforts, together with considerable support from the colony, resulted in the creation of the College of William and Mary. In recognition of his role in promoting the institution, William III made the Commissary its President for life. The creation of the College, its staff of ordained professors and Blair's presidency were extensions of Church power. The Commissary further expanded his power base by lobbying successfully for a position on the Council of State. The Council was Virginia's upper house of Assembly. With the Governor, it also formed the General Court. Blair argued that a clerical seat would result in more harmonious relations between Church and State. Over time, members of the clergy came to see the Council seat and College presidency as the just due for the holder of the Commissary's office.

Blair's one enduring reform was the College. It did not, however, immediately strengthen the Church's presence in Virginia. The shortage of clergymen continued to be a problem until 1733, when for the first time there were more parsons available than parishes. Although a large majority of the priests serving the colony were still imported from Britain, some authors have seen William and Mary's small but growing contribution as essential in filling up the ranks. The College also gave the otherwise decentralized clergy a small institutional concentration. William and Mary's
teaching clergy became relatively independent of secular power in 1729 when the trustees turned administration over to the president and masters.

In the first twenty years of the eighteenth century a pattern of institutional interaction emerged. The Burgesses, Governor, Council, Commissary, and vestries could effect changes involving the Church. Technically the Lieutenant Governor had the power to override most local initiatives. In practice, however, he had to tread a thin line between precedent, the vested interests of the other elements, and the expectations of superiors in England. Gentry control over the vestries, county courts, the House of Burgesses and, in part, the Council created a strong power nexus. Until shortly before the Revolution the political history of Virginia may be characterized as a series of power struggles between the five institutions with the Council of State, the vestries, and the Commissary occupying places of decreasing importance.

Political competition increased while the religious revival after 1740 presented a new threat to the existing power structure. Although the popular churches did not represent a direct political threat, they eventually undermined gentry and religious authority at the lowest level by disrupting life in the parishes. Church of England and government stability were based on parish organization. Therefore the revivalists presented a long term threat to the balance of power.
Dissenting denominations had been allowed access to Virginia before 1740, but their adherents, with few exceptions, were required to contribute to the Anglican tithe. Nonconformist ministers were also required to observe the same rules which governed their Anglican counterparts. In addition, with the exception of some dissenters settling in Augusta county on the frontier, the Anglican ministry held a monopoly over burial and marriage rites.¹

The revivalists developed from sects which had been allowed to practice in Virginia since the passing of two Assembly Acts, in 1699 and 1705. These Acts recognized a limited form of religious toleration. The Acts were themselves created after the fact as dissenters had been present in the colony for forty years. The revivals, which constituted the Great Awakening, occurred as a series of waves. The amount of support and number of conversions accruing to the popular churches were dependent on itinerant ministers who included Virginia on their circuits. The first group to enter Virginia were "New Side" Presbyterians whose presence was considered an invasion by the established clergy.¹

The revivalists espoused a form of religion unpalatable to the colonial clergy. The activities of the new sects included highly emotive preaching, adult baptism after spiritual rebirth, and extensive use of uneducated preachers. In the revivalists' estimation the Anglican ministry was incredibly immoral. The clergy indulged in all manner of recreation which the nonconformists thought led directly to
Hell. Among the condemned activities were card-playing, horse racing and dancing -- the normal pastimes of the Anglican gentry and clergy. If clerical recreational conduct was considered disreputable, their pastoral workings were worse. The English Church’s ministry had no prerequisite spiritual rebirth, read sermons rather than engaging in emotional extempore preaching, and considered educated reasoned commitment to Christ to be the accepted form of worship. The clergy also seemed much more attached to their salaries than to their parishes. As a result, Anglican clerics became the favourite target for the barbs of the nonconformists.

The clergy attempted to halt the increase in New Side membership by appealing to higher authority. Letters written to the Commissary and Bishop pleaded for assistance in the fight while petitions were presented to the House of Burgesses requesting their intervention. It is interesting to note that most of the clergy’s activities were not aimed at having the revivalists removed. The clergy wanted the newcomers to respect parish boundaries and conform to the ideal of a settled ministry.

Given the nature of Virginia’s Church and its close ties with secular authority, an appeal to the rule of law was a logical recourse. Unfortunately for the clergy a number of circumstances had changed. In 1728, when Bishop Gibson requested a clarification of his colonial powers from the King, he received instructions which became known as Gibson’s commission. This commission was the clearest statement of
the role of the Anglican hierarchy in the pre-Revolutionary period. The authority that had been given to Compton was reinforced, as was that granted to the ad hoc Church government arrangements in the colonies. Upon receipt of his commission, Gibson issued new instructions to Commissary Blair. The revised role of the Commissary removed his theoretical authority over the laity. His duties in relation to the clergy remained much as before.

On the surface the change in the Commissary's mandate appears to be a diminution of power. But as Blair had discovered earlier, the Commissary's power was more assumed than real. Local opposition had defeated him in his efforts to reform the Church at precisely the point where change affected the relationship between parishioners and ministers. Removal of responsibility for lay conduct then, should have strengthened Church government. Unpopular Church responsibility over the activities of parishioners became the government's function, leaving the Commissary free to concentrate on bringing the Church government and clergy up to standard.

Gibson's orders, however, were passed on to a seventy-four year old Commissary who had apparently become more interested in his political career than in Church reform. A number of explanations have been given for Blair's inaction. In general these center on his advanced age and discouragement over early defeats in the area of Church reform. Whatever the cause, the legal reinforcement provided by Gibson's commission was not put to good use, and
at the time of Blair's death in 1743 the Church remained in much the same position it had occupied prior to 1728 -- with the added problem of the nonconformist threat.

Five years after Blair's death Bishop Gibson also died. With him died the commission giving well defined colonial authority to the see of London. Gibson's successors, either through lack of interest or other motives, allowed Church government to lapse into its former state. London's diocesan ruled but the exact extent of his colonial authority was undefined. Blair's inaction, and the demise of Gibson's commission, weakened the Church in the face of the nonconformist onslaught and in its power relationship with lay authority. Blair's successor, William Dawson, had to start virtually from the beginning.

Dawson had to rely on the original Commissary-Lieutenant Governor alliance in order to govern the clergy. Election as College president did give him some real authority, but a seat on the Council of State was at first unavailable. Dawson eventually got his seat but a precedent had been set. The three offices Blair had held would not pass on automatically to the incumbent Commissary.

Dawson's primary concern was to stem growth among the dissenters. Two concentrations of religious nonconformists existed during his term. The first was located on the western settlement fringe and the second in Hanover County which was also in a semi-frontier state. These areas contained sparse, shifting populations -- precisely the type of settlement patterns the Anglican establishment could not
deal with. Little was done about dissenter concentrations on
the western fringe. Hanover County provided the focus for
the reaction of Church and State.

The Presbyterians in Hanover County were led by Samuel
Davies, a Pennsylvania trained New Side minister. Davies
conformed with the law by applying for permission to preach
and a licence was duly issued. As his following grew, he
requested further licences to reach members of his
congregation residing outside Hanover. After approving two
more licences, the Burgesses acceded to Dawson's request and
refused Davies leave to expand his territory. From Dawson's
perspective the response was inadequate. But secular
authority had acted on the Church's behalf, a fact pleasing
to Virginia's Anglican clergy.

Two major political events occurred in the 1740s which
were to set the tone for future debates involving the Church.
In 1748 the Burgesses passed a bill entitled, "An Act for the
Better Support of the Clergy". Clerical income was set at
16,000 pounds of tobacco per year with four percent allowed
for collection and wastage. The same law extended vestry
control over advowson to twelve months. On the surface
this legislation appears to have been a step forward for the
clergy. Their rights were reinforced at a time when the
popular churches were beginning to mount a serious threat.

The law, however, did something else. It began to
supplant vestry authority over the Church's clergymen. Part
of the Act stipulated that a minister had tenure from the
moment of his acceptance into a parish, regardless of whether
or not he was inducted. Thus the bill extended vestry control over who would serve as parish minister while removing the lay boards' power to deprive arbitrarily ministers of their livings.

The clause concerning advowson reinforced the alliance between the Governor and Commissary. Both Dawson and Governor Dinwiddie considered extension of the vestries' control over clergy recommendation to be an invasion of the Royal prerogative. This issue remained important until a more serious event, the Two Penny Act crisis, forced clerics to use the salary provisions of the 1748 Act in their own defence.

In 1744 a controversy began which was to have considerable consequences for the Virginia clergy. William Kay arrived in Lunenburg parish, Richmond County, to replace Reverend David Morthland who wished to return to England. Kay had been recommended by both the Governor and Commissary and had been received into the parish by the vestry. Kay was not sure why, but he became the object of Colonel Landon Carter's hostility. The friction between the two became a political matter after Kay preached a sermon on pride which the Colonel took personally. Carter then proceeded to gather a majority of his fellow vestrymen in an attempt to oust the minister. The controversy became even more heated with the return of Morthland. Carter and his confederates petitioned to have their old minister reinstated. They also leased the parish glebe to individuals who abused both the property and
Kay's livestock. The latter action forced Kay to take a considerable loss on his animals.

Both the Commissary and the Governor advised Kay to sue the vestry and glebe tenants for trespass. Nearly three years after the first incident Kay's suit for damages reached the General Court. The Carter faction defended its actions by maintaining that non-inducted ministers had no right to sue for trespass on glebe lands. This defence brought the threat of deprivation, which had long plagued the Church, out in the open. The Court decided in Kay's favour. Scholars agree that this verdict was the primary reason for the property provisions of the 1748 "Act for the Better Support of the Clergy".

Although clerical security was improved by the Kay decision and the 1748 Act, the question of clergy rights did not end immediately. Colonel Carter petitioned for the right to appeal to the Privy Council. The appeal was granted despite the fact that it was in violation of a Virginia law which stated that such petitions would not be allowed in cases involving less than £300. In 1753 the Privy Council decided all counts in favour of Kay. The final award was £30 in damages and £200 in back pay.

Most historians argue that the 1748 Act and the final disposition of the Kay case strengthened the clergy, although Colonel Carter's spirited pursuit of Kay also shows the possible damage that one powerful member of the local gentry could do to the entire clergy. As well, clerical property rights were at the mercy of future changes in the
local political mood, because improved security had been provided by other members of the elite in the Assembly. Any real protection for the Church stemmed from the 1748 Act having Royal assent not from any strengthening of the institution per se.

William Dawson died in July, 1752. By the end of his tenure the Church appeared to be in a stronger position than it had occupied since the death of Bishop Gibson. This occurred despite increasing dissenter activity. The nagging property issue was being resolved, most parishes had incumbents, the Lieutenant Governor's support was secured, and the College was turning out an increasing number of graduates, although the relatively small number of alumni entering the ministry caused the Church to continue to recruit replacements from England. Following Dawson's death, however, events which originated within the Church began to erode recent gains.
NOTES
CHAPTER ONE


6 Rouse, James Blair, p. 61.


8 James Blair in: Gage, "The Established Church," p. 45.

9 Rouse, James Blair, p. 61.


11 Gage, "The Established Church," p. 47.


14 Morton, Colonial Virginia, 2:776.


Austin, ibid., pp. 105-108. Although he denies this on p. 110.


Austin, ibid., p. 115.


Ibid.


Ibid., p. 469.

Ibid., p. 760.

Ibid., p. 761.

Austin, "The Role of the Anglican Church," p. 120.
33 ibid., pp. 120-121.
CHAPTER II

THOMAS DAWSON AND THE CLERICAL ACTIVISTS

With the death of William Dawson came the first of a series of power struggles between the Lieutenant Governor and some members of the Board of Visitors of the College of William and Mary. The Visitors elected William Stith President of the College, aware that the office of Commissary usually went with that of President. Following his election, Stith showed that he expected to become Commissary.

Stith, the author of a local history and a cleric well qualified for the vacant administrative posts, had run afoul of the Lieutenant Governor over one of the latter’s revenue gathering schemes. Shortly after his arrival, Dinwiddie imposed an impost on all land patents issued on the settlement fringe. He intended the tax to do two things. First, the fee of one pistole per land patent would add measurably to government revenue; second, it would give the Governor some control over an existing arrears problem in collecting frontier quitrents. Stith complained claiming that the Governor wished to line his pocket with the
pistole fee. This action earned the parson the undying devotion of the House of Burgesses whose members quickly closed ranks behind him. 4

Thomas Dawson became the Governor's choice for Commissary and in due course Sherlock appointed him to the post. But the Bishop did not petition the King for a commission for his new representative. Thus, Dawson held the office without the limited power that had previously gone with it. In addition, he began his tenure without either of the other offices which had, in the past, accompanied appointment as Commissary. 5 Governor Dinwiddie, eager to support his candidate, offered Dawson a Council position. But Dawson traded that seat in an unsuccessful effort to be elected College President. He explained his actions to Sherlock:

My Lord, immediately upon the Death of my Brother, Col: Carter Burwell, one of the Governor's of this College, made me a Visit and introduced a Discourse concerning a successor to my Brother. Upon which I desired his Vote for the Place of President; he answered he should always be my Friend, but he was afraid I should interfere with him, for the Governor had promised to recommend him for the first vacant Place in the Council, but he now supposed, that I should be the Man. In this season of Distress I told him, that I was not at present ambitious of that Honour, and that I would wait upon the Governor & desire that I might not interfere with him. 6

In the Fall of 1752 Governor Dinwiddie again offered Dawson a Council seat, which he accepted. Bishop Sherlock's failure to supply a commission of office combined with Dawson's failure to win the College Presidency undermined the
Commissary's traditional sources of authority. When Dawson attempted to exercise power, he was forced to depend on his own prestige in combination with the power of whoever chose to support him.

This paralysis was precisely the effect that Bishop Sherlock intended. London's diocesan was embarking on a plan to force a resident Anglican bishop on the colonies. He assumed that the obvious problems in Church government he had created would lead to a chorus of demands for a resident bishop. In this he was disappointed. During Dawson's term an active element among the clergy, centered on William and Mary's faculty, emerged as a sort of Church lobby. Their activism appears to have resulted from time honoured fears that secular meddling with ministers' salaries would discourage high quality applicants from taking service.

Over the longer term, as the 1755 Two Penny Act was followed by the dismissal of Reverend John Brunskill, the 1758 Two Penny Act and wholesale firings among the College's faculty, fear of generalized arbitrary intervention by lay authority became a powerful motivation for clerical activism.

John Camm, the dissident leader, served as Master of Divinity at the College and was eventually appointed to the Presidency, the Commissaryship and to the Council. Throughout his time at William and Mary he also served as rector of York Hampton parish. William Robinson, identified by Lieutenant Governor Dinwiddie's replacement, Francis Fauquier, as Camm's deputy, was a native Virginian who held
Stratton Major parish before his appointment as Commissary on the death of Thomas Dawson. These two formed the core around which other clergymen gathered. The number of Camm and Robinson’s supporters depended on a variety factors: popularity of the current debate among themselves, and among the populace at large, degree of personal exposure to the wrath of lay Virginians and their own understanding of the long term effects of action over specific issues.

The College clergy and their supporters reacted when either the Church’s position or their assumptions concerning clerical autonomy were affected by secular actions. Some scholars have portrayed activist politics as usurping the Commissary’s authority. The “College clique” is seen as proof of the breakdown of clerical discipline. However, there is another interpretation; the College clergy’s actions were aimed at strengthening the Church as an institution. The alliance headed by John Camm did nothing that did not have a precedent in Virginia history. They neither co-opted Dawson’s authority nor did they necessarily covet enhanced personal power.

Dissident actions were almost entirely defensive. Responding only to Assembly and Governor-in-Council initiatives, the vocal minority showed a responsibility for which they were rarely given credit. If independence from the gentry was their principal objective, it seems reasonable to assume that they would initiate action on ground of their own choosing in order to gain the precedents necessary for
increased clerical autonomy. That they did not do so, at least until the bishops question of the late 1760s, may indicate a perception of the balance between Church and State that is somewhat at odds with their rabble-rousing image.

Perhaps the key to understanding the actions of the College faction and their allies lies in the existence of a third force. Both sides in the clerical disputes thought that revivalist successes in Virginia were the result of poor quality Anglican clergymen. Colonels Bland and Carter, the clerics' most vocal opponents, saw the solution differently from the activist clergy. The colonels argued that Churchmen would be successful if they became more pious and spent less time on worldly concerns. Camm, Robinson, Commissary Dawson and their various allies thought that improved employment conditions would attract ministers of the calibre needed to defeat the nonconformists. The division over how to solve the Church's problems regarding the revivalists emerges in all debates involving the clergy from Dawson's appointment to the political break with Britain.

While the numbers supporting Camm and his friends fluctuated, some remained supporters throughout. One of these, James Maury, provided an indication of the choices facing the Virginia ministry:

What Part then, my Friend [William Robinson], are the clergy here to act? Whither will be more eligible to merit the infamous charge of betraying their own Rights & those of their Successors by a timid submission to repeated Encroachments, or by generously asserting them incur the unmerited censure of being Enemies to Peace.
For such it seems is the sad alternative now before us.

The College teachers, a few allies, and the Commissary were the only clergymen in the immediate vicinity of Williamsburg. They were, therefore, the only ministers who could offer coherent resistance to actions taken by secular authority. Petitions and letters claim repeatedly that dispersion of the ministry made broad based clerical consensus difficult to achieve. The possibility of political pressure to remain silent may also have been important. Excessive vestry power over the ministry had been a clerical concern for nearly a century. It seems unreasonable to assume that the threat of this power would be suspended just when clergy related issues were coming to the fore.

Fear of lay reprisals on the part of some of the ministry was not shared by the dissident leaders. Camm and Robinson had some protection not available to their brethren, including Commissary Dawson. Robinson stated that he had a small legacy making him less dependent than most on his official salary. By inference Camm must have had similar insulation. He was ready and apparently able to travel to England to plead clerical causes. Furthermore, his activism did not cease upon his dismissal from the College in 1757.

James Maury, writing in the 1760s, leaves little doubt that deprivation was much on the minds of other activists:
The country is excessively exasperated against him [Camm]. His voyage to England would probably be attended by the loss of his Parish & certainly I think with that of his Professorship. From the present Temper of the Times he can't expect common Justice, much less Indulgence...

These are not only my own Sentiments, but those of Barrett, Tickell, Boucher, who with myself formed a little convention at Tickell's Lodgings....

The College faculty had another level of protection not available to their parish brethren. The administration of William and Mary was placed in the hands of the President and Masters in the 1730s. Theoretically, this gave the teachers protection from a Governor or gentry led vendetta. The Commissary also did not have much power over the professors. Even when he held the office of President he had no veto in meetings of the President and Masters. This protection proved to be inadequate when the Visitors chose to dismiss the faculty in 1757, but it did provide some group solidarity.

Clergy activist perceptions of affairs in Virginia differed markedly from those of the Assembly and Council. The traditional idea that English birth and training accounted for the difference may have some credibility. But the supporters of Camm and Robinson were a mixed bag of native Virginians and immigrant English and Scots. Robinson himself was Virginia born and probably William and Mary trained. Loyalties during the Revolution also provide few clues as to motivation. Camm and Jonathon Boucher remained Loyalists, while their arch rivals over the bishops' question,
Professors Gwatkin and Henley, also chose the King. In a similar vein, James Maury could decry the Two Penny Acts and the Stamp Act in exactly the same terms. What united the "College clique" was their willingness to work against any arbitrary use of local power which impaired their group autonomy.

In a petition to Bishop Sherlock the activists display a fear that local government was disrupting the traditional balance of power as well as undermining the privileged position of the clergy:

[We hope] that we do not cease to be British subjects by being members of a Colony; and that it ought to give us a more affecting pleasure to view ourselves in that larger than in this smaller capacity.... We are hearty and zealous friends to the dependence of the Colonies on their Mother Country:

Commissary Dawson shared the faculty’s view. But he was more acutely aware of the actual weakness of his own position and that of his fellow clergymen. Institutional weakness did not prevent Dawson from attempting to do his best against arbitrary power.

In 1752 John Moncure, holder of a parish in Stafford County, was appointed to the county peace commission. The Council, however, determined that a clergyman had enough to do without adding the duties of justice. They ordered Moncure suspended in early 1754. Council’s action infuriated the local clergy. At a convention called by Dawson in October the clergy approved a petition asking Governor Dinwiddie to use his influence with the Council in order to
have Moncure reinstated. Dinwiddie apparently agreed that
the suspension was a violation of both the rights of the
clergy and of free Englishmen.\textsuperscript{24} His intervention must have
been effective because twelve clergymen served on county
peace commissions between 1754 and 1776.\textsuperscript{25}

The 1754 convention was undoubtedly the high point of
Commissary Dawson's career. Despite the lack of a
commission, he had a number of ideas for reforming Virginia's
Church. The centerpiece of his program was an annual meeting
of the clergy which he designed to enforce clerical
discipline. Annual convocations could also help establish a
united front in dealing with problems that directly affected
the Church. At the same time, such gatherings would also
provide the Commissary with a more powerful base in his
dealings with Virginia's lay authorities and the dissenters
threat.

The 1754 convention began the reform process. Dawson's
immediate objective was the creation of a widows and orphans
pension fund.\textsuperscript{26} The convention adopted the scheme
unanimously and the first annual meeting of the pension
committee took place in the spring of 1755. Although many
ministers later chose to opt out, this reform lasted through
the colonial period and was adopted by the Protestant
Episcopal Church.

The success of the first convention, establishing a
pension fund and having Moncure reinstated, was seen by
Commissary Dawson as a great step forward in promoting Church
interests. The meeting, in combination with the final outcome of the Kay case, seemed to place the Church and its ministers in a relatively strong position. Dawson, however, still harbored reservations about vestry control over advowson. In addition, the practice of vestry recommendations for holy orders had recently become subject to abuse. Dawson pointed to cases where vestries recommended candidates without adequate investigation of their characters and qualifications. The Commissary solved the problem of unsatisfactory candidates by insisting that each person approaching him for endorsement provide a letter indicating the recommending vestry's willingness to accept the aspirant as their own parish minister.

Dawson was also concerned about the quality of ministers emigrating to the colony. He wrote Bishop Sherlock requesting that he stop the flow of Scottish ministers fearing that they would weaken the Church owing to a presumed predisposition toward Presbyterianism: "But it is not to be dissembled, my Lord, that most of these Northern Gentlemen are bred Presbyterians, and I fear have seldom so great a Regard to the Church's Interest as they ought. And as we have now Dissenters among us, there is the greater Occasion of a regular & able Ministry." As a further measure of control Dawson made it policy to promote candidates from the colony; he found locally born and educated ministers to be both better trained and more acceptable to the gentry.
In the Commissary's opinion, however, vestry control over advowson was still the most significant threat to clerical independence and a healthy Church. The vestries were not about to surrender their traditional right which had been lately reinforced in the Clergy Act of 1748: "I wish something could be done for us at Home, for little can be expected here. For tho', the Governor & Council are well disposed, the lower House of Assembly (all or most of them Vestrymen) will never part with a Power established by Law, and confirmed by the Royal Assent." In this analysis Dawson proved correct. The vestries maintained their power over clerical hirings.

Despite real successes Dawson's position remained weak. Without a commission and salary warrant from the Bishop he was dependent on the Governor's support and the more or less voluntary allegiance of the clergy. The lack of a warrant meant that Dawson did without the Commissary's £100 annual stipend. Although Dawson was elected to succeed President Stith, who died in 1755, the presidency did not augment Dawson's power. William Robinson, writing shortly before Dawson's death, blamed the Commissary's waffling performance during the later part of his career on financial dependence: "in short he is despised by all, and I believe continued President only as a fit instrument for designing men. His Presidentship being £200 but [being] liable to be deprived of it when the Visitors please, makes him afraid to act as Commissary."
During the period of Dawson's successes the Church's legal position was partially altered. The rate of new settlement on the western frontier was relatively low, with taxes being one of the major factors discouraging immigration. In addition to secular taxes, the religious establishment required settlers to absorb the cost of building the church, creating appropriate glebe property and of the tithe in support of both the minister and the Church's local activities. These costs remained relatively fixed regardless of the number of tithables available to support them. In only one category, poor relief, were frontier parishes better off than those in more settled parishes where poverty was becoming an increasingly onerous burden. To reduce taxes and encourage immigration in 1753 the Governor and Council modified Church support requirements in newly opened areas. Building costs, for example, were deferred for a number of years in frontier counties. Since no interim funding was provided, Anglican clergymen were reduced to preaching in private houses. Payment of the clergy was also altered because the new areas were not good tobacco growing country. The inhabitants were given the right to discharge their obligations in money at a fixed rate of three pence per pound of tobacco. Lack of religious services also prompted the government to allow at least one dissenting minister to perform marriage and death rites which were formerly a Church of England monopoly.
The activists and Dawson recognized that changes on the frontier were intended to be temporary. They also saw the payment provisions as nonthreatening because they did not strike at the whole clergy. The first Two Penny Act petition, probably written by John Camm, claims the payment in money cases were not really important because: "In one of these, the Minister solicited the change in the other the minister was content with what was done; in both instances the Parishes never make any Tobacco & the Money in lieu of it is settled at a stated price, forever." The dissident clergy, it seems, were not entirely out of touch with colonial conditions. They could and did accept local variations in the Church where those changes did not effect their corporate rights.

The temporary nature of change on the frontier had come into question by 1759. In that year Lieutenant Governor Fauquier wrote to the Bishop of London questioning the expediency of maintaining religious establishment in the west. It is not known how wide spread this idea was. But the record shows that activist clergymen became less tolerant of parish level changes to the Church's forms during the 1760s.

Two events divorced significant elements of the clergy from the Commissary. The case of John Brunskill, which is discussed below, and the Parsons' Cause arising from the "Two Penny Acts" of 1755 and 1758 clearly illustrated the powerlessness of an uncommissioned Commissary and forced
parts of the clergy to act in their own defence. The Brunskill case involved a dispute over jurisdiction in matters of clerical discipline. The Two Penny Acts were created in order to control the domestic economy during the French and Indian war in years when a tobacco short-fall was predicted. Tobacco was both Virginia's staple product and the principal medium of exchange in a cash-short economy. Therefore a substantially reduced crop was potentially disastrous. The threat was compounded by the extraordinary expense of keeping the militia in the field.

The first Two Penny Act, invoked by the Assembly in the fall of 1755, fixed the rate of exchange for the current tobacco crop at two pennies per pound. The Act was to run for ten months until the next tobacco crop was due. One historian has stated that the Act and its 1758 successor had a "special animus directed at the clergy". The College clergy and Commissary would have agreed. The Williamsburg based clergymen worked to have the first Act overturned. But support from the parish clergy was not strong. Many of them apparently adopted James Maury's position that the measure was necessary for the successful prosecution of the war and that it was the duty of all Virginians to accept short term hardship.

The College clergy and Commissary were opposed to the Act on three main grounds: first, Burgess actions violated the law in that the Act did not have royal assent and was intended to overrule the 1748 Act which did have such
approval. Second, the Act set a precedent for future meddling in salaries and the economy, and constituted an attack on private property as it altered the terms of contracts after service had been rendered. Third, the effect on the security of the clergy would be such that potential recruits would be discouraged from entering service in the ministry.²

While their complaints were the same, the College clergy and Dawson differed over the preferred method of dealing with the problem. Camm, Robinson and their associates wished to call a clerical convention. This meeting would draft a petition requesting that the Governor overturn the offensive legislation. Dawson was in favour of a less confrontational private request for the Governor's intervention.

The difference in approach led to infighting within the Church. The College clergy attempted to call a convention without Dawson's blessing. This effort failed to attract significant support. Although the faculty's action can be seen as a breach of discipline, there is nothing in the Bishops' correspondence to show that Dawson took offense at their actions. There is, however, one letter in the Dawson Papers indicating that the Commissary tried to exercise discipline over the activists.²

In November, 1755 the College teachers drafted a petition to the Bishop of London requesting that he use his influence in the fight over the Two Penny Act. They claimed that the small number of clergymen who signed the petition resulted from the pressure of time. They also claimed to
have had no intention of undermining the Commissary:

We are conscious that this Application to your Lordship will want an ornament, & a sanction of a principal kind, in not having to it the name of your honorable and reverend Commissary; who was against this Bill & is, we believe, heartily concern'd that it met not with a more prevailing Opposition than it has received. The Reason for our not having him at our head & many other Clergymen to join us, is that this must have been a work of time, considering how we are dispers'd from one another: And we were determined to give your Lordship the most early notice possible of what has happened.43

Opposition to the Act was not the result of greed.

Dawson indicated that "The Price fixt is undoubtedly better than the Clergy in general have commonly received[..]"44 What both the Commissary and the College clergy objected to was the precedent the Assembly had set. They understood that the conflict was taking place between a largely decentralized clergy and an increasingly powerful House of Burgesses. The Assembly, in part, replaced the vestries as the principal threat to the "Rights of the Clergy."45

The preamble to the Two Penny Act defends the Assembly's actions by stating that the legislation was intended to protect the poor from the ravages of a bad crop year. The Commissary claimed that the new law was intended for the benefit of the wealthy:

Was the Scarcity of Tobacco indeed very great, and was the Law really framed for the Benefit of the Poor & needy, as the Preamble ... insinuate[s], every pious & humane Clergyman would undoubtedly acquiesce. But give me Leave to observe, that this Law is calculated rather for the Benefit and Advantage of the Rich than the Poor. For
the Poor, and the middle sort of People generally pay their Levies very early, and in Tobacco of their own Produce: But the Rich are always very late in discharging their Dues, endeavouring either to do it in Money, or waiting 'till they can purchase Publick Transfer, or other mean Tobacco thinking their own too good and valuable for the Clergy or any other Officers.

The College clergy amplified the Commissary's concerns in their petition by identifying the Act's long term repercussions. Principal among these effects was a potential shortage of ministers resulting in the destruction of the established Church: "For what Clergyman can it be expected, will come hither from Great Britain, or who here will design their sons for Holy Orders, when the Clergy shall not be paid in one certain Commodity, but in Tobacco or Money, or something else, as any of them shall happen to be the least profitable...." The same document indicates that the Act may serve as a precedent for annual meddling by the Burgesses in the clergy's salary rates. The petition is concluded with a warning that dissenters would quickly fill gaps created in the clerical ranks. The controversy died quickly when a better than average crop year dried up the minimal support the faculty and Commissary had. A good crop lowered the price of tobacco, making the two penny legislation less of a burden.

The 1758 Two Penny Act was invoked for much the same reasons as its predecessor. This time, however, action was imperative. Virginia was in the midst of a drought which threatened to curtail severely both the tobacco crop and the
food supply. Despite adverse conditions, however, the College clergy managed to orchestrate significant collective action among the ministry. Dawson again objected to a convention. But his position had become so eroded that pleas for moderation were ignored. The Commissary's weakness was exposed during the Brunskill case which fell between the two Two Penny Acts. It is appropriate, therefore, to look for the roots of differences in the handling of the two political problems in this entr'acte.

Brunskill, rector of Hamilton parish, Prince William County was accused of gross immorality and drunkenness in 1757. Governor Dinwiddie informed the Commissary of the problem at which point Dawson declared that he did not have the authority to act. The Governor and Council took Brunskill's case upon themselves. Dawson tried to keep the matter within the Church by bringing the charges up at a convention. This recommendation was ignored. The Governor and Council with Dawson absent, sitting as the General Court, found Brunskill guilty, dismissed him from his living and forbade him from seeking another in the colony.

Despite Dawson's protest, the Governor-in-Council clearly had the right to discipline clergymen. Bishop Compton had confirmed this power in 1677. Once again, however, the division between colonial institutions is vague. It is not clear whether the General Court actually had the power to invoke a colony wide ban. In ecclesiastical law this power is within a Bishop's purview. What is clear is
that both the governors and commissaries had been loath to use their disciplinary powers. After the appointment of Commissary Blair in 1689, few clergymen were called to account for their conduct in front of the Court.\textsuperscript{35}

The Brunskill case was decided on two premises, more or less forgotten precedent and a section of the King's instructions to the Lieutenant Governor granting him the right to administer justice to both the civil and clerical populations.\textsuperscript{36} The King's instructions were open to interpretation as even Dinwiddie admitted. He wrote the Bishop explaining that he saw his sixteenth article of instruction, allowing him to discipline clergymen, as being in effect if the Commissary had no commission.\textsuperscript{37} Neither Dawson nor the faculty accepted that interpretation.

The falling out between Dawson and his College colleagues appears to have occurred as a result of differences in interpretation of clerical strength and, on a more personal level, Camm and Robinson's insistence on pursuing a confrontational course. During the 1755 Two Penny crisis, Camm, his associates and Dawson disagreed on the correct course of action. The Commissary, in his communications with the Bishop of London stated that the teachers' disaffection was justified. The difference in tactics for handling the latest issue appears to have resulted from continuing differences in perception of the clergy's position. Dawson again declined to call a convention after the Governor-in-Council ignored his initial
request. Another reservation, that such an action would disturb the "Peace & Quietness" of the colony and presumably alienate the much needed support of the Governor was accurate. Camm, Robinson and their associates were also correct in their view that collective action was the only hope for a favourable local solution to the problem.

Camm and Robinson's actions after Dawson refused to intervene further in the Brunskill case can be seen as either, or a combination of, a breach of Church discipline or a protest, using the only means available, in defence of the Church. Following the Governor-in-Council's judgement both leaders of the dissident faction invited John Brunskill to preach in their parishes. As Rhys Isaac points out, neither Camm nor Robinson were in favour of immoral conduct. Their actions were meant as a political protest. This less than subtle jab at the Lieutenant Governor did not go unnoticed. Dinwiddie asked the Commissary to restore order within the ranks of the clergy. But Dawson, having no powers of compulsion, failed to control the dissidents. If this case alienated Dawson from his College brethren it also generated a great deal of animosity toward them on the Governor's part. Dinwiddie and his colleagues on the College's Board of Visitors took the unprecedented and, as it turned out, illegal step of firing the activist professors.

Heated debate between Dawson and his erstwhile subordinates continued through the second two Penny Act crisis. The Governor's actions in 1757 also showed that in
matters of politics he would both ignore the interests of the clergy and Dawson, whose office required the Governor's support in order to maintain even vestigial authority. Furious political competition and his own inability to act may well have contributed to Dawson's decline into alcoholism.

The 1758 Two-Penny Act controversy took place against a background of the political blood-letting over Brunskill. Predictably, the College faction asked the Commissary to call a convention of the clergy to fight the issue. Equally predictable, Dawson refused. This time, however, the Burgesses' actions excited a significant number of the parish clergy. Although the reasons for imposing the Act were more pressing the second time around, it seemed that the College clergy's prediction in 1755, that the Assembly was setting an invasive precedent, had come to pass. Camm and Robinson were again the leaders of the opposition with the Commissary caught in the bind Sherlock had placed him in. The dissidents convened the clergy without the Commissary's blessing. This time they succeeded, with thirty-five members turning out in August, 1758. This convention had the second largest attendance of any held in Virginia's colonial period.

The activists began their appeal along the Church's traditional routes for redress of grievance. In addition to local action, the 1758 convention forwarded a petition requesting diocesan intervention. Virginia clergymen making
requests of London’s Bishop was not a new activity. During Blair’s tenure individual clergymen appealed to ecclesiastical authority arguing positions at odds with those of the Commissary. Collective action was also not new. Blair had played a major role in the dismissal of Governor Nicholson in the early 1700s. This action had elicited unfavourable responses from both individuals and groups of clergymen. In addition, the first Commissary’s attempt to establish ecclesiastical courts met with a campaign of silent opposition. What had changed was the target of clerical activities. While Dinwiddie was criticized for over-stepping his authority in approving an Act passed in contravention of the 1748 Act, he was not the principal target of clergy animosity. Similarly, the Commissary was ignored more than attacked.

The Governor was taken to task in so far as he refused to support clergy action when that action was in the right in constitutional terms. But the pamphlet and newspaper campaigns on the local level and the wording of appeals to England reveal the primary protagonists to be the College faculty and members of the Assembly. The gentry side was led by Colonels Richard Bland and Landon Carter. The major author for the dissident clergy was John Camm. It is interesting to note that Colonel Carter had publicly vowed, in 1744, to humble the clergy. There is nothing in his diary or other writings to show that his opinion had changed.
Carter and Bland were dedicated adherents of the Anglican Church. While they supported Anglican theology they attacked the Church's material forms. In short, the clerical political presence was found to be objectionable. This is demonstrable through Carter and Bland's contention that various members of the clergy were overly concerned with the material benefits accruing to their offices, rather than with their spiritual duty. Excessive material concern had both furthered the dissenter cause by lowering the clergy's popularity and placed the ministry in the political arena where they had no right or need to be.

In an era which took pride in elaborate, decorative rhetoric and had the luxury of lax libel laws, printed arguments must be treated carefully. Vitriol aside, the core of the lay arguments against the clergy and in favour of the Two Penny Acts is derived from two related ideas: first, the Assembly had to deal with an emergency -- there was no time to seek authority for their actions from England. Second, the bill was not aimed specifically at the clergy. It was intended to affect all debts payable in tobacco. The simple fact that the clergy formed the only local opposition to the Act was proof enough of their less than honourable conduct and over-concern with worldly goods.

What the colonels failed to notice was that the clergy formed the only organized force outside colonial governing institutions. None of the other affected elements of colonial society had an institutional forum for their
opinions. Whether other local interests opposed the Assembly's actions is not known. But published letters can be traced to authors within the ranks of the clergy and colonial elite.

It has been stated that clerical appeals to authority in England angered the colonial Governor and citizenry. This was certainly the case. At the convention's behest John Camm sailed to England to present the case before Bishop Sherlock in order to enlist his influence with the Lords of Trade and Plantations. The colonial government responded by having its resident agent, James Abercrombie, defend them. Sherlock did intervene, not by disciplining clergymen who had undermined Church government, but by wholehearted endorsement of their views. Clearly, the province's diocesan did not share the Lieutenant Governor's opinion that the teachers' actions were something akin to mutiny. The clergy's petition along with Sherlock's letter of support was forwarded to the Lords. A few days later, on 10 July 1759, London merchants also presented a petition complaining about the Two Penny Act. It seems that the Burgesses' emergency measure also managed to absolve them of a significant amount of debt.

The standard conception that lofty principles were being fought for by the Burgesses and that the dissident clergy had somewhat baser motives has more than a grain of truth. But the picture is out of balance. The clergy also had higher motives, which became clearer in the court cases that resulted from the Two Penny Act's disallowance in the summer
of 1759. Similarly the Assembly's motives in passing the Act and in fighting in the courts had a considerable financial motivation. The Two Penny Act controversy accelerated in the 1760s. Indeed the Parsons' Cause, or case, does not officially begin until members of the clergy launched law suits for back pay following the Act's disallowance. These disputes occurred simultaneously with the fight over control of the College.

Between 1752 and 1760 the balance of power existing between the Church and secular authorities was altered. Sherlock's intentional weakening of the Church's hierarchy, the aggressive clergy faction at William and Mary, and the centralizing trend in the Assembly introduced instability into relationships built up over the preceding seventy-five years. The French and Indian war and the expansion of the religious revival also created a division of interest in Williamsburg. Wartime exigency and potential crop failures allowed further centralization in the hands of the Assembly. Clerical response was at first fragmented. Out of the disorder created by a powerless Commissary, the College faction and their allies emerged as the leaders in defence of Church autonomy. The Parsons' Cause and the fight for control of the College pitted the House of Burgesses against this organizing element among the clergy.
NOTES

CHAPTER TWO


Among Stith's most useful assets were strong family ties with the Randophs.

Morton, Colonial Virginia, 2:633.

Ibid., p. 626.


Ibid.


Thomas Dawson to Bishop Sherlock, 9 July 1757, Fulham Papers; William Robinson to Bishop Terrick, 1765, ibid.

Francis Fauquier to Sherlock, 29 July 1761, Fulham Papers; William Robinson to Sherlock, [1761?], ibid.


15 Perry, Historical Collections, 1:434; Dawson to Sherlock, 9 July 1757, Fulham Papers.


17 John Camm et al. to Sherlock, 29 November 1755, Fulham Papers, p. 11; Dawson to Sherlock, 9 July 1757, ibid.; p. 3.

18 Robinson to Sherlock, [1761], ibid.

19 Maury to White, 10 July 1764, "Letterbook".

20 Maury to John Blair, 23 July 1768, "Letterbook".

21 Camm et. al. to Sherlock, 29 November 1755, Fulham Papers.

22 Dawson to Sherlock, 23 July 1753, ibid; and [1754].


25 Ibid., p. 127.

26 Morton, Colonial Virginia, 2:762.

27 Perry, Historical Collections, Dawson to Sherlock, 10 June 1755, 2:432.

28 Dawson to Sherlock, 23 July 1753, Fulham Papers.
2. Ibid.

3. Perry, *Historical Collections*, Dawson to Sherlock, 10 June 1755, 2:433.


5. Robinson letter, 12 November 1760, Fulham papers, pp. 11-12.


8. Robinson to Terrick, 12 August 1765, Fulham Papers.

9. Camm et al., to Sherlock, 29 November 1755, ibid.


11. Robinson to Terrick, 1765, Fulham Papers.


14. Camm et al., 29 November 1755, Fulham Papers.

15. Ibid.


17. Camm et al. to Sherlock, 29 November 1755, Fulham Papers.

18. Ibid.


22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

Dawson to Sherlock, 9 July 1757, Fulham Papers.

ibid.

Morton, Colonial Virginia, 2:764.


ibid., p. 42.

Morton, Colonial Virginia, 2:765.

Perry, Historical Collections, Dinwiddie to Sherlock, 1:455.

Dawson to Sherlock, 9 July 1757, Fulham Papers.


Morton, Colonial Virginia, 2:803.

Dawson's 1754 convention had the largest attendance in Virginia's colonial history.

Austin, "The Role of the Anglican Church," pp. 76-77, 92-93.

ibid., pp. 92-93; Gage, "The Established Church," pp. 51-52.

Austin, ibid., pp. 76-77; Gage, ibid., pp. 46-47.

Robinson to Sherlock, 12 August 1765, Fulham Papers, and 16 July 1767; Perry, Historical Collections. Dawson to Sherlock, 25 February 1758, 1:448; ibid., Robinson to Terrick, 1763, 1:474.

Robinson to Terrick, 12 August 1765, Fulham Papers; Camm to Terrick, 8 September 1768, ibid.; Perry, ed., Historical Collections, Robinson to Terrick, 1763, 1:474; ibid., Sherlock to the Board of Trade, 14 June 1759, 1:463.

account of Carter's actions and attitudes in the Kay case
see: Morton, Colonial Virginia, 2:760.

"Greene, ed., The Diary of Colonel Landon Carter
46-47.

"Greene, ibid.; Isaac, Transformation, p. 146.

Robinson to Terrick, (1761), Fulham Papers. The
date for this document is provided in Isaac, Trans-
formation.

SHERLOCK TO THE LORDS OF TRADE, 4 JUNE 1759,
Fulham Papers.

Merchants of London to the Lords of Trade, 17 July
1759, Fulham Papers.
CHAPTER III

THE ACTIVIST DEFENCE

The Parsons' Cause and the fight for control of the College in the 1760s completed the secular drive for local authority over the Church. The actions of the Lieutenant Governor and those of the gentry, as expressed by the House of Burgesses, were aimed at the removal of the activist clergy and at gaining as much secular authority in Church matters as was possible within the modified episcopal structure. The dissident clergy defended themselves through the channels developed in the preceding twenty years. Local court actions and appeals to Bishops Hayter, Osbaldeston and Terrick, Sherlock's successors, were the main methods used by the dissidents. In addition to attempts to obtain new precedents in support of their position, the activist clerics opted for a status quo solution based on restoring the Commissary's office to the position that they thought it had before Thomas Dawson's appointment.
The dispute which broke out over the Two Penny Acts was simply another action in a series which can be traced back to the Kay case and the Clergy Act of 1748. In broader terms, it was an extension of the arguments which led to the creation of the office of Commissary in 1689. During the 1740s the local elite began to alter the terms of establishment. On the surface the changes were to the clergy's benefit. Pay provisions certainly made benefices more secure, although they did little to add to the material well being of the ministry. The clause giving the clergy legal rights to a benefice immediately on acceptance into a parish, can also be seen as a step forward in clergy security. This section, however, also enhanced lay power in Church government by making clerical property rights dependent on the legislature rather than on induction.

Although the colony's political authorities had always had a role in Church government, their actions reversed a trend toward the appearance of increased Church autonomy that began with Bishop Compton's initiatives. In a similar vein, the 1748 Act's extension of vestry control over advowson to twelve months shows an increasingly centralized control over the Church. Vestries had jealously guarded their six month monopoly over advowson. This power acquiesced to by the Church was eventually confirmed by James Blair and a succession of Lieutenant Governors. Thus the extension of vestry control over advowson demonstrates that the Assembly
changed the source of that power from a tradition originating within the Church to its own political fiat.

The Burgesses' perception of their role became clear over the Two Penny Acts. It is highly unlikely that the Assembly originally intended the Acts as a body blow to clergy security. It is equally unlikely that gentry debt obligations to London merchants formed the major motivation for Burgess control of tobacco exchange. They saw crises looming and acted accordingly. In the case of the second Two Penny Act, the Burgesses' actions, although outside their specific legal power, were probably essential to the colony's well-being. The dissident clergy acted in what they saw as the best interests of the Church. In the past there had been little contradiction in what had been good for the Church and State. The combination of wartime exigency and the dissenter threat, however, created a division of interest.

The clergy saw the principal threat in terms of encroachments on the Church. The government, which had supported the Church in its competition with the revivalists, changed its focus in order to fight the French and Indian war. Burgess and Council actions over Samuel Davies and his Hanover County Presbyterians show a willingness to use legal controls in favour of the Church. The clergy also supported the war against the papist French and their heathen allies. But they were unwilling to suspend action against the internal threat during the external emergency.
Clergy recalcitrance escalated as they saw secular authorities encroaching on the Church's operation and its ability to deal with the religious threat. Clerical opposition, much as the 1748 Act, attempted to strengthen while in fact changing traditional forms. The activists tried to use the normal channels of petitioning the Governor and the Bishop of London. When Dinwiddie and Dawson failed to support them, Camm and his allies entered into direct conflict with the Governor, Council, and Burgesses.

Conflict over the Two Penny Acts quickly extended beyond the confines of the colony. Successful appeal to London showed that the clergy had a better understanding of the political balance within the first estate than had the colonial authorities. Their success, however, created further problems at home. Secular authority, exercised through the Governor and gentry, began a campaign to beat the Church into line. This campaign followed two paths: first, an effort to defeat the clergy over the Royal disallowance of the Two Penny Act in Virginia courts and, second, an attempt to establish direct control over the College of William and Mary.

After completing his Two Penny Act business in London, Camm stayed on a further six months. During this time he carried despatches for delivery to Francis Fauquier. The Governor found out about both the delay and his instructions secondhand, and assumed that Camm had read the King's
instructions and spitefully passed on their contents to the dissidents in Virginia.*

Upon his eventual return, Camm spent time visiting with Thomas, Warrington, whose parish lay adjacent to the professor's port of debarkation. In a letter to his Bishop Camm excused his not waiting on the Governor immediately by claiming ill health. According to the parson, he used the time with Warrington to recover from a case of gout contracted during the trip. There is little reason to doubt Camm's explanation, although why the divine did not send a messenger informing Fauquier of his return is open to question.

Fauquier, who discovered the parson's arrival secondhand, believed Camm's failure to report in a timely fashion added insult to injury.* When Camm eventually arrived Fauquier ordered him to leave the Governor's palace, instructing his servants not to allow Camm onto the property in future.* Fauquier's tantrum, although largely spontaneous, had a calculated aspect. The attempted humiliation of Camm showed the cleric and his companion, William Robinson, that the Governor blamed Camm directly for the trouble over the Two Penny Act and the royal reprimand, which Camm delivered.**

Throughout his term, the Governor reduced the trouble with the activist clergy to a personal level. In his view, John Camm was responsible for clerical dissidence. Trouble would persist, therefore, as long as Camm was permitted to
continue his activities. In a letter to Reverend Dr. Nicholls, the Bishop of London's secretary, after the appointment of William Robinson as Commissary, he complained of the alliance between the Commissary and Camm. He requested diocesan intercession to separate the pair:

...excuse me to the Bishop for giving this honest and well meant piece of advice (viz) that his Lordship would be kind enough to direct his Commissary to break off Connections with Mr. Camm who now winds him about his finger just as he pleases, for Mr. Camm is a man of such a Head, but such a Heart, that it is utterly impossible to continue long on Terms of Amity with him or any one influenced by or connected with him whenever he is disposed to work mischief.11

The Bishop's response to this appeal is not known, but Camm and Robinson continued to collaborate. In his next letter to the Bishop, Camm expressed concern that a local attempt would be made to obtain a new Commissary. He also pleaded for diocesan intervention: "I therefore most humbly beg of your Lordship to ward off the Blow, immediately aim'd at Mr. Robinson, but intended to affect the whole Clergy here in a very sensible manner."12 Camm was concerned with the precedent that would be set if secular pressure to replace the Commissary was successful. In any event Robinson was continued as Commissary although, like Thomas Dawson, he was not given a commission. Local animosity also prevented him from becoming either College president or a member of Council.13

Through the Assembly the elite also chose to thwart the clergy over the King's disallowance. The Governor and
Burgesses took the position that the King had made the Two Penny Act illegal after the fact. Based on the secular interpretation the law could not be reenacted, but parties affected during the original ten month tenure were not entitled to compensation. Several of the clergy launched suit for back pay before and after the local government's decision. While he was still in England Camm instructed his solicitor to sue the vestry of York Hampton parish. The Assembly responded with an action that was seen as an attempt to exercise direct control over Churchmen. The Burgesses passed a motion subsidizing the legal costs incurred by parishes in litigation with their ministers.

The activists responded by complaining that the clergy had been singled out for revenge. In letters to the Bishop and each other the dissidents create an image of colonial society that is less than flattering. The principal complaint was that justice was no longer possible within the colony. The choice facing the clergy required them either to accept complete secular domination of the Church or to carry the fight back to England. They saw lay intervention as arbitrary applications of power. Assembly financial support and the Lieutenant Governor's specific endorsement of the Burgesses' position weighted justice against the clergy. The most famous of the Parsons' Causes, that of James Maury, gives an indication of the secular attitude toward the Church in general and members of the ministry in particular.
James Maury, minister of Fredericksville parish, Louisa County, brought suit to the Hanover County court in the spring of 1763. By Maury's account the judge was well disposed but the jury consisted of the "meanest sort", including at least two dissenters. This case is also noteworthy for introducing the young lawyer, Patrick Henry, who acted for the defence. The trial was something of a family affair for the Henrys. Patrick's father, Colonel John Henry, served as judge and his uncle, who was later to bring suit in the same county, came to the hearing. Henry's closing argument was by all accounts both popular and a source of irritation for the activists. According to Maury Henry admitted, after the hearing, that his course of action had been based on a desire to achieve personal fame as a platform for a political career. Despite the Governor's continuing support for the Act, the case was decided in favour of Maury, but the real victory went to the defendants, for the jury awarded the victorious parson only one penny in damages.

This case is of interest for a number of reasons, not the least of which is it shows the struggle between the gentry and the clergy did not occur between monolithic blocks. The judge, who decided in favour of Maury, was a member of the gentry. By the same token, the descriptions of the jury probably exclude them from the ranks of the elite. Most secular actions against the clergy resulted in
close votes. Even John Camm's suit, heard in the General Court some months after Maury's, resulted in only a five to four decision against the parson. Despite pamphlets written in the adversarial form and Governor Fauquier's statements there were significant numbers of uncommitted among both gentry and clergy.

The existence of the uncommitted does not excuse the excesses of both sides. But it does explain why the protagonists indulged in campaigns marked by exaggeration and personal slur. The clergy activists are usually shown as a minority Tory clique operating against a secular Whig majority. The evidence for this is provided by the sides eventually chosen during the Revolution by prominent members of each camp and their periodic expressions of loyalty. Those eventual decisions, however, were based on events that had either not yet taken place, or existed only in embryonic form. The continued antagonism of some clergymen and some of the gentry did contribute to a hardening of attitudes during the political crises ushered in by the Stamp Act. They also initiated a constitutional crisis on their own. But the basic motivation of the dissident clergy was to obtain support, from whatever quarter, in defence of the Church and themselves.

Growing Assembly power makes its members' specific motivation less open to question. The gentry's emergence as the eventual winners in the struggle, however, does tend to colour earlier actions. Clerical opposition and successful
appeal to London placed the Burgesses on the defensive in an arena in which they had no representation. The colonial agent, James Abercrombie, was responsible to the Governor-in-Council, not the Assembly. The Burgesses responded by enacting legislation that appointed a London agent responsible to a committee of correspondence consisting of members of the Council and a majority from the lower House. Clerical opposition brought a natural reaction and escalation on the part of those whose loyalty and motives had been impugned. Thus, the "Whig" Burgesses and the "Tory" Governor could make common cause against the "Tory" clergy dissidents.

Bound up within the conflict of ideologies and personalities lay the original division of interest: secular authority's interpretation of the overall good of the colony and dissident concern with the stability and continuance of the established Church. This dispute continued almost without regard for the larger issues it both initiated and fueled. The most extreme members of the secular faction maintained their loyalty to the Church of England, although the same sentiment was not directed at all of its ministers. Some members of the activist clergy also maintained a manifest attachment to the colony, but not necessarily to its legislators or public opinion.

The fight for control of the College began in the Spring of 1757. The Governor and gentry through their influence on the Board of Visitors and Governors removed the professors
who were deemed to be activist ringleaders. Thomas Robinson was deprived in what was an unprecedented action. John Camm, Richard Graham, Emmanuel Jones and William Preston were dismissed in November. Preston returned to England and took no further part in colonial events. Governor Fauquier began referring to the remaining four as the "late professors". They, of course, did not see it that way. The dismissed clerics refused to vacate the College and opposed the firings on the grounds that neither the Visitors nor the President had the power to remove tenured faculty. The initial round was stalemated until President Dawson and the other Visitors changed the locks on the professor's apartments. After this action, the teachers vacated.

Thomas Robinson's dismissal became the test case of the Visitors' power to dismiss faculty. In letters to Sherlock the Visitors outlined their reasons for removing the grammar school master. Significantly, neither the clergy nor the Visitors brought up either the Two Penny Act controversy or the Brunskill case as reasons for the firings. Robinson was accused of not doing his job owing to a combination of illness and parochial commitment outside the College. He countered the argument by asserting that in fifteen years as a William and Mary teacher he had not taken outside employment. Preaching had been an occasional activity involving day trips to substitute for friends. He did substantiate the illness allegation. But Robinson stated
that his incapacity was short-lived and his absence had been covered by other members of the faculty.  

The Visitors' actions, Robinson argued, had another source. Some time before his firing Robinson had disciplined his student usher, James Hubard. The substance of Hubard's actual infraction has not survived, but it is clear Robinson thought Hubard's family connections orchestrated revenge against him through the Visitors. His statement to the Bishop was countersigned by the other fired professors, as being a "true State of the Case."

Robinson was called before a meeting of the Visitors in order to explain himself. William Robinson, sitting as one of the four designated clerical Visitors, noted that: "The Committee asserted by their Chairman, that the meeting of the Visitors had not been call'd on the Usher's account: tho the Usher was permitted to be present to confront the Masters." He further stated that Thomas Robinson was closely questioned concerning the usher's disciplining.

After questioning, Thomas Robinson was dismissed from the faculty, on May 20, with six months notice.

During that summer the professors overcame Dawson's objection and dismissed Hubard. The remaining faculty were called to give testimony on this issue in November. Camm and the others objected that the Visitation had no right to intervene in the ordinary discipline of the College. Such intervention, they maintained, was in violation of the transfer of power from the trustees to the Visitors,
President and Masters. At the conclusion of the interview the remainder of the faculty, Camm, Graham, Jones and Preston, were also dismissed effective December 14.

On that day Emmanuel Jones was again called in front of the Visitors. Jones was asked whether he acknowledged the Visitation’s right to enquire into the running of the College. He replied that they did have such power. The Visitors subsequently reinstated the Indian school master. The others, according to William Robinson, "...asserted, that if they had been call’d and questioned in the same manner they would have made the same Answer." None of the exprofessors questioned the right of the Visitors to monitor their activities. Intervention was the issue.

Also on December 14, Robinson presented the Visitors with a statement written by the faculty members. The other Visitors voted not to have the statement read out, but suggested that the professors, who were also meeting at the College, could always walk down the hall to present their views. When Robinson gave this information to the deprived professors, they decided that the suggestion was a trap:

When I told this afterwards to the Masters; they said they were not sorry that they had not gone before the Visitors; because for them to have bolted into the room where the Visitors were met in Council, with the Door shut, without any Summons or so much as any Notice from the Visitors of their meeting, a thing which had never been done, would have been a real transgression.

Two of the three replacements recruited for the College were clergymen. For various reasons all three proved
unacceptable to the Visitors. Goronwy Owen and Jacob Rowe were found unacceptable primarily because of alcoholic excesses. William Small was unpopular for his activities outside William and Mary.

Rowe compounded his problems when, during a bout of public drinking, he made derisory remarks about the Visitors and President. When called to account, the new Moral Philosophy Master apologized. This apology was apparently accepted because Rowe returned to work. Six months later he was again called in front of the Board. His crimes this time included leading the students in a pitched battle with Williamsburg apprentices, repeatedly defaming the President and neglecting his duties. The teacher admitted guilt to all charges except that of verbally abusing Dawson who, he said, had deserved the derision. Rowe soon followed his predecessors into unemployment.

Fauqieur disposed of Owen in such a manner that he angered the local gentry. During the conflict with the new professors St. Andrew's parish, Brunswick County, became available. The Governor recommended Owen and another minister on a trial basis. After a six month trial period had lapsed, the vestry announced that neither minister was suitable and petitioned for one of their own choosing. Fauqieur ignored the request until the vestry's one year control over advowson had lapsed. He then appointed Owen, against the will of the parishioners. The furor over this
action apparently died down quickly as there is little mention of it in the surviving record.

William Small proved to be a better find. Beginning in 1760 this professor covered most College teaching duties. Small has been characterized as a gifted and inspiring teacher. But the Visitors soon took exception to his outside activities. Small was a physician and began to practice his trade in off hours. This practice went against the Visitor's ideas concerning what College teachers were to do with their time. Small compounded the problem by obtaining leave from the College to attend to personal business in England and make equipment purchases for the College. Once in England he abandoned his professorship and wrote to the Visitors requesting the commission promised him for the College purchases. The Visitors objected because of his desertion and sent a letter to Bishop Terrick asking him to spread word of Small's infamy.

John Camm considered Visitor attempts to control the College to be the same type of secular encroachment as that which he saw underlying the Two Penny Acts. In that instance, the activists saw the Two Penny Act as directly influencing the future operation of the Church by undermining its ability to attract high quality clergymen to Virginia. The dispute over the College followed the same form. After the firings and during the subsequent debate over governing statutes the clergy-teachers argued that changes prevented them from doing their jobs, and that changed working
conditions made it impossible to attract the highest quality replacements to continue their work.  

The Visitors went further in trying to reduce clerical influence in running the College. This attempt has been shown as an example of anticlericalism. It is possible, however, that the Visitors were trying to rid themselves of the potential for a politically noisome concentration of clergymen in Williamsburg. The Visitors tried to eliminate the clergy nexus by replacing the professors with secular teachers. Thomas Robinson suggested a reason for this in a letter outlining his own position: "Now as the Case stands, I cannot conceive, what makes 'em so very desirous of having a Lay-man; except it be, that they may have him more under their Thumbs...."

After Commissary Dawson's death the Visitors nominated a layman to occupy his chair on the Board. This action reduced clergy representation from four to three out of twenty. The Church's hold was further weakened when William Robinson, Sherlock's choice for Commissary, was not elected president. William Yates, another clergyman, was put up in his stead. Yates was thereby denied the Visitation seat which the College charter allowed the President. The Visitors' drive for control accelerated with the 1764 introduction of a statute modifying the way in which the College operated. Before this occurred, the Privy Council intervened in 1763 forcing the reappointment of the fired professors. Of the original five, only Camm and Graham were left. Jones had
been reinstated in 1757, Robinson had died, and Preston went to England. The return of Camm and Graham constituted a victory for the clergy. Although nothing could force the local elite to send their sons to William and Mary, the Church’s shaky hold on the College had been restored. And despite secular complaints there does not appear to have been a radical decline in enrollment.  

The Visitors’ new statute gave them the right to intervene in every aspect of the College’s operation. They removed the teachers’ right to administer College revenues and scholarships and demanded more conscientious attention to student discipline. At the same time the Visitors removed the faculty’s ability to apply discipline. The new provisions made the Visitation the final arbiter of disputes between the faculty and students. Members of the faculty drew, for the Bishop, a ridiculous picture of a mock court in which a teacher was to be forced to defend his actions against a scion of the local gentry in front of a board made up of members of the same class.

The professors found one clause of the 1764 statute most distressing. It denied the teaching staff the right to seek any outside employment. According to the Visitors the employment clause was intended to prevent professors ignoring their duty in favour of outside activities:

The undertaking [of] lucrative Employments out of the College, unless we could so happy as always to have Gentlemen for Professors who are actuated by the most conscientious Principles, would generally be attended with the Temptation of neglecting that Department
which had a fixed Salary attended to it, and postponing their Duties of this, to the other.... Indeed, my Lord, some of us at least, have our Doubts, whether the ill Success of our College has not been in some Measure owing to our having fixed Salaries at all.**

The chief source of employment for a minister was Sunday preaching. The Visitors identified weekend as the usual time for student infractions of discipline.** It is reasonable to accept the Visitor contention that this section was intended to keep clergymen on campus on the weekends. There was, however, another and possibly more pressing motive underlying Visitor actions.

Thomas Robinson provided reasons why the Visitors preferred secular instructors to clergymen. He highlighted the relative ease of controlling a layman's activities. A lay professor would have little or no recourse to other employment within the colony should he be dismissed from the College. A clergymen might "find refuge in a parish".** The Visitors may have been trying to close off this option to gain a greater degree of control over clerical instructors.

After passing the 1764 statute, the Visitors tried to enforce the changed employment conditions. They required Camm to choose between his York-Hampton parish and his College professorship. Camm refused, stating that neither employment disrupted the other. The Visitors backed down.*** But the fact that Camm was singled out suggests selective enforcement as a possible tool for Visitor control of more outspoken faculty members.
William Robinson maintained that Camm's effective defense and Bishop Terrick's timely intervention forced the Visitors to revise the offending statute. In 1765 they introduced a modified version which toned down the language but kept the substance of the 1764 statute. For example, the 1764 statute forbade professors from seeking outside employment. The 1765 version substituted the Visitation's right to approve outside employment. In addition, manipulation of faculty salaries suggests a constancy of aim in attempts to control the College.

William Robinson provides some idea of the relative value of the professorships by stating that the Visitors would be unsuccessful in their quest for secular instructors because the stipends were both too small and potentially unreliable:

How your Lordship or any other Person ... can be expected to persuade Laymen of Learning and Character to come hither for a hundred sterling a year, which will not go farther here than half the Sum in England; especially when they are to hold this mighty Provision at the Will and Pleasure of twenty Gentlemen, who may dispossess them ... is beyond my Comprehension.

In a 1768 report to Terrick, Camm showed how the Visitors interfered with the curriculum through faculty salaries. After his reappointment, he was asked to fill both chairs in the divinity school. This he did and was duly paid the stipends for both positions. But the amount of the stipends varied between schools. Each of the other faculty members and some of their ushers were paid above the level
set out in the College statutes. The divinity chairs, however, were rated considerably below scale. Camm eventually gave up hope of recovering the back salary owing him from his period of deprivation. But he did petition the Bishop to have the salaries raised to the minimum required by the statutes. He also requested that the diocesan pressure the Visitors into filling the second divinity chair. 

Visitor replacement of the dissident professors had ominous overtones for the Church. Had the attempt to hire secular teachers succeeded the Church's presence would have been severely weakened. Commissary Blair had intended William and Mary to train local candidates for the ministry. This mandate produced a small but important body of Virginia-trained clergymen. The 1757 firings coincided with a curriculum reorientation away from the religious emphasis. Until Camm's forced reappointment in 1763 the College had no Master of Divinity, thus drying up the College as a source of clergymen. Although weakening the Church was never the stated object of the Visitors, the Camm faction and Bishop Terrick recognized that this was a natural consequence.

In 1765 Privy Council crushed clergy hopes for victory over the Parsons' Cause. Following the example set by Colonel Carter, John Camm chose to appeal the decision in his case in England. Also, like Carter, Camm's suit was in violation of Virginia custom because the amount sought was less than £300. The Governor approved the petition for two
reasons: first, the suit would serve as test case for the entire clergy. Thus the overall value of the claim was considerably in excess of £300. Second, failure to approve the appeal would result in a renewed round of local conflict over an issue that the secular authorities preferred to leave dead.

Privy Council recognized the growing tension between England and the colonies over the Stamp Act. In order to avoid further animosity they chose not to render a decision in Camm's case. Council dismissed the suit on the grounds that it was "improperly drawn." That there were other implications in the dismissal is beyond question. Camm failed to resubmit the suit -- such nonaction was completely opposite to the cleric's performance over the preceding ten years. In addition, William Robinson wrote that Council's actions amounted to the abandonment of the colonial Church. His fears turned out to be reasonable. The dissident clergy never again succeeded in obtaining redress from London. After 1765 the activist route of appeal changed from a primarily trans-Atlantic orientation to an intercoloniai one, although appeals to London continued.

Correspondence with the Bishop, which had previously been optimistic, reflects resignation to domination by local political authority. The Commissary remained powerless and the other offices, those of Councilman and College president, seemed permanently beyond the reach of any clergyman who failed to support prevailing political trends.
dissenter threat also exploded in 1765. In the early 1760s the revivalist and traditional wings of the Presbyterians reconciled. After the reunion the Presbyterian threat to the establishment began to recede. Despite political weakness this was, of course, good news for the ministry. Although traditional Presbyterian methods were not entirely in line with those of the established Church their attitudes toward religion in general and a learned ministry were similar.

Unfortunately, for the Virginia Church of England and the pacified Presbyterians, the standard of nonconformist fervor was picked up by a break-away group of Baptists. The New Side Baptists were if anything more aggressive than their Presbyterian predecessors. These individuals spent the rest of the pre-Revolutionary period threatening the establishment's position in more remote parishes.

Both the Parsons' Cause and the battle for control of the College were part of a longer term trend. While the dissident clergy must accept much of the blame for their own undoing, it is unreasonable to place the whole of it upon them. They acted, and continued to act after 1765, in what they saw as the best interests of the Church. The decline in dissident hopes did not, however, occur entirely as a result of political action by the colonial elite. The death knell was delivered by authority in England. Because of a perceived inability to obtain justice in Virginia, the activists measured their aspirations and successes against
support they received from Britain. As long as that support was sufficient to check the excesses of local lay authority the activists deemed themselves to be successful. \(^6\) When that support visibly evaporated Camm and his allies were lost. Much of the trouble in the preceding ten years had been triggered by Sherlock's decision not to grant commissaries commissions. Appropriately, repudiation of Camm's appeal in London resulted in the activist clergy's decline.

It is not difficult to understand why the activists resisted secular intervention. The idea of episcopal establishment presupposes clear delineation of both authority and responsibility. No such delineation existed in colonial Virginia. \(^6\) The actions taken by clerical dissidents and their opponents were attempts to define authority and spheres of influence. To the clergy their own actions were defensive in the face of an increasingly aggressive gentry. Changes promoted by the clergy were intended to strengthen their vision of episcopal establishment.

In trying to achieve their institutional objectives the clergy used the tools available. Autonomy, the scramble for supporting precedents, constitutional arguments arising from the Two Penny Acts, the fight for control of the College, and occasional misrepresentations of Virginia's history and traditions all served as ammunition in the fight for Church autonomy. \(^6\) The imperative for struggle was provided by revivalist encroachment in what had been largely a Church of
England preserve. Continuation and escalation were bound intimately to the growing assertiveness of local secular authority and that authority's reaction to clerical political opposition.

The crises confronting the Church, from both the dissenters and parts of the local gentry, grew and, in at least one cleric's opinion, merged into a single multifaceted plot to undermine the Church. Privy Council's dismissal of Camm's case appeared to many of the activists to cut off that route of appeal. For them, if justice was not available in the colony and redress could not be obtained in England, the choices were reduced to accepting subordination to secular power or agitating for the creation of an American bishopric. A resident diocesan would restore matters of Church government to the Church.
NOTES

CHAPTER THREE


3 Morton, Colonial Virginia, 2:724-730.


5 Camm et al. to Sherlock, 30 November 1755, Fulham Papers; Dawson to Sherlock, February, 1756, Ibid.

6 William S. Perry, ed., Historical Collections Relating to the American Colonial Church 4 vols., (Hartford: by the editor, 1882) 1:464.

7 John Camm to Bishop Terrick, 6 June 1768, Fulham Papers.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Francis Fauquier to Reverend Dr. Nicholls, 29 July 1761, Fulham Papers.

12 Camm to the Bishop of London, 23 October 1761, Fulham Papers.


16Robinson to Terrick, 12 August 1765, Fulham Papers.

17James Maury to Reverend Mr. White, 10 July 1764, "Letterbook of James Maury," Virginia Historical Society copies of originals held by the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia. Robinson to Terrick, 12 August 1765, Fulham Papers; Camm to Terrick, 8 September 1768, ibid.

18Camm et al. to Sherlock, 30 November 1755, Fulham Papers.


20Ibid., 2:810.

21Ibid., 2:309-310.


24Perry, *Historical Collections*, 1:512.


26Ibid., 2:814.

27Ibid., 2:767.


29Ibid.

30Austin, "The Role of the Anglican Church," pp. 138-139.


33 Camm to Terrick, 8 September 1768, Fulham Papers; J. Maury, 31 December 1765, "Letterbook", and 2 February 1767, ibid.; Robinson to Terrick, 12 August 1765, Fulham Papers; 6 June 1766; on public opinion, Robinson to Terrick [1761], ibid.

34 Austin, "The Role of the Anglican Church" p. 134; Morton, Colonial Virginia, 2:773-776.

35 Robinson to Terrick, [1761], Fulham Papers; Morton, Colonial Virginia, 2:775.

36 Morton, ibid.

37 Thomas Robinson to Sherlock, 30 June 1757, Fulham Papers.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 William Robinson to Terrick, [1761], ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 Morton, Colonial Virginia, 2:774.

44 Robinson to Terrick, [1761], Fulham Papers, p. 19.

45 Morton, Colonial Virginia 2:775.

46 Robinson to Terrick, undated, Fulham Papers.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

49 Brydon, Virginia's Mother Church, 2:324; Morton, Colonial Virginia, 2:777-780.

50 Morton, ibid., 2:779.
"Visitors to Terrick, 15 July 1767, Fulham Papers.

5. "Visitors to Terrick, 15 July 1767, Fulham Papers.

5. Ibid., 2:780.

5. Ibid., 2:779-780.

5. Ibid., 2:781.

5. Visitors to Terrick, 15 July 1767, Fulham Papers.

5. Ibid.

5. Camm et al. to Terrick, 30 November 1755, ibid.; compare with: Robinson to Terrick, [1761], ibid.

5. Robinson to Terrick, 16 October 1767, ibid.


5. Thomas Robinson to Terrick, 30 June 1757, Fulham Papers.


5. "Clergy Suggestions to the Visitors", May 1768, Fulham Papers, requests a raise in tuition fees in order to lower enrollment.


5. Visitors to Terrick, 15 July 1767, ibid.

5. Ibid.

5. Thomas Robinson to Sherlock, 30 June 1757, ibid.

5. William Robinson to Terrick, 6 June 1766, ibid.

5. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

5. Robinson to Terrick, undated, ibid.

5. Camm to Terrick, 8 September 1768, ibid.


5. Terrick to [Robinson], 7 January 1766, Fulham Papers; Robinson to Terrick, 16 October 1767, ibid.; Horrocks to Terrick, 29 March 1767, ibid.

ibid., 2:819.

Robinson to Terrick, 16 October 1767, Fulham Papers.

Camm to Terrick, 23 October 1761, ibid.; Robinson to Terrick, 12 August 1765, ibid.


Orthodox Presbyterian ministers were required to subscribe to the articles of the Church of England.

Robinson to Terrick, 12 August 1765, Fulham Papers; and Robinson to Terrick, 16 October 1767, ibid.; Camm to Terrick, 23 October 1761, ibid.


Misrepresentation of Virginia history has been used by scholars as proof that the dissidents were out of touch with colonial reality.

Robinson to Terrick, 12 August 1765, Fulham Papers.
CHAPTER IV

BISHOPS AND ORDINARY BUSINESS

Resident bishops became a contentious topic in Virginia in the spring of 1771. However, debate on this issue was not new. Advocates for and against a local diocesan had been active at various times for most of Virginia's history. Bishop Compton's attempts to strengthen Virginia Church government occurred immediately after the failure of a plan to create a Virginia diocese. Blair's early initiatives leave little doubt that he intended to expand the power of episcopacy in Virginia. His attempts to strengthen institutional controls and superimpose a modified governing hierarchy on the clergy and, initially, the laity show his conception of what the Church should have been. Local opposition to Blair's reforms provides an indication of why the colonial citizenry, or at least the elite among them, chose to argue against a resident episcopate.

Opposition to Blair and episcopacy developed two major arguments which shared the same political root. First, a
local prelate would undermine vestry power. Second; among
the baggage associated with an old country bishopric, the
spectre of episcopal courts provided a particular focus for
lay opposition. The anti-bishops position, then, was based
on an understanding of the political role of the Church.
This line of argument remained constant, whenever a Church
government question arose, until after the Revolution.

The commissaries and clerical activists were concerned
with the forms of Church government. Although Thomas Dawson
and the coterie headed by Camm and Robinson disagreed over
tactics, they agreed that the Church's long-term viability
was dependent on obtaining as much autonomy as possible for
the institution. The main method used to obtain autonomy was
agitation against what appeared to be lay attempts to gain
more power in Church matters. Clergy activism was aimed at
strengthening the existing hierarchy. The promotion of
resident bishops did not re-emerge until that hierarchy, in
the activists' conception, had failed.

Lack of concern for the Church hierarchy among some of
the parish clergy was remarked by the first three
commissaries and John Camm. Thomas Dawson labelled this
aberration "presbyterianism." Dawson railed against the
high proportion of Scots in service in Virginia. His
argument was aimed specifically at Scotland as incubator of
the lay tendency in Presbyterian organization. Ethnic slurs
aside, Dawson's attitude shows, indirectly, that a
'significant element of the parochial ministry thought in
terms which differed from those of the Williamsburg-based clergy. Their opposition to any suggestion of a resident episcopate, along with that of the much maligned drunkards and other straying ministers could be expected. The chronic salary-clerical quality debate may well have been aimed at attracting more orthodox men to Virginia.

Many leading colonists and presumably some of the clergy saw Camm and his associates' actions as dangerous to colonial self-government. It is interesting to note that the only issue over which the dissidents could claim majority support from their brethren was the salary dispute over the second Two Penny Act. Over all other issues the activists occupied a minority position, and they knew it. The clearest expression of their understanding of their own position occurred over the bishops question. Following 1755, the faculty and their allies took over the defence of the Church and that they had done so was acknowledged by their superiors in London. But no surviving private correspondence, published letter, or pamphlet, prior to 1770, shows that the dissidents were prepared to promote the logical end result of their own activism. No mention is made of a resident episcopate.

In not calling for a bishop the faculty and their associates may have shown an astute understanding of local politics. Their actions followed the routes established by the Church's traditional governing mechanisms. While they took over the function of Church government representatives,
they agitated for a return to the *status quo* by repeatedly requesting a commission for the Commissary. The activists seemed quite prepared to accept the ramshackle method of Church government evolved in Virginia between 1689 and 1748 as providing an acceptable level of security for both Church and clergy. This approach remained constant until events in England closed off the extracolonial route of appeal.

The 1767 rejection of Camm's appeal to Privy Council brought home the realization that the activists could no longer expect direct support from England. Past support had not been particularly effective. But it was the gauge against which the activists measured their aspirations for the colonial Church. As early as June 1766 William Robinson reported to Bishop Terrick that "We are driven by hard necessity to look, in practice at least, upon the Governour and Assembly as our ultimate Rulers Legislatively and Judicially." He expanded his view in October 1767: "They [the clergy] begin to feel themselves reduced to that condition which they dread, that of finding no Protection in the Crown and being left to the Will and Pleasure of the Vestry in each Parish, instead of enjoying what they imagined to be an Establishment in this Church of England Colony."

The clergy dissidents did not share a common political position beyond immediate Church related issues. Their world views ranged between two archetypes. In 1765 William Robinson articulated an understanding of empire, which would have been gratifying to most imperialists:
I think it is very clear that the illTreatment, which has been given here to the
Clergy, the British Parliament and the,
King's Authority springs all from the same
Root, namely, from wrong notions respecting
both Property and Legal Authority, and from
a desire of some among us to reduce us under
an arbitrary Aristocratical Power of our own
with the name of Liberty, instead of that
happy Constitution of an inferior
Legislature, with the King at the head of it, a supreme Legislature consisting of the
King and the British Parliament, which we
have a right to enjoy.

James Maury took the position that the Assembly had
every right to resist arbitrary actions emanating from
England. And, with considerable irony, he complained to
John Blair that the characteristics of such resistance had
changed:

Loud were the clamours, which some bitter
spirits had spared no pains in public
Assemblies or private Conversations to raise
against us for what, it seems, has since
undergone so total an alteration in its very
Nature, as to have become meritorious &
laudable in so high a Degree, that it hath
intitled others to the pompous appellations
of Patriots and Sons of Liberty.

Dissident attitudes toward the Stamp Act may shed some
light on their concern with political issues larger than
Church involvement. Maury was one of the few dissidents to
take a concrete position on the Act, and that was
procolony. Robinson made a few direct references, but they
were used primarily as illustrations of both the type of
opposition the clergy were facing and a general trend in
Virginia politics. He also pointed out that prevailing
political problems militated against any betterment of the
position of the Church and clergy in the immediate future.
Camm's single direct reference is by way of explaining the status of his case's appeal in the General Court. His action had been delayed because in reaction to the Act the courts had been closed. Camm also identifies political turmoil as a limiting factor in activist attempts to gain justice.12

Unfortunately, for a study of clergy defences, neither Robinson nor Maury lived long enough to take positions on the revived bishops question in 1771. Activist endeavours were directed primarily by John Camm and Robinson's replacement as Commissary, William Horrocks. Carl Bridenbaugh notes that Camm may have been approached on this subject by Dr. Samuel Johnson of Connecticut as early as 1767.13 There is no reason to doubt this, but Camm took no action for at least three years. Indeed, direct evidence indicates that the Virginia clergy took no part in the debate at least before June, 1768.14 Public notice of Virginia Church involvement was first available in Purdie and Dixon's Gazette on May 9, 1771.15

The bishops question emerged in the northern and middle colonies. It was promoted by missionaries of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), headed by Thomas Bradbury Chandler of New Jersey and Dr. Samuel Johnson. Support for a diocesan came from a clergy in dramatically different circumstances than those of their Virginia brethren. The Anglican Church in the northern and middle colonies operated among a dissenter majority. A resident bishop would have enabled the Church to compete more
effectively with other denominations. A diocesan would have allowed for local ordination and expansion into areas in which the Church did not operate. This aggressive orientation had no complement in either Virginia or Maryland, where the Church of England was the dominant religious force. Although the revivalists had made telling inroads, it seems reasonable to assume that their clergymen would have different motives for establishing new bishoprics.

While the intent of clergymen north of Maryland was aggressive, their proposal for an episcopate was designed to raise the least opposition among dissenter inhabitants. The Johnson-Chandler plan called for a bishop with severely restricted powers. After the debate began, SPG officers issued a statement indicating that the society had always advocated a bishop without the secular authority associated with that office in England. The proposed American episcopate would have strictly defined powers. His authority would be further constrained by refusing him powers of compulsion over the lay population.

A bishop with limited power was clearly aimed at appeasing the hostility of a dissenting majority while fulfilling the minimum requirements for an episcopal church. The same platform was adopted by the Virginia bishops faction. This occurred despite the different nature of Virginia's polity. Local power and the press were in the hands of Church of England men. Nevertheless Camm and his allies expected opposition. Their own activism since 1755,
endemic anticlericalism, and a jealously hoarded local political monopoly ensured opposition. Divisions within the ranks of the clergy also made internal dissension probable.

In light of potential opposition, Horrocks tried to use the annual meeting of the Widows and Orphans Pension Fund to hide a general convention over the bishops issue. Clerical resistance to this deception forced Horrocks to advertise the real agenda. Purdie and Dixon's May 9, 1771 edition carried the announcement. Despite the question's importance and Horrocks' attempted duplicity only twelve clergymen showed up for the June 4 convention. Eight of whom supported an episcopate while four, including two new professors, Samuel Henley and Thomas Gwatkin, were opposed.

The June convention ordered a petition circulated through the colony in an effort to gain the support of a majority of the ministry. Failing majority endorsement, the request would not be forwarded to England. This process is in sharp contrast with earlier dissident actions. They had always attempted, and generally failed, to achieve a broad based clerical consensus. Failure had not, however, stopped them from pursuing issues that they deemed essential.

This change may be interpreted a number of different ways. In the traditional conception, the bishops faction, being out of touch with local reality, may have assumed that support would emerge. Horrocks' correspondence supports this image. He was shocked at the active opposition to episcopacy within an episcopal church. Camm, the veteran campaigner,
may have been less than sanguine about the outcome of the bishops question. His agitation in favour of the proposal was limited to literary jousting with Gwatkin, Henley and Colonel Bland.\textsuperscript{22} His hesitation in bringing forward the issue at all may have been, as Bridenbaugh implies, evidence of the subversive nature of the activist coterie.\textsuperscript{23} It seems likely, however, that Camm recognized, after repeated defeats, that the proposal had virtually no chance of success.

This interpretation is reinforced by Camm's lack of activity after the Church's nominal leader, James Horrocks, deserted the colony on 20 June 1771. Richard Bland asserted that Horrocks had gone to England in order to have himself promoted to an American diocese.\textsuperscript{24} His departure left Camm alone in the leadership of the pro-bishops camp. He did nothing to press the issue or change the resolution of the June convention. Despite heated newspaper debates the bishops controversy died out quickly. By the spring of 1772, the primary public religious issue was toleration.\textsuperscript{25}

The bishops question forms a special case in the overall pattern of activist defence. For the first time active opposition to Camm and allies emerged from within the ranks of the clergy. Gwatkin and Henley were widely acknowledged to have been theological liberals.\textsuperscript{26} While similar sentiments were well established in Virginia, it is interesting to note that opposition to bishops was led by these two new arrivals in residence at the College of William
and Mary. The Church's strongest institutional presence in the colony was undermined from within. The importance placed on Gwatkin and Henley's opposition lends credence to the idea that the College formed a focus for the Church in the colony. The dispute between Gwatkin, Henley, and Camm and Horrocks gave voice to a schism in the Church's polity.

The political arguments against a Virginia bishop were the most compelling. No matter how limited the powers of an episcopate, his presence would inevitably have removed at least some of the power over the Church then being exercised by the government. Bland contended that the idea of a bishop with restricted power was a fallacy. To him it was ludicrous to expect two types of bishop which differed philosophically and practically to exist within the same church. He felt, as did a large number of secular opponents, that office holders would inevitably exercise some of the lay authority granted to their counterparts in England:

> If this should be the case, our Civil as well as Religious Liberties will be destroyed. The spiritual Courts will usurp a Power to draw Civil Causes to their Tribunals under Pretence of their being spiritual Offences, and will be supported in this usurped Power by an arbitrary Ministry.

This consensus is borne out by the lack of opposition to the creation of Episcopal Church bishops after the revolution had severed political links with Britain.

Church conflicts were not confined to the bishops issue after 1768. Chronic Church problems continued. The activist position on prelates is perhaps best understood within the
context of continuing struggle with dissenters on the one hand and colonial political power on the other. During the summer of 1768 Rind's *Virginia Gazette* carried a series of exchanges between Reverend William Giberne and James Waddell, a Presbyterian divine. This dispute encapsulates the endemic conflict between the Church of England and revivalist Presbyterians. It occurred despite the unofficial truce in existence since the reunification of the Presbyterians.

Giberne accused Waddell of preaching in his parish without permission. Waddell responded by stating that various members of Giberne's parish had invited him to preach. The arguments which followed reflect an ideological division. Giberne based his statements on the legal power of the Church of England in England and a specific understanding of Church government in Virginia. Waddell responded with statements on religious toleration, parishioners' rights, and an appeal of his own to English precedent.

Giberne's principal argument did not rest on whether or not Waddell was invited to preach, but on who had done the inviting:

> ...was you really discharging the duties of a Presbyterian minister when you stole into my pulpit: Or can the laws protect you in so audacious a proceeding? Who did you receive your invitation from? Was there any Justice of the Peace, or Vestryman, or Church Warden present, or even a principal inHabitant?... What have you to do with churches without the lawful appointment?!

He stated that episcopal courts in England would have disciplined Waddell for his transgression. In the same
sentence he underlined the differences in control methods in England and those in the colony. Giberne moves from the specifics of a spiritual court to a more vague "power" in Virginia "to restrain such abuses [as] forfeit the indulgences of toleration." The Anglican incumbent maintained that "I shall leave it to my [the?] vestry, and the conservators of our established church, to provide against any of your future attempts in that place."

Waddell defended his actions by claiming that borrowing another's pulpit did not constitute a usurpation. This was especially so because the Presbyterian minister had been invited and was sworn to uphold established Church tenets:

Your great inquiry now is, "if I was discharging the duties of a Presbyterian Minister when I preached in your pulpit?" I answer, yes, Sir, as a Presbyterian Minister I am as much obliged by principle, and the requisition of the law, to explain and enforce the doctrinal articles of the established religion I have subscribed, as you are[.]

He also employed English precedent by calling Giberne's attention to the Bishop of Gloucester's 1759 sermon preaching fellowship with Presbyterians in order to combat more extreme dissenters.

It is important to note the intellectual bases from which the two contenders operated. Giberne's arguments are rooted almost entirely on the politics of Waddell's actions. He does address the latter's theology, but his intent is ridicule. Waddell is characterized as a "dark lanthorn" and a "moon light" preacher. The Presbyterian divine barely
touches on Giberne's structural concern preferring instead to concentrate on a lately reestablished theological amity. It is clear that, at least in this case, the Anglican-Presbyterian accord was far from amicable.

The salary issue also had not died down. Early in 1771 the Burgesses delayed payment of clerical salaries by one month. This action was made worse by an amendment allowing the vestries to pay out on time in cash, a practice opposed by the activists. The dispute was carried on during April in Purdie and Dixon's Gazette by authors writing under the pseudonyms Philo-Dicaicos and Eirenopolis. On April 25 Philo-Dicaicos resurrected both the principles underlying clergy opposition to the Two Penny Acts and their perpetual fear of vestry power:

And as to the real and indisputable Injury resulting to the Clergy from the present Alteration in deferring the Payment of their Salaries one Month longer than they were by the Act of 1748, this you counterbalance by the speedy Remedy of a Motion, and the Power this Act will give the Vestries of paying the Ministers Money for their Tobacco at the biggest Prices. This, I am afraid, few Vestries will do; though if they should, I should like the remedy as bad as the Disease. For I would have no such power lodged in the Vestries .... Their Office I would have so circumscribed by Law as to deprive them of all discretionary Power.17

Philo-Dicaicos, who was probably John Camm, appears to have been willing to continue the time honoured disputes at the same time as the clerical minority were preparing to campaign for a bishop. Eirenopolis, whose writing bears the
intellectual mark of Richard Bland,^" restated the lay position that pious clergymen had the respect and support of the laity and that the Burgesses meant no disrespect by their recent actions. He also indicated a desire to avoid further lay-clergy disputes: "... I will observe that, wantonly to revive Contentions between the Legislature and Clergy which every good Man hoped had long ago subsided, demonstrates a great Depravity of Temper, and Disregard to the Piece of Religion and Society."^" Thus at least two members of the opposing factions were prepared to continue arguments in the same terms as those used in the 1750s, despite political change in the intervening twenty years.

James Horrocks also had to confront the perennial dilemma facing commissaries since Thomas Dawson's day. After actively promoting himself for the position, Horrocks received his office in 1768. The commissaryship and College presidency gave him two-thirds of the nominal power available to James Blair. Horrocks, like his predecessors, applied to the Bishop of London for a commission of office; also like his immediate predecessors, he did not receive one. In 1768, he asked Terrick to use his influence to help him obtain a seat on Council. 40 There is no record of resistance by Fauquier's successor Norborne Berkeley, Baron de Botetort, to Horrocks' request and the Commissary took his seat shortly before Botetort's death. Thus, the three offices were reunited during Horrocks' tenure. However, the real power of the Commissary's office, which had never been substantial,
and that of the College presidency, had been eroded over the preceding fifteen years.

The new Commissary, while appearing to strengthen the Church's structure in Virginia, was in fact a source of weakness. Opposition to him created a division within the ranks of the activists. According to Camm, he was the only College dissident to support Horrocks after his appointment as President. This loyalty was not reciprocated. After selection as Commissary, Horrocks tried to restrain Camm-inspired opposition. In a letter to Terrick dated 6 July 1769 the Commissary notes his efforts to stop the activists, specifically mentioning John Camm, from taking Thomas Warrington's Parsons' Cause appeal to England:

I can, my Lord, have no Doubt in my own Mind about the Iniquity of the Act in Question; ... I apprehended [that the] Administration would not wish for more American Embarassments & this certainly would prove a whole Colony's Concern, conceiving little of no Hopes of success to this Cause I formed my Opinion, which I perceive has given much offence to Mr. Camm & to some others who think with Him.  

While Horrocks' assessment of the political implications of activist attempts to keep the Parsons' Cause an issue is undoubtedly accurate, Camm and his allies had some experience with the type of action the Commissary proposed. In September of 1768 Horrocks prescribed a two-fold plan for restoring the Church's position: first, having himself appointed to Council would act as a stabilizing influence and provide the Church with a political voice; second, reform of the system of recommending candidates for holy orders would
ensure a higher quality ministry. These were precisely the arguments put forward by Thomas Dawson during his tenue.

Council president Nelson, acting Governor during the hiatus between Botetort's death and the Earl of Dunmore's arrival in August of 1771, also tried to avoid future clergy-gentry conflicts. Twice he wrote to Lord Hillsborough, the President of the Board of Trade, asking him to assist in getting Horrocks a commission. The first letter isolates clerical discipline as the single most important factor in the need for a commission. No disciplinary actions were contemplated at the time of writing, but Nelson thought that the prevailing method of applying discipline in front of the General Court was bad for the Church. He cited two recent cases in which lay action would have excited conflict between clergymen and members of the local elite had not the alleged offenders died.

The first letter did not achieve the desired result. A second, dated 17 April 1771, was written under more pressure. The consensus now is that the case of Reverend Patrick Lunan's drunkenness had become an unavoidable problem. Nelson requested clarification from Hillsborough:

If a Commission is not sent to the Commissary I beg your Lordship to favour me with the opinion of the Attorney & Solicitor General on the subject of the Jurisdiction of the General Court on this point, for a cause hath lately been instituted against a Minister for immoralities in which the point of Jurisdiction of the Court is by consent of the Parties to be argued in October next and such opinions though not definitive will have great weight.
Despite lately awakened conservative lay support for the clergy, the political avenues open to clerical defence were closing inexorably. The official channels were shadows of their former effectiveness. Transatlantic appeal was effectively shut down, first by Sherlock and his successors' refusal to obtain a commission for the Commissary and later by Privy Council's unwillingness to support the activists during a politically sensitive period. Local channels and offices had also been either closed or emasculated. By 1769 the Burgesses had formed a standing committee on religion which was actively considering ways to achieve a new religious balance in the colony.\(^\text{[17]}\)

The bishops question can be seen as the final escalation in a series of confrontations aimed at a precise definition of spheres of authority in the colony. The prevailing defeatism among clergy activists which appears in their correspondence beginning in the middle 1760s gives an indication as to why activist support for a local bishop was both lukewarm and short-lived. Tepid support also likely resulted from a schism in the formerly solid dissident front presented by the College of William and Mary's faculty.

Shortly before Horrocks left he redivided his offices. William Willie was deputized as Commissary and John Camm assumed the College presidency. Following Horrocks' death, Camm was appointed Commissary. The last colonial Commissary was also confirmed as College president and Councilman.\(^\text{[18]}\) This apparent victory was pyrrhic. Twenty years of struggle...
for control of the Church and the onset of imperial political crisis made Camm's much coveted status quo solution obsolete.

In a final irony, with the outbreak of hostilities, Camm's archrivals Gwatkin and Henley, took refuge with Governor Dunmore on ships in Chesapeake Bay, while the aging Commissary stayed on in the colony. He was stripped of his offices in 1777 and died two years later. A substantial majority of the ministry, in the type of common front the clergy dissidents could never achieve, abandoned their oaths of supremacy and supported the continental cause.⁴⁹
NOTES

CHAPTER FOUR


4 Carl Bridenbaugh, Mitre and Sceptre: Transatlantic Faiths, Ideas, Personalities, and Politics, 1689 - 1775 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 317, notes that Camm may have been in favour of a resident diocesan as early as April of 1767. But no overt action was taken before the spring of 1771.

5 Robinson to Terrick, 6 June 1766, Fulham Papers.

6 Robinson to Terrick, 16 October 1767, ibid.

7 Robinson to Terrick, 12 August 1765, ibid.

8 James Maury to John Fontaine, 31 December 1765, "Letterbook of James Maury," Virginia Historical Society copies of originals held by the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia.

9 Maury to John Blair, 23 July 1768, ibid.

10 Maury to Fontaine, 31 December 1765, ibid.

11 Robinson to Terrick, 12 August 1765, Fulham Papers; and, idem, 6 June 1766, ibid.

12 Camm to Terrick, 23 October 1761, ibid., on justice and, idem, 8 September 1768, ibid., on the Stamp Act.

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Mills, p. 101, claims that the May convention was intended to establish a Widows and Orphans Pension Fund. It was, in fact, the annual meeting of the trustees of the fund created in October, 1754.


William Horrocks to Terrick, 8 October 1771, Fulham Papers.


Bridenbaugh, *Mitre and Sceptre*, pp. 317-318; Mills, *Bishops by Ballot*, p. 150, states that some opponents felt that Camm acted primarily to strengthen ties with Britain.

Bridenbaugh, ibid., p. 319; Mills, ibid., p. 105, indicates that William Willie also thought this.


Ibid., pp. 198, 221.


Ibid.

107


32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid., 15 September 1768, p. 1.

35 Ibid.


38 Identification of "Eirenopolis" and "Philodicalos" is tentative. I have concluded that the authors were probably Bland and Camm based entirely on the contents of letters in: Purdie and Dixon, publs., *Virginia Gazette*, 4 April 1771 and 25 April 1771.

39 Ibid., 4 April 1771, p. 1.

40 Horrocks to [Terrick], 18 January 1769, Fulham Papers.

41 Camm to Terrick, 8 September 1768, ibid.

42 Horrocks to [Terrick], 6 July 1769, ibid.

43 Horrocks to [Terrick], 18 January 1769, ibid.

44 President Nelson to Lord Hillsborough, 15 November 1770, ibid.


46 Nelson to Hillsborough, 17 April 1771, Fulham Papers.


49 Ibid., p. 171.
CHAPTER V

COLLEGE AND PARISH

Most studies of the clerical defences ignore events at the parish level. The most important reason for this omission is the dearth of surviving material written by parish ministers. Shortage of information has forced scholars to address the parochial ministry in general terms. As well, the parish clergy have been used to provide a back drop for the study of larger political events.

Pre-Revolutionary loyalties are determined from positions clergymen were known to have taken during the Revolution. Similarly, the lack of overt support for the activist faction is depicted as identifying the College faculty and their allies as outside the mainstream of Virginia thought. Most scholars indicate that the majority of the parish ministry approved of modifications in the Church's governing hierarchy, accepted political positions adopted by the local gentry and preferred the near congregationalist functioning of the Church at the parish level. However, some documents
show serious misgivings concerning the Church's structure, functioning, social relations and the threat presented by religious competition.

Contrary to what one might expect, dissident correspondence also ties their activities to events at the parish level. And, some activists, wearing their second hats as parish ministers, wrote directly of lay interference with the execution of their parochial duties.

James Maury's correspondence provides one of the links between affairs at the parish level and the political activities of the College based faction. In 1759 he wrote to Commissary Dawson complaining of a problem in his Fredericksville parish. This letter illustrates the weakness of a minister in conflict with local power; it is also important because it provides insight into the manner in which one dissident thought. In four pages the parson moves from a relatively specific and solvable problem to the destruction of the established Church and Christianity in North America.

Maury's complaint arose from a dispute with the Church Warden, a Mr. Johnson, over the baptism of slaves. During an interracial baptism service Johnson stopped the slave contingent from approaching the altar. Maury took the position that:

This debarring slaves the Benefits of Christ's Ordinances & Sacraments is, surely, defensible neither by Scripture nor Reason, & I hope I may add, nor by Law. Both of the former, however, clearly determine: that they are equally with their Masters intitled
to them. A State of Servitude, it appears from the Gospel, is no just Bar: much less should their Colour, offensive Scent, or any other Inconvenience under which they labour be deemed [as such], as these are Misfortunes, not Faults.\(^5\)

He showed that the offensive smell of the slaves, which formed the basis of Johnson’s complaint, was nonsense given that the same individuals were allowed “... near Approaches to us in our own Houses”. Maury saw this single incident as paving the way for wholesale alterations in Christian doctrine: “Excluding such a numerous Race of People from Baptism (to drive them from it, when they duly apply for it, is surely to exclude them) looks too much like an attempt to abolish Baptism[..] And should this first step towards it be allowed to pass without Animadversion I doubt not but another will soon be made...”. The parson demanded Dawson’s intervention. His closing plea connects the baptism incident to Church political problems in Williamsburg:

> If some of the temporal Rights of the Church have been either complimented or wrested away, for God’s sake, Sir, let us not meanly give up her Doctrines and her Sacraments [although?] the Enemy has dismantled this City of God..., let us not... surrender the City itself.\(^6\)

Maury presented his case to show that “deistic” agitators who were the enemies of “revealed religion” would pick up on the precedent and extend it throughout the colonies. There is a parallel in the logic that allowed Maury’s grand leaps from a single incident to the destruction of Christianity and that employed by the clergy dissidents in their battles with members of the colonial elite. The main
issue in both circumstances was centered on the long term impact of precedents being set by the laity.

Clerical fear of temporal interference in the Church was not limited to this single case. William Robinson, in the postscript of a letter to Thomas Sherlock, noted that the Governor had attempted to alter Church practices in Bruton parish. He felt that the Bishop should know:

That he [Governor Fauquier] has applied to the Rector of the Church in our Metropolis entirely to omit the Athanasian Creed, and on his being refused this Compliance desired to be excused for setting down while the said creed was reading; That he has told another Clergyman, he thought he ought not to refuse Parents for Sureties in Baptism, whatever the Church may say about it....

Fear of lay influence on the religious aspect of the Church's existence in Virginia appears to have been widespread although diffuse. William Kay traced his problems with Landon Carter to a sermon the former had preached on the sin of pride. Colonel Carter escalated his conflict with Kay until it threatened the security of the entire clergy. Through the 1748 ACT for the Better Support of the Clergy the Burgesses recognized that Carter's crusade was extreme and that clerical security was tenuous. But the point remained that the established Church clergy was in a difficult if not impossible position when it came to ministering to members of the local elite. Actions somewhat less extreme than Carter's would likely have succeeded if promoted by prominent parish members. This is the point at which the dissidents' drive for autonomy becomes understandable. Prestige and economic
independence were essential to obtain control over religion at the parish level.

Gentry power, as exercised through the vestries, had been a prominent clerical concern since at least Bishop Compton's time. Indirect evidence indicates that this fear was heightened by dissenter incursions following 1740. The revivalist threat existed at various levels. The dissenters were theologically removed from orthodox Anglicans and the writings of most concerned Anglicans, clergy and nonclergy alike, display a fear that the nonconformists would co-opt the nongentry elements of Virginia society. A far more immediate threat, however, existed in the potential for revivalist influence among the gentry and members of the clergy.

The existence of Samuel Henley, Thomas Gwatkin and others with unorthodox opinions must have spurred on the orthodox members of the activist faction to greater efforts. The issues which the dissidents contested were aimed as much at enforcing conformity within the Church as they were at secular power. One argument used by both sides of the disputes in Williamsburg was that the parochial clergy was of too poor quality to promote effectively the cause of religion in Virginia. This common position, although based on different intellectual premises, cannot have helped but to isolate some parochial clergymen from the dissidents. The secular position, as espoused by Colonels Carter and Bland, advocated the greatest possible rewards to clergymen who
conformed to their ideal of a parson. The dissidents had no such comforting proposals. They strove to reinforce the Church's structure in order to promote religion by making parish ministers conform more closely to Church law and through obtaining replacements of a higher quality than that of current benefice holders.

The nonconformist threat to parish institutions was more extreme on the frontier than in the long-settled Tidewater. David Currie and John Leland wrote to Dawson from Lancaster county a year before Maury's complaint requesting that Dawson intervene to stop the spread of Presbyterianism, under the leadership of Davies and Todd, in Hanover and Lancaster. Their main argument was that dissenter activities were undermining "religious & civil Societies." They reported that the revivalists were stealing the lower social orders from the Church of England communion. Like Maury, these parsons were more concerned about long-term implications than they were with specific infractions:

Now Sir, as we are apprehensive that the Consequences of such Proceedings may in Time be more dangerous than is at present generally imagined; for it is well known & we think never can be forgotten, what unhappy Divisions & Distractions have been hatch'd & fomented by Conventicles & field preachings in our Mother Country, & we do not know what may be the Event if timely Check be not given to the Conventicles here.

Currie and Leland, along with many of their brethren, argued that the clergy would have had little trouble staving off the dissenter threat if the revivalists were forced to
respect parish boundaries and function as settled ministers. One historian has stated that nothing the Anglicans could have done would have stopped the social revolution in Virginia, of which the revivals were a part. Nevertheless, legislated control was the principal defensive option open to the established Church.

The threat to the Church occurred from two directions. First, the nonconformists operating outside Virginia's institutional structure were undermining Church adherence. Contemporary Church opinion indicated that this threat was controllable if legal restrictions could be enforced. Second, the gentry formed a threat on two levels. The vestries could bring considerable power to bear against clergymen who displeased them. This potential power had been a persistent problem for the Church -- revivalist incursions in settled parishes simply heightened its importance. In the dissident view the other gentry representatives, the House of Burgesses, attempted to change the terms of establishment. Church of England subordination to the growing centralization of power in the Assembly was probably not a major concern of the Burgesses. To Camm and his allies, however, the implications of enhanced secular control formed a dire threat. Religion could not be served and establishment could not be maintained under the twin threats of changes in the local political climate in relation to the Church and the aggressive dissenter challenge at the parish level.
Dissident correspondence bears out this dualism. Every complaint addressed to the Bishop of London, from 1755 until the record tapers off in the early 1770s, contains at least two issues. First, each letter addresses the major political problem of the moment with the Burgesses and Governor. The writers then show the issue's impact on the dissenter threat. Secular control also had the effect of preventing the Church from attracting local boys into the ministry and the recruiting of good quality Churchmen in England.

Dissident battles with some Assemblymen probably had severe repercussions among the parish ministry. Although no records exist on this point, indirect evidence supports the contention that the more Camm, Robinson and their allies alienated the Burgesses, the more the Assemblymen, acting as vestrymen, made life difficult for parish ministers who might have supported the activists.

The parochial ministry's security was most dramatically affected by changes in the salary provisions of their contracts. As some scholars have noted, colonial clergymen tended to lack both social position and wealth. The prospect of losing a benefice, even with the added protection of the Act for the Better Support of the Clergy, must have been daunting. The same authorities are wont to point out that there are few records of abuse of power. But the parish ministry showed no high degree of support for the actions of the dissidents, except in the immediate aftermath of the second Two Penny Act.
Much of the faculty's activity was directed at maintaining the limited security parish ministers enjoyed. The traditional method of promoting clerical security had been for the Commissary, Governor and Council to intervene in parishes where the vestries had overstepped the boundaries set by custom. Changes undertaken by the Burgesses, however, quickly elevated the Assembly to the position of posing the greatest threat to the clergy. By 1759, the Burgesses were intervening in parish life to the extent that some vestry decisions were being overturned, and in at least one case the Assembly had dismissed a vestry. By 1769 the Assembly had created a standing committee on religion both to untangle the existing sectarian confusion and to explore ways and means of establishing a new religious balance in the colony. If the dissidents were guilty of being out of touch with anything it was the shift from vestry power over individual ministers to Assembly power over the Church -- including the vestries. Cam and his allies fought against this trend but until the middle 1760s, they did so without clearly identifying centralization of power in secular hands as their principal objection.

In all, probability Isaac is correct to note that Virginia was not a highly institutionalized society, although it was rapidly developing an institutional life. The clergy-gentry dispute, which Isaac states is best understood on a parson to squire basis, became an institutional conflict between the centralizing authority of
the House of Burgesses and an unofficial equivalent among the clergy. In this light the clergy - vestry struggle becomes less important and the call for a resident bishop is a last ditch bid to erect a religious governing structure separate from its secular counterpart.

The dissidents knew that they were becoming increasingly isolated from the parish ministry. Various allies, including James Maury and Jonathon Boucher, kept them informed of opinion outside Williamsburg. While the dissidents fought the political battles in the colonial capital, some among the parochial clergy attempted to strengthen the Church at the local level. The most prominent parish initiative involved Virginia's black inhabitants.

As Maury inferred, there was considerable white animosity toward slave parishioners. The black population also provided fertile ground for the revivalists. Nonconformists organized religious revivals among the slaves that were usually, but not universally, opposed by the owners. Some Anglican ministers, in cooperation with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), worked to bring slaves into the Church. This was to be accomplished via two routes: first, the continued inclusion of blacks in parish services and, second, the creation of a "Negroe School" as a corollary to the existing "Indian School". Jonathon Boucher, among others, was active in finding ways to bring the black population into the Church of England communion.
As the SPG was primarily a missionary organization it had a very small presence in Anglican Virginia, and the SPG was content to operate through the existing Church structure. The Society confined its activities to finding methods of extending Church adherence among blacks and raising the standard of reasoned commitment to the Church among all parishioners. The single tool used to promote both ends was education. A black school proved to be impractical. Slave settlement diffusion, owing to the plantation system, made a school in a fixed location useless. There was also considerable opposition among some Virginia slave owners to the education of their property.\(^3\)

In a series of letters to SPG authorities in England, Boucher suggested ways to overcome these obstacles. His principal method was to send out a literate black on Saturdays and Sundays to educate other blacks.\(^3\) This initiative apparently met with some success. In a follow-up letter, dated 22 January, 1765, Boucher noted:

Yet many important Services may still be done amongst the poor Negroes & I hope I have been the means of doing some. At present I know no way so likely as that which you have happily taken to, Proper Books, distributed amongst them & proper Inquiries into the Improvement seems to be all, that is in the power of the best of us to do, in Parishes like ours.\(^3\)

Boucher also gave some indication that he faced the same type of opposition as that which Maury met with in Fredericksville parish:

The Negroes in my Parish are too numerous for my Church to contain, were They all
constantly to attend Divine service: I believe, however, I have always more than any other Man. At least, the Numbers are complained of by the Whites during the hot weather Months, when They really are very offensive.13

Boucher's method of educating blacks was similar to that, which he used to combat itinerant dissenters. Whenever the parson got wind of an revival in his parish, he sent an educated, articulate layman, who was clearly neither churchman nor member of the local elite, to debate with the dissenting minister. Boucher claimed considerable success for this technique of outmanoeuvring the dissenters and reinforcing parish cohesion.14 This parson's choice in dealing with sensitive issues through proxies was not universal among parish ministers.

An incident involving an itinerant nonconformist, Brother Waller, and an unnamed Church of England minister and county sheriff shows that direct intervention was also practiced. The minister and sheriff came upon Waller, who was preaching to an open air meeting, and whipped him repeatedly. The effort to stop the meeting failed as Waller continued to preach.15 Although this vignette may have been apocryphal given that neither minister nor sheriff are named, it does indicate a high degree of conflict between the competing forces.16

The SPG's records for Virginia also show that some of the clergy were concerned with moral laxness among parishioners. James Mayre identified two common failings as needing special attention in his parish: "I w" request you to
send especially some Dissuasives to Gaming and swearing, wch I am sorry to inform you are too common among [the] lower rank of People here. Mayre's attitude was also not universal. As A.P. Middleton has shown, gaming and other social activities of questionable morality were considered normal pastimes -- even among members of the clergy.

There was also some concern in the parishes for the degree of commitment to the Church exhibited by some parishioners. Boucher revealed an intriguing parish problem when he wrote that:

I am griev'd to be oblig'd to make such Reports to You, but it is a melancholy truth that several Whites of respectable Characters, think Themselves at liberty to live totally negligent of either of y* Sacraments. I have had several white adults to baptize alas some of Them seem to think it rather a matter of form than of Important Consequence. I wish & shall labour to set them Right.

Boucher's acknowledgement echoes the principal dissenter claim that the Church of England consisted of form without substance.

Devereux Jarratt, who was ordained in the Church of England and later became a leader among American Methodists, traced some parish problems to education. The ministers had too much of it. Jarratt's Autobiography states that many clergymen were isolated from the majority of their parishioners because they used sermons that were beyond the understanding of parishioners. Their status as gentlemen also created a social gulf which was difficult, if not impossible, to overcome. Jarratt's comments cannot be taken without a
caveat emptor: his position made indictment of the orthodox ministry almost inevitable.

In this case, however, his criticisms are probably valid. Boucher, who was staunchly orthodox, indirectly supports Jarratt's criticisms in his *Reminiscences of an American Loyalist*. Boucher claimed that men of learning were few and far between in the colony:

There was not a literary man, for aught I could find, nearer than in the country I had just left [England]; nor were literary attainments, beyond mere reading or writing, at all in vogue or repute.... I was engaged in many silly frolicks with people as silly as myself, was very often at balls and on visits, and almost constantly in a round of very unimproving company.4

The examples of parish level problems and reform attempts used here may not be representative of the opinions or actions of the bulk of Virginia clergymen. The record of parish activity is too sparse to support such generalizations. It is possible to conclude tentatively that parish clergymen who supported the College faculty were in a difficult position. Boucher, himself a supporter of resident bishops, reported preaching with a brace of loaded pistols in the pulpit during the episcopal dispute.4
NOTES

CHAPTER FIVE


2Brydon, Virginia's Mother Church, 2:295.


4Maury to Thomas Dawson, 10 October 1759, Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

5Ibid.

6Ibid.

7Ibid.

8Ibid.

9Ibid.

10Robinson to Bishop Terrick, [1763], Fulham Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

11Morton, Colonial Virginia, 2:760.


Camm et al. to Sherlock, 30 November 1755, Fulham Papers; Robinson to Terrick, 12 August 1765, ibid.; and, Robinson to Terrick, undated, ibid.


Greene, *Diary*, 1:122.

David Currie and John Leland to Dawson, 12 April 1758, Dawson Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

ibid.


Camm et al. to Sherlock, 30 November 1755, Fulham Papers; Camm to Terrick, 23 October 1761, ibid.; Robinson to Terrick, 12 August 1765, ibid.

Camm et al., ibid.; Dawson to Sherlock, 9 July 1757, ibid.; Robinson to Terrick, 12 August 1765, ibid.; and, Robinson to Terrick, 6 June 1766, ibid.

Gage, "The Established Church," p. 113; Camm to Terrick, 23 October 1761, Fulham Papers; Dawson to Sherlock, 1752, ibid.; and idem, 9 July 1757, ibid.; Dinwiddie to Sherlock, 10 December 1752, ibid.; Robinson to Terrick, 1761, ibid.; Maury to White, 10 July 1764, "The Letterbook of James Maury," Virginia Historical Society copies of originals held by the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia.


27 I bid., p. 125.
28 Isaac, "Religion and Authority", p. 7.
29 Isaac, Transformation, p. 144.
30 William Horrocks to Terrick, 6 July 1769, Fulham Papers; Maury to White, 10 July 1767, "Letterbook".
31 Isaac, Transformation, p. 172.
32 I bid., pp. 172, 280.
33 Boucher to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), 28 April 1764, Virginia Colonial Records Project (Reel 2), University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia.
34 Boucher to SPG, 22 January 1765, I bid.
35 Boucher to SPG, 11 October 1767, I bid.
37 Isaac, Transformation, pp. 162-163.
38 I bid., p. 163, note 2.
39 James Mayre to SPG, 30 May 1761, Virginia Colonial Records Project (Reel 2).
41 Boucher to SPG, 31 December 1762, Virginia Colonial Records Project (Reel 2).
CONCLUSION

Between 1752 and 1774 the actions of a clerical minority and some members of the local elite may be seen as conflict over lay versus clerical control of the Church of England in Virginia. The Parsons' Cause, the dispute over control of the College, and the resident bishops controversy were three rounds in the larger contest. While the activists have been portrayed as usurpers of the Commissary's authority and a Tory clique, they in fact did nothing that did not have a precedent in Virginia history. Camm, Robinson, and their allies stepped into the role of defenders of Church autonomy primarily as a result of Bishop Sherlock's decision not to grant power to Commissary Dawson.

Prior to 1765 the activists saw the threat as made up of two components. First, gentry aggressiveness through the Assembly and individual vestries was seen as undermining the clergy's ability to do its job and, second, the dissident faction drew a connection between this weakening and potential success on the part of their nonconformist competitors. By the time William Robinson wrote to Bishop
Terrick in 1766 the threat, at least for him, had become unified. Gentry aggression was seen as a product of the "local conditions" which made the revivalists successful. Robinson then marked every secular attempt to exercise authority over the Church as part of a continuing effort either to destroy or to subvert the Anglican establishment.

Each issue that the College centered activists pursued had its precedent within the internal reform tradition of the Virginia Church. A variety of circumstances, both local and transatlantic in origin, made the dissidents more dependent on links with English power. This enhanced dependency, ushered in by Thomas Sherlock's refusal to obtain commissions for his Commissaries, was ultimately betrayed by Privy Council over Camm's Parsons' Cause appeal. In each dispute, the dissidents sought to defend the Church by protecting the autonomy of the ministry.

The first Two Penny Act petition, written in 1755, identifies the type of issue over which the clergy activists were prepared to do battle. They asserted that minor modifications to the Church at the parish level were of no concern. Changes to the establishment on the settlement fringe elicited no outcry among the faculty and their allies. They explained to Sherlock that frontier modifications were inconsequential because they did not affect the Church and clergy as a whole -- although William Robinson later amended this view to include frontier arrangements in his list of secular incursions.
The changes which motivated dissident response have a single common thread. This commonality was the original problem which prompted Compton to create the office of Commissary and it preoccupied the first three occupants of that office in Virginia. The reformist element in the colonial Church saw their institution's weakness in terms of clerical quality and numbers. The Commissary's office was created to foster the growth of the Church, protect its ministers, and discipline those who strayed from the canons.

The first Commissary, James Blair, quickly discovered that discipline was difficult to apply, and growth impossible to foster given Virginia's chronic shortage of ministers. His solutions were to obtain more and better quality clergymen by increasing salaries and creating a College with the objective of training local candidates for the ministry. He was partially successful in both endeavours. Blair's disciplinary forays were less fruitful. The Commissary found that that element of his control conflicted with local vestry authority and an established power sharing relationship with the secular government through the Governor. Despite limitations, the first Commissary did establish himself as part of the disciplinary process.

Blair's successor, William Dawson, inherited a situation which limited reform attempts primarily to the salary issue. Dawson recognized that much of the difficulty in Church government resulted from the high degree of vestry control. He had Blair's example, however, to show him the futility of
trying to defeat vestry power on a purely local level. The case of William Kay allowed Dawson to fight this power vicariously. Although the immediate result of Kay versus Vestry, the 1748 Act for the Better Support of the Clergy, displeased the Commissary because it gave more power to the vestries, Dawson was more concerned with improving clerical quality to combat the growing dissenter threat. The only avenues open to him which did not impinge upon lay power were salaries and the encouragement of local candidates for holy orders. Dawson made very limited gains in the salaries issue. In fact, the only real addition to clergy security was made by the Burgesses in the 1748 Act which Dawson disliked. In the end, however, the chronic shortage of ministers had been solved during Blair's tenure and Dawson managed to keep the numbers up although clergy quality continued to concern him.

The concern with salaries after Virginia parishes had been filled continued under Thomas Dawson. Given that the vacancy rate was low it seems reasonable to conclude that the Commissaries were trying to attract a particular type of minister to Virginia. Blair and the brothers Dawson wrote repeatedly concerning the poor quality of the clergy. Given this preoccupation it appears that they were trying to recruit persons who shared their view of the Church.

The considerable continuity between the reigns of Blair and William Dawson and the objectives Thomas Dawson set was interrupted by Bishop Sherlock. London's prelate, in an
effort to carry the process of church reform beyond what the
commissaries were capable of doing, disabled the modified
governing hierarchy that had been built up since 1689.
Sherlock tried to force the creation of colonial bishoprics
by making the Church in "foreign parts" ungovernable. He
reasoned that by not providing his representatives with the
modicum of power they had previously held, he would create a
situation in which local authorities would be compelled to
request a resident diocesan. In this reasoning Sherlock
was wrong. The Bishop succeeded only in weakening the
already tenuous position that clerical authorities held
within Church government.

From 1752 until his death in 1760 Thomas Dawson
attempted to strengthen the Church's presence despite
Sherlock's initiative. Where his attempts did not conflict
with local lay power, Dawson was successful. The Widows and
Orphans Pension Fund is evidence of this success. Dawson's
failures occurred, as had those of his brother and Blair,
when matters affecting local politics came to the fore.

The activist clergy took on the role of defending Church
autonomy after Dawson announced that he did not have the
power to do so. The Commissary's correspondence during the
first Two Penny Act debacle indicates that he was in sympathy
with the activists. While the College faction did take
over part of the Commissary's duties, Dawson considered their
intentions to be for the good of the Church.
In each of the main political debates between 1755 and 1771 the clergy dissidents reacted to secular attempts to undermine Church independence. The activists' perception was that the Virginia Church was being attacked while the clergy were weak. The income problem associated with the Two Penny Acts had little to do with the dissidents' major concern. They were primarily worried about the precedent the Assembly had set. Their fear was probably justified. In 1765 Robinson reported that the continuing controversy over the Parsons' Cause was the only thing keeping the Assembly from enacting similar legislation in that year of projected shortfall. During the winter of 1770 - 1771, after Camm's appeal had been rejected and the motion to remove Warrington's cause to England had been defeated, the Assembly passed legislation significantly altering the pay provisions of ministers' contracts.

Social rank aside, changes in the method of payment made it difficult for the clergy to do their jobs. The potential for capricious salary alterations in combination with one year employment contracts limited the field ministers' effectiveness among prominent parishioners. Changed employment conditions made it difficult to attract any but desperate candidates for holy orders. In 1763 Commissary Robinson wrote that penury and the potential for political intervention had discouraged Virginia's "better" families from "breeding any of their own Sons to the Church."
The same problems discouraged the type of ministers that the activist faction wanted from emigrating to the colony.

The College dispute damaged the Church on two levels. First, faculty dismissals directly attacked the Church's strongest remaining institutional base. Second, curriculum modifications away from the religious emphasis virtually ensured that Virginians would not pursue holy orders. Each issue was contested vehemently by members of the College faculty and Commissary Robinson. Through their letters Bishop Terrick came to believe that the College, operating under the conditions set by the Visitors, would fail in its educational mission -- whether or not that mission was religious in nature. The problem of losing native candidates for the ministry was also important. The Dawson brothers recognized that locally produced ministers were more easily accepted into parishes and that they were, as a result, better able to deal with the dissenters. They were also important because native parsons gave at least a veneer that the Church was a local institution.

The bishops question is the one issue over which the dissident clergy took the initiative. In concert with their northern brethren, the activists attempted to gain the Church's independence by erecting a local ecclesiastical hierarchy. The fact that the Virginia activists held off this call for at least three years indicates that they were aware that the proposal had little chance of success. The timing of the attempt also shows that the dissidents had run
out of options. Failure in transferring Warrington's cause to England and renewed Burgess attempts to alter clergy salary provisions occurred immediately prior to the call for a convention to discuss resident bishops.

Confinement of the activists more or less to the Williamsburg area was explained by the faculty. A geographical imperative was at work. The dissident faction and the Commissaries complained of an inability to attract support owing to the ministry's dispersion. The existence of a body of clergy in the political capital suggests that concentration as the logical opponent of secular power. In addition, the College's existence as a semi-autonomous institution protected clergy activists, at least initially, and again after 1763, from the direct wrath of the colonial elite.

The clergy activists, headed by John Camm and William Robinson, moved into the political vacuum created by Bishop Sherlock's decision not to obtain commissions for his Commissaries. Far from being out of touch with local conditions, the dissidents sought to reestablish the status quo in existence before 1752. The Burgesses, while attempting to centralize authority in the hands of the Assembly, also tried to fill the vacuum created by Thomas Dawson's political emasculation. The resulting collision found the clergy dissidents on the defensive, without benefit of a common front among their parochial brethren, in a confrontation with the holders of virtually all the real
power in the colony. The Burgesses, vestries and court officers were all drawn from the same local elite. Any confrontation with this power nexus required the support of the Governor, ecclesiastical superiors and the political clout available in England. The dissidents eventually failed on all three counts.
NOTES

CONCLUSION

1 Robinson to Terrick, 12 August 1765, Fulham Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

2 Camm et al. to Sherlock, 30 November 1755, Fulham Papers.

3 Ibid.

4 Robinson to Terrick, 12 August 1765, ibid.


6 Ibid., p. 241.


8 Alan K. Austin: "The Role of the Anglican Church and its Clergy in the Political Life of Colonial Virginia" (Ph.D dissertation, University of Georgia, 1969), p. 120.

9 Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church*, 2:259-260. The application of the label "presbyterian" to Anglican ministers is found in: Dawson to Sherlock, 23 July 1753, Fulham Papers.

10 The point is most clearly made in: Dawson to Sherlock, ibid.


12 Dawson to Sherlock, February 1755, Fulham Papers.
135

Camm et al. to Sherlock, 30 November 1755, ibid.

Robinson to Terrick, 16 October 1767, ibid.


Robinson to Terrick, undated, Fulham Papers.

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*Virginia Gazette (Rind), 1768-1774.*

B. SECONDARY SOURCES

1. Books


2. Articles


3. Dissertations

