

EDUCATING “GENTLEMEN AND ACCOMPLISH’D CITIZENS”:  
ESTABLISHMENT, ENLIGHTENMENT, AND COLONIAL VIRGINIA’S COLLEGIATE TRANSFORMATION

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INTRODUCTION  
HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN COLONIAL VIRGINIA

In 1797, Samuel Harrison Smith noted in a Washington newspaper, “an enlightened nation is always most tenacious of its rights.”<sup>1</sup> While perhaps too monolithic to be faultless, Smith’s words rang particularly true in eighteenth century Virginia when a rapidly progressing feud began between an enlightened backcountry people and the Established Anglican Church of the Tidewater. Fighting for their right not only to be heard, but to be accepted as a viable intellectual community in Virginia, the people of the backcountry established academies and institutions of higher learning to evidence their intellectual vitality as a group.<sup>2</sup> As establishment of these enlightened academies advanced, there ensued an anomalous educational occurrence in Revolutionary Virginia that has received no extensive scholarly treatment. Under normal societal conditions, educational and intellectual trends begin in major cities and centers of commerce. During these formative years of Virginia’s Commonwealth, however, progressive educational currents made significant headway first through the backcountry corridor, which in turn, resulted in the hub of intellectual activity in Virginia to shift away from the eastern communities. The result was a backcountry people protecting and disseminating the rights of the new republic, and an Anglican Tidewater educational culture still wrestling with former English identities.

In 1693, the Anglican Church, under direction of a royal English charter, founded The College of William and Mary as a “seminary of ministers of the gospel, and that the youth may be piously educated in good letters and manners, and that the Christian faith may be propagated

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Harrison Smith, “Remarks on Education,” cited in Carl F. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).

<sup>2</sup> The term “academy” was typical for schools associated with dissenting religious groups.

amongst the Western Indians, to the glory of Almighty God.”<sup>3</sup> The school existed primarily as a training ground for Anglican clergyman and future statesmen in Virginia. Following English design, William and Mary proposed to instill Christian morals to students within a thoroughly religious framework. Anglicans, concerned with remaining British in essence and therefore remaining “civilized,” continued to use preaching, catechizing, and schooling communities as bulwarks in their incessant struggle against the barbarism of the wilderness.<sup>4</sup> Like the Puritans in the North, Anglican higher education advanced for societal transmission, whereby students learned how to properly think, act, and reason within an exclusively elite, Anglican framework.

The products of the western Enlightenment in America, however, dramatically changed this long-standing tradition, allowing works on individual rights and religious freedoms to be circulated through the general public. Schools during the middle to late eighteenth century, like the College of New Jersey, Public Academy of Philadelphia, Hampden-Sydney College, and Liberty Hall Academy, promoted occupational training, student autonomy, and embraced intellectual and religious liberties within academia.<sup>5</sup> The enlightened reform movement in education also spawned much of the founding leaders of American government, perhaps explaining many reasons for their insistence on political moderation, corporate and individual rights, and religious freedom.<sup>6</sup>

Following the Great Awakening, an interesting, and in many ways counter-religious, movement took place in intellectual and educational practices. Enlightenment principles initially crept into personal libraries, such as those belonging to Benjamin Franklin and Jonathan Belcher.

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<sup>3</sup> “The Charter of the College of William and Mary, in Virginia, 1691,” in *The History of the College of William and Mary From its Foundation, 1660, to 1874* (Richmond: J.W. Randolph & English, 1874), 38.

<sup>4</sup> Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The Colonial Experience 1607-1783* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1970), 176.

<sup>5</sup> Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 312.

<sup>6</sup> For a thorough treatment of political moderation in America’s formative years, see Robert M. Calhoon, *Political Moderation in American’s First Two Centuries* (Cambridge: University Press, 2009).

Scottish Enlightenment thinking ascribed to several major facets, as outlined by historian Henry May. The progressive intellect believed the present age was always more enlightened than those that preceded it. They understood “nature and man best through the use of . . . natural facilities.”<sup>7</sup> Practitioners of Enlightenment philosophies in the eighteenth-century educational institutions urged students to seek their natural individual knowledge. The enlightened rhetoric reshaped the curricular and program formats, providing a substantially new model of education in the colonies from the founding of the Academia of Philadelphia in 1740, up to Jefferson’s “Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge” in 1779.

The new enlightened classroom quickly took roots throughout the backcountry corridor of Pennsylvania and Virginia as New Light Presbyterians, Quakers, Huguenots, and German Piests established in these areas. In an effort to centralize the diverse intellectual frontier culture, Liberty Hall Academy and Hampden-Sydney College pioneered Virginia’s movement toward a more public, enlightened model of higher education. Interestingly, the College of William and Mary, despite being located in what was the heart of Virginia’s intellectual and religious activity prior to the Revolution, was reluctant to alter its traditional English design for at least four decades following the Revolution.

This project, then, traces the shift of educational, and in many ways, intellectual, hegemony from the elite College of William and Mary in the Tidewater region, to those institutions founded in the western parts of the Commonwealth. As a result of diversified people groups, religious pluralism, and influences from scattered religious revivals, people formerly considered agrarian folk, found themselves in the midst of Virginia’s intellectual and education transformation. Because of the school’s unshakable connections to both the English monarchy and the Established Church in Virginia, the College of William and Mary failed to incorporate a

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<sup>7</sup> May, *Enlightenment in America*, xv.

more religiously tolerant agenda. With the development of American independence, the College was unable and unwilling to adopt the diverse cultures surrounding it, and thus relegated as an English religious institution amidst a country and state taking on a new Republican identity. The academies in the backcountry, having already adopted a more universal educational paradigm, not only adopted Republican rhetoric, but quickly became the foremost centers in Virginia for enlightened Republican education. Synthesizing the diverse cultures around them into a unified educational paradigm, the backcountry institutions were able to do what the College of William and Mary could not; they espoused and encouraged ideas of Republican liberties and developed students for practical professions within the new Commonwealth.

Not only does this fascinating movement of ideas take place in a unique socio-cultural pattern, but it also demonstrates that regional variations in education played a more significant role in the formation of Virginia society than has typically been realized. While there still persist many treatments surveying individual schools, there is a scarcity of works discussing educational movements on a regional scale. This treatment offers a corrective to that oversight, providing one avenue through which to view the movement of ideas in colonial Virginia.

To understand intellectual movement in Virginia, it is first important to place it in its proper wave of Enlightenment thinking. The term ‘Enlightenment’ requires further clarification.<sup>8</sup> As early as 1784, philosopher Immanuel Kant asserted that the most important change brought about by eighteenth-century *philosophes* was “mankind’s exit from its self-incurred immaturity.”<sup>9</sup> According to his reasoning, when people could think and reason for themselves without the reliance on superiors, they could emancipate themselves from the “dogmas and

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<sup>8</sup> For a good treatment of recent historiography regarding Scottish Enlightenment, see Jonathan M. Yeager, *Enlightened Evangelicalism: The Life and Thought of John Erskine* (Oxford: University Press, 2011), 17-21.

<sup>9</sup> Immanuel Kant, *An Answer to the Question: “What Is Enlightenment?”* Königsberg, Prussia, September, 1784, <http://philosophy.eserver.org/kant/what-is-enlightenment.txt> (accessed on March 9, 2011).

formulas” of the established Church, sectarian religious bodies, and cultural traditions.

Therefore, intellectual maturity, according to Kant, was the result of the Enlightenment.

Some historians, such as Frank Manuel, have offered that the Enlightenment was primarily a movement within Christianity. Central to his argument in *The Enlightenment* (1965), Manuel contends that the cornerstone of the Enlightenment was “a demand for open expression of ideas without the risk of prosecution.”<sup>10</sup> Famous authors of the period, such as Montesquieu and Voltaire, fought vigorously for freedoms of speech and press, the axioms which they held central to intellectual movement.

Thus, while Manuel defines the Enlightenment as a movement of individualism and personal rights, he does not offer insight into regional, philosophical, or even international variations to the movement. Henry May suggests that broad-spectrum books such as Manuel’s are the result of historians trying to provide a “sufficiently broad, accurate, comprehensible, and usable definition of the Enlightenment.”<sup>11</sup> But after 200 years, he contends, historians have left the present generation very “sophisticated and confused.”<sup>12</sup> In an attempt to identify the gap, Henry May’s instrumental work on the subject, *The Enlightenment in America* (1976), contends against those who argue for only one Enlightenment. Rather, May suggests that the Enlightenment presented itself in four distinct variations. Among his four Enlightenment models, the Virginia Tidewater elite embraced a “skeptical” version of enlightened rhetoric. Skeptical Enlightenment, he argues, resulted in a paradoxical gentry culture, especially in the time surrounding the American Revolution. While attempting to embrace new Republican virtues of equality and democratic government in theory, the eastward Virginians did little to combat the institution of slavery. Even within their own race they rarely sought to reform any social

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<sup>10</sup> Frank E. Manuel, ed., *The Enlightenment* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), 12.

<sup>11</sup> May, *Enlightenment in America*, xiii.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

inequalities or injustices, which May argues was hypocritical, or “skeptical.” Further, Tidewater Virginians prided themselves on “honor, duty, and the public good,” but their actions represented carelessness of expense, and a hatred of opposing religious groups.<sup>13</sup> As the “top class” of southern culture, May asserts, the coastal Virginia gentry did little to practically advance any positive enlightened mentality.

Thomas Schlereth offers a solution to this seemingly paradoxical, or “skeptical,” Enlightenment. Analyzing the Enlightenment from a socio-historical perspective, Schlereth defines the key characteristic of enlightened movements as a search for the “cosmopolitan ideal.”<sup>14</sup> Enlightened cosmopolitanism possessed a number of distinguishing characteristics. Chiefly among those was the idea that the enlightened sought to be identified by a broad familiarity with the world. As such, the Enlightenment encouraged people to “borrow from other lands or civilizations in the formation of intellectual, cultural, and artistic patterns.”<sup>15</sup> The borrowing of intellectual and cultural patterns to form a new paradigm, Schlereth claims, resulted in social systems that not only failed to meet a cosmopolitan utopia, but were burdened by competing, paradoxical information.

Schlereth’s explanation highlights an important facet of American Enlightenment. Most pre-revolutionary colonists strove to maintain their “Britishness.” As such, the Enlightenment in America, and particularly among Virginia’s gentry, could never be fully realized as it was synthesized or watered down within existing English mentalities.<sup>16</sup> While national and intellectual identities were not necessarily mutually-inclusive in Colonial America, and

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas J. Schlereth, *The Cosmopolitan Ideal in Enlightenment Thought* (Norte Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), xi.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 105.

especially in early-Virginia, the separation of Englishness and Enlightenment concepts was highly unlikely.

The influence of the Enlightenment in Virginia was therefore limited. In the Tidewater, elite members of society could not distance themselves from traditional models of monarchical government. As May asserts, the eastern Virginians were “skeptical” of all the Enlightenment had to offer, and could only embrace the portions that fit within their narrow English social structure. Their pursuits of enlightened self-improvement were directly affected by both mentalities, and as such, both were compromised resulting in a diluted, “conservative” version of each.<sup>17</sup>

The people in the backcountry regions, however, were much more inclined to embrace an Enlightenment mentality as defined by Manuel. Already functioning within a diverse religious, intellectual, and ethnic society, they were more inclined to assimilate new ideas into their culture. The Virginia backcountry was open both environmentally and socially, allowing for the free movement of ideas without fear of harassment.

Pre-Revolutionary Virginians, by nearly all accounts, clung fiercely to their Englishness. As T.H. Breen argues in his work *The Marketplace of Revolution* (2004), scholarship is too reliant on the traditional understanding of the American colonies growing exponentially restless with England in the years that led up to their final break for freedom in 1776. Rather, Breen contends that the colonists’ shared experience as consumers provided them with the cultural resources needed to develop a bold new form of political protest where goods became the

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<sup>17</sup> John Fea, *The Way of Improvement Leads Home: Philip Vickers Fithian and the Rural Enlightenment in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 214.

foundation of trust, and the individual's willingness to sacrifice their consumerist pleasures provided an effective test of allegiance.<sup>18</sup>

Building off of Breen's argument, Brendan McConville's work *The King's Three Faces* (2006) also analyzes the colonists' changing perceptions of England from the Glorious Revolution up to the American Revolution using ideological, material, and religious components. Preexisting notions of British patriotism incited a zealous allegiance to the crown. McConville argues that the American colonies were more concerned about resembling their British counterparts than evolving into some Republican machine. The constant safeguarding of the vaguely defined liberties as Englishmen was less of a concern than that of emulating metropole's latest trends.<sup>19</sup> Royalty, unlike Breen's contention, was the ideal to which the colonists gazed. It was not simply for the sake of remaining English. Rather, as McConville demonstrates, the prevalent materialism and Protestant devotion were byproducts of the colonists' growing appreciation for the crown.

As one of American's primary hubs of English custom, the Tidewater region of Virginia was no exception to this trend. Importing food, drinks, clothing, and a variety of decorative furnishings from London, Virginians in many ways looked more English than any of the other colonies. Historians Louis Carr and Lorena Walsh note that the broad rise in consumer spending across every layer of the social fabric was "rapid and unprecedented."<sup>20</sup> In an attempt to remain

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<sup>18</sup> T.H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), xv-xvi.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 99. The "metropole," as defined by Jack P. Greene in his work *Peripheries and Center* (1990), refers to the center of power in any given area. Those areas outside the center, or "metropole," are referred to as the "periphery." These terms were used throughout this study.

<sup>20</sup> Louis Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles and Consumer Behavior in the Colonial Chesapeake," in Carson et al., eds., *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994), 59; See also Carr and Walsh, "The Standard of Living in the Colonial Chesapeake," in *William and Mary Quarterly*, No. 45 (1988), 137-143.

thoroughly and unquestionably “British,” Virginians aggressively entered the consumer market, indicating a chronic, even obsessive, adherence to their English roots.

To further complicate the understanding of Tidewater Virginia, there were massive differences between social classes which later led to migration across the state. Elite planters were almost exclusively rich, white, Anglican gentry who often held positions of political authority in addition to their regular plantation duties. They mostly came to the colonies with wealth or were born into significant financial backing.<sup>21</sup> Beneath them in the Virginia social structure were the merchants, shop-keepers, and tenant farmers who earned enough wages to keep out of debt, but had little excess to spend recklessly like elite members of society.<sup>22</sup> Servants and slaves composed the bottom tier of Tidewater society. They had no individual rights, no ownership of land, and therefore, no political representation.

Because of sharp social lines and rampant debt with a progressing material culture, Virginians tended to be restless. As a result, it was not uncommon for twenty percent of a Virginia county to move away within their first year of residence. Further, more than fifty percent would vanish before residing in that county for a decade.<sup>23</sup> Studies also demonstrate that Virginians of lower class moved far more frequently than those with means.<sup>24</sup> As servants were freed in the early eighteenth-century, they moved west to the Piedmont and far western regions where land was still to be developed.

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<sup>21</sup> Emory G. Evans, *A “Topping People”: The Rise and Decline of Virginia’s Old Political Elite, 1680-1790* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 7.

<sup>22</sup> There were some exceptions to this social construct of course. Some merchants in the middle parts of the eighteenth century were quite successful as mediators between English investors and American consumers.

<sup>23</sup> David Hackett Fischer and James C. Kelly, *Bound Away: Virginia and the Westward Movement* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 74.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 317. Also see Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003); Kevin Kelly, “Economic and Social development of Seventeenth-Century Surry County, Virginia,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1972); James R. Perry, *The Formation of a Society on Virginia’s Eastern Shore, 1615-1655* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); James P. Horne, “Moving On in the New World: Migration and Out-Migration in the Seventeenth Century Chesapeake,” in Peter Clark and David Souden, *Migration and Society in Early Modern England* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1988).

These former migrant servants, however, were quickly pushed aside by the sons of wealthy Tidewater families who were left no land in family wills. Additionally, various religious groups immigrated from Delaware and Pennsylvania, settling as families in large units. With a rapidly expanding elite culture in the Piedmont region and a plethora of religious groups colonizing throughout the Shenandoah and Rappahannock Valleys, the backcountry corridor of Virginia became a highly pluralistic culture in the latter half of the eighteenth century. While the Tidewater desperately tried to command the direction of intellectual and educational patterns in Virginia, the migration opening of the backcountry began the disruption of traditional patterns of a purely English, Anglican Virginia.

The College of William and Mary was directly tied to both English church and state, and was therefore an institution functioning within, and catering exclusively to a closed society. As a closing society operating within an opening environment, the College could not maintain its intellectual vitality. The backcountry “enlightened” institutions, readily adopting an enlightened language, became the new epicenter for educational, Republican virtue in the State.

Regional variations in colonial education are treated sparsely in the historiography. The majority of recent treatments survey the whole of colonial American collegiate activity, offering only passing, if any, attention to specific regional movements.<sup>25</sup> Other histories, often initiated by a particular college’s administration, are institutionally-specific and offer no analysis beyond

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<sup>25</sup> See Arthur Cohen and Carrie B. Kisker, *The Shaping of American Higher Education: Emergence and Growth of the Contemporary System* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2009); Christopher J. Lucas, *American Higher Education: A History* (Palgrave: Macmillan Publishers, 2006); Cremin, *American Education*, 1970; Frederick Rudolph and John R. Thelin, *The American College and University: A History* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991); Harold S. Wechsler et al, eds., *The History of Higher Education* (Saddle River: Pearson Publishing, 2008); John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); Wayne J. Urban and Jennings L. Wagoner, Jr., *American Education: A History* (New York: McGraw Hill Publishers, 1996); Rush Welter, *Popular Education and Democratic Thought in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962); Willis Rudy and John Brubacher, *Higher Education in Transition: A History of American Colleges and Universities* (Piscataway: Transaction Publishers, 1997).

the operational activities of that particular school.<sup>26</sup> And while histories abound identifying continuities and discrepancies in the flow of intellectual life colony-wide, very few seek to identify these patterns within an educational context. Acknowledging these oversights in educational histories, Bernard Bailyn's paramount work, *Education in the Forming of American Society* (1960), redefines education not only as the formal, and specific process of training by which students inherit information, but also as "the entire process by which a culture transmits itself across generations."<sup>27</sup> Education cannot necessarily be defined as a universal across every colony as regional differences in social structure, politics, religious background, familial contexts, and cultural traditions all play important roles in the process. Thus, as early colonies were highly localized, the education of youth was as well, a pattern few educational historians identify.

Bailyn argues that one of the most significant shifts in colonial education was the result of the westward movement into America's expansive, unpopulated land. As migration increased, the long-standing traditional family unit began to dissipate, and those centers of family and communal life rapidly took on new dimensions. While typically youth trained in the occupation of their parents and within the ideologies of the larger social unit, young adults in the early eighteenth-century had the option to move, establish new communities, and thereafter, establish new traditions according to their new locale and occupation. Bailyn's thesis applies clearly to

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<sup>26</sup> See Brooks Mather Kelly, *Yale: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); John L. Brinkley, *On This Hill: A Narrative History of Hampden-Sydney College 1774-1994* (Hampden-Sydney: Hampden-Sydney College, 1995); Mark A. Noll, *Princeton and the Republic: 1768-1822*, (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1989); Ollinger Crenshaw, *General Lee's College: The Rise and Growth of Washington and Lee University* (New York: Random House Publishers, 1969); Reuben Aldridge Guild, *Early History of Brown University* (New York: Arno Press, 1980); Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Founding of Harvard College* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1935); Samuel Eliot Morison, *Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936); Susan H. Godson and Ludwell H. Johnson, *The College of William and Mary: A History* (Williamsburg: Society of the Alumni of the College of William & Mary in Virginia, Inc, 1993).

<sup>27</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *Education in the Forming of American Society: Needs and Opportunities for Study* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1960), 14.

Virginia as well. With a new generation of rural, backcountry Virginians encountering Enlightenment and Evangelical values, a redefined, itinerant, enlightened culture arose, encouraging further diversity throughout the colony.

Despite Bailyn's warning against grouping the whole of American education as a reflection of New England practices, studies persist in that monolithic trend. Lawrence Cremin's seminal work, *American Education: The Colonial Experience* (1970), approaches America's educational history from a sociological perspective. Like Bailyn, Cremin, underscores the importance of analyzing education in its larger social context. The colonial pattern, he argues, was strictly about transitioning cultural values between generations clearly and efficiently.<sup>28</sup> Cremin argues that the colonists had to consciously fashion their own social order, which in turn had dramatic affects on the nature of education. By the eighteenth-century societal structure changed and with that, educational institutions also changed in most areas.

The Anglican Church, Cremin argues, was the preeminent force behind higher education in Virginia and "established a uniform system of instruction through [a] realm, controlled by the Crown and its appointed ecclesiastical officials."<sup>29</sup> While this description certainly applies to the College of William and Mary, it does not account for the religious and educational movements taking place in more rural areas of the Commonwealth.

Whereas these works serve to clarify educational practices in the northeast, they fail to recognize the significance of the development of southern higher education. Harvard was founded almost sixty years prior to any other institution in America, but the date of establishment does not necessitate that Harvard was the most influential school in the whole of colonial America. Nor does an over-abundance of primary source materials from New England schools

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<sup>28</sup> Cremin, *American Education*, xii.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

dictate that they were more fully developed, or advanced, systems of instruction relative to their southern neighbors.

With the Great Awakening beginning in the early eighteenth century and the introduction of Enlightenment rhetoric colony-wide, new ideas of college instruction permeated the middle and southern colonies. The Great Awakening, according to historian Douglas Sloan, was the American version of “evangelical pietism,” a vigorous and widespread movement throughout all the churches of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Protestantism.<sup>30</sup> Encouraging the flow of new ideas, institutions for higher learning naturally grew out of the revival. In the middle colonies, Sloan argues, the “academy movement” of some revivalists began to take hold and spread rapidly.<sup>31</sup> General liberal arts curricula gradually arose, aiming at producing professional graduates, not just clergy members as had their Puritan and Anglican predecessors. Eventually, the fiery and emotional preaching of the Awakening converts shifted toward more intellectual pursuits so as to ward off critics who condemned the movement as insipid, rural, and without reason. The founding of these academies for higher education in part reflected the anxieties regarding their own status in the “eyes of the respectable.”<sup>32</sup> The core curriculum of the College of New Jersey was similar to earlier institutions incorporating classical languages and theological training. New training methods such as demonstration lectures and job-specific training, however, marked a sharp, perhaps “enlightened,” distinction between the middle colonies’ institutions and those in New England who continued to ascribe only to classical models.

Mark A. Noll, in his work, *Princeton and the Republic* (1989) argues that the amalgam of Enlightenment, Republican, and Evangelical values that John Witherspoon created in his early

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<sup>30</sup> Douglas Sloan, *The Great Awakening and American Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1973), 3.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

years at Princeton was a highly influential paradigm, eventually moving into the backcountry of Virginia.<sup>33</sup> Many authors, Noll notes, have argued that Witherspoon was the main individual responsible for challenging seventeenth-century Christian values with a Scottish Enlightenment perspective. However, he did so in a purposefully contextualized way, allowing for Christian elements to be present within his framework..<sup>34</sup>

Noll's work contributes an important facet to this discussion since the two prominent institutions of higher education in the "enlightened" backcountry of Virginia began as daughter institutions of the College of New Jersey. As such, the values and educational practices noted in Noll's treatment are in many ways reflective of what expanded through the western parts of Virginia. College of New Jersey graduates William Graham and Samuel Stanhope Smith were the founding presidents of Virginia's backcountry "enlightened" colleges; respectively Liberty Hall Academy and Hampden-Sydney College. Both sought to model their system of education after the College of New Jersey. So despite Noll's argument that Witherspoon was only moderately successful in his implementation in New Jersey, his students were perhaps more successful in their efforts on the Virginia frontier.

Given the varying nature of educational practices throughout the colonies, it seems that the New England model for higher education may have been atypical in the colonies. Much of New England history can be best appreciated as a series of reactionary efforts aimed at developing and maintaining a rigidly homogenous or "tribal" way of life.<sup>35</sup> In contrast, Virginia was marked by diversity, individualism, and dissent, creating wholly different models of advanced learning than those in New England. As historian Jack Greene has aptly argued, one of the most important facets of the emerging American culture was its conception of society where

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<sup>33</sup> Noll, *Princeton*, 10.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>35</sup> Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*, 16.

free people could pursue individual happiness or success.<sup>36</sup> While New England's contributions to the history of America's higher educational practices should not be ignored, perhaps the best places for further study are the schools that spurred notions of professional, student-oriented training, thus beginning a tradition of advanced learning that still exists throughout America. And while Virginia has long stood as the quintessential middle-state of intellectual, political, and social movements, a more detailed understanding of its higher educational movement reveals a new perspective of the progressing center of influence away from the Chesapeake and into the backcountry.

In 1912 historian Alfred Morrison asked, "What are the origins and the fortunes of any idea that has taken shape?" "These are interesting questions," he replied, and "not the least so in the case of . . . academic institution[s]."<sup>37</sup> The history of higher education in colonial Virginia reflects an important facet of the intellectual and religious progression in the colony. The sociological movement whereby the backcountry "periphery" became the most outspoken, influential hub of intellectual activity has been largely ignored in scholarship. By evaluating the College of William and Mary, Liberty Hall Academy, and Hampden-Sydney College in relationship to each other, this study encourages a better understanding those particular schools within their larger regional context. Further, the study demonstrates the removal of the College of William and Mary as the vanguard of Virginian intellectual life, and the rise of the enlightened backcountry academies within the republic.

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<sup>36</sup> Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

<sup>37</sup> Hampden-Sydney Board of Trustees, Alfred J. Morrison, ed., *The College of Hampden-Sydney: Calendar of Board Minutes 1776-1876* (Richmond: The Hermitage Press, 1912), 5.

CHAPTER 1  
THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY AND THE MIGRATION IN VIRGINIA

It was not long after the first settlers in America established themselves that the discussion of outposts for higher education emerged. In 1619, one year prior to the arrival of Pilgrims, Virginia settlers established two separate institutions of learning within the Jamestown colonies. Both were designed as preparatory schools for a college that would be built after the successful establishment of secondary schools. The first school at Henrico was a dedicated place to house and train local native Indians in English customs. In 1612, a writer in Virginia sent news to England that the settlement's relations with the Indians would be far smoother if they were trained and evangelized according to English standards. In his agenda for incorporating the Indians into English life, the author notes that the establishment of a grammar school for the Indians was "the work that we first intended, and have published to the world to be chief in our thoughts, to bring those infidel people from the worship of devils to the service of God."

<sup>1</sup> Agreeing favorably, King James I later wrote to the leadership of the Church of England in 1617 authorizing them to take collections for the purpose of the education and conversion of the Virginia Indians. As J.E. Morpurgo contends the king's 1617 request was, after the Reformation, the very first "nation-wide and church-wide summons for funds intended for a missionary effort outside Great Britain,"<sup>2</sup> thus beginning what has become a longstanding tradition of endowment-driven institutions in American education.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> R.H. Land, "Henrico and its College," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 2: 18 (1938), 470.

<sup>2</sup> J.E. Morpurgo, *Their Majesties' Royall Colledge: William and Mary in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Williamsburg: The Endowment Association of The College of William and Mary, 1976), 5.

<sup>3</sup> Morpurgo argues that there was a continual connection between Henrico College and the later College of William and Mary. While William and Mary was not chartered until 1693, Morpurgo suggests that the long withstanding plans to erect an institution of higher learning in Virginia indicate the College of William and Mary's date of origin is actually prior to that of Harvard University. The fact remains, however, that there was no physical institution until after the royal commissioning at the close of the seventeenth century, nearly fifty years into Harvard's continued operation.

Unfortunately, after a brief three year existence both the secondary schools and the newly forming College in Henrico were destroyed in the 1622 Good Friday Massacre. While some report that discussion continued in London regarding the school's existence, it was not until 1660, when the Assembly of Virginia reclaimed the project and that plans began for a domestic institution of higher learning.<sup>4</sup> Following the design of both Oxford and Cambridge Universities, the Assembly voted to begin a college that trained students traditionally, focusing on strict religious training and moral standards within an Anglican context. Continuing the tradition of endowments, the legislation declared that the county courts take subscriptions on meeting days for the establishment of the college. Further, a petition made to Sir William Berkeley, the governor of Virginia at the time, that he petition the King to again authorize collections from those with means in England, "for the erecting of colledges and schools in this countrye," a claim he sourly dismissed, stating, "I thank God there are no free schools nor printing, and I hope we shall not have these hundred years."<sup>5</sup>

The plans and fundraising for a Virginia college continued for another twenty years, however none of the plans ever came to fruition. While some argue that the school's date of foundation began with the Assembly's call for monies in 1660 as described above, actual classroom meetings were highly unlikely given the colony's expansive, and still very fluid geographic movement.<sup>6</sup> Further, at this point in the colony's maturity, the planters most certainly

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<sup>4</sup> For a thorough account detailing the events between 1622 and 1660, see Morpurgo's, *Their Majesties' Royall Colledge*, 1976. Morpurgo argues that the continued discussion and effort toward reestablishing a college in the Jamestown colony clearly indicates that the College of William and Mary was the first, still-standing, institution of higher education on American soil, as its inception date was thirteen years prior to that of Harvard.

<sup>5</sup> William Berkeley, "Answers of Sir William Berkeley to the inquiries of the Lords of the Committee of Colonies From Virginia," in Herbert Baxter Williams, *The College of William and Mary: A Contribution to the History of Higher Education, with Suggestions for its National Promotion* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1887), 13. See also, William Waller Henning, *Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of all the Laws of Virginia From the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619, ii* (Reprint: New York: R. & W. & G. Bartow, 1823).

<sup>6</sup> Williams, *College of William and Mary*, 14. Also see Morpurgo, *Royall Colledge*.

possessed insufficient means to support the cost of a continued institution of higher learning. Many continued to hold the notion that Virginia was merely the “fabled El Dorado” from which financial betterment could be secured. In these contexts, the widely spread, agrarian folk of the Virginia settlements would be unable, and unwilling, to underwrite such a project, giving “little concern for the intellectual or cultural requirements of the colony.”<sup>7</sup>

Among the many religious traditions sparked by the Reformation in the early sixteenth century, few were as fervent or expansive during Virginia’s provincial era as the Anglican Church. In less than a century from their inception as a religious body, there were only slightly more than thirty clergymen in Virginia and Maryland in 1671, which represented roughly half of their American representatives on the whole.<sup>8</sup> By 1675, their presence in the colonies, and particularly in Virginia, multiplied quickly with the accession of Henry Compton as the bishopric of London. Immediately after attaining his new position, Compton took steps to establish his authority over the American Anglican churches. While this was certainly a new development in the colonies, Compton cited the initial charters of Virginia which gave clerical control to whoever held the position of bishop. A critical component of Compton’s new administrative initiatives was his decision to appoint clerical commissaries to represent him in the colonies. This decision carried significant weight in the colonies for years to come as the ecclesiastical commissaries brought with them to America all of the power to reinforce diocesan authority, with the exception of collating ministers to benefices, granting marriage licenses, and exercising wills.<sup>9</sup> As much as their “Old World” mentalities influenced both political and religious culture

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<sup>7</sup> John M. Jennings, *The Library of The College of William and Mary* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968), 6; While there is no direct lineage between the original college at Henrico, the 1660 Assembly movements, and the actual Royal Charter of The College of William and Mary in 1693, it is important to note that the spirit of higher learning in Virginia played a continual role in what ultimately lead to the establishment of America’s second college in Williamsburg.

<sup>8</sup> Cremin, *American Education*, 334.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

in Virginia, it also played an instrumental role in shaping the character of Virginia's higher education for the next century.

On December 15, 1689, Compton appointed James Blair to be his commissary to Virginia. A Scotsman by birth, Blair received his education at Marischal College and The University of Edinburgh before eventually assuming the role of an Episcopalian minister in Cranston, Scotland. Unfortunately for Blair, the brief and little known Scottish Test Act of 1689 forced him out of his position with the church, and thereafter, out of the country. King James II attempted to reinstate Catholicism through his territories, and forced all Protestant clerical members to sign a test oath that would have placed the Catholic king at the head not only of the English church, but of the Scottish church as well. Refusing to sign the Act, Blair took part in a counter movement seeking to "maintain and preserve the true Protestant religion contained in the Confession of Faith, recorded in the first parliament of King James VI."<sup>10</sup> Fighting the reinstatement of Catholicism in Scotland, Blair and his followers corresponded with local political leaders and members of parliament advising them that King James' Act was in contradiction to rules established earlier in the country's political history. Ultimately failing to bring the "popish church" to a "full and vigorous execution," English ruling removed Blair's Episcopal post and cut him off from further employment in Scotland as well.<sup>11</sup> Seeking employment elsewhere, Blair found refuge in London where, through the connections of a former professor, he met Compton who then appointed him as a missionary to the parish of Varina, in Henrico County, Virginia.<sup>12</sup> In the four years preceding his appointment as The College of William and Mary's first president, Blair aptly managed several local parishes,

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<sup>10</sup> "Scottish Test Act of 1689," <http://www.rps.ac.uk/trans/1681/7/29> (accessed on February 18, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Also see J. David Hoeveler, *Creating the American Mind: Intellect and Politics in the Colonial Colleges* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002), 82.

<sup>12</sup> Cremin, *American Education*, 335.

married into an influential family, and rapidly gained entry into a potent network of political and financial connections which he would later use in his efforts to secure funds for the newly forming college.<sup>13</sup>

Blair spent a short period in London where he eventually found favor with Compton and then departed to Virginia in 1689. Within his first year of service Blair convened the clergy of Jamestown for a meeting that set the foundation of the future of the College. While there are neither minutes of the proceedings, nor records of the attendees, it is generally accepted that at least two actions were taken during the meeting.<sup>14</sup> The first was the establishment of a system of ecclesiastical courts that enforced clerical law against any dissention. The second once again began the plans for the establishment of a college. While the first of the two actions quickly floundered, Blair's action toward the foundation of a college secured for him an enduring place in the history of American education.<sup>15</sup> Despite its brief existence, the first action should not be ignored. Very early on in the formation of the college it was evident that the local religious leadership had little tolerance for dissenting religions in Virginia. Regardless of the Toleration Act issued a year prior, the Virginia Anglican tradition was generally one of stubborn, if not dogmatic reluctance to any theological perspective outside its own. The College's direct connection to the Anglican Church was largely responsible for its relentless controversy with the dissenting groups throughout the next century due to its inability to tolerate dissimilar institutions.

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<sup>13</sup> James B. Bell, "Blair, James (1655/6–1743)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> See Cremin, *American Education*, (1970); "Papers Relating to the Founding of the College," in *The William and Mary College Quarterly*, No. 3 (Jan. 1898); George Maclaren Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church and the Political Conditions Under Which It Grew* (Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, 1947).

<sup>15</sup> Cremin, *American Education*, 335.

The 1690 proposal for the College incited for the “better encouragement of Learning By the founding a Colledge in this Country to consist of three Schools, Viz: Grammar, Phylosophy, & Divinity.”<sup>16</sup> It is evident from the founding sentiments of the clerical counsel that the College was intended to operate as a traditional English institution. At this time, there were only two institutions of higher learning in operation in England, Oxford College and Cambridge College. Both institutions were divided into three separate schools, as suggested for the College of William and Mary. Additionally, the only other practicing college in America during this time, Harvard, operated in the same way. The College of William and Mary, unlike its English counterparts, was intended from the beginning to be a training ground specifically for Anglicans.<sup>17</sup>

With plans in place, the College then found financial matters a daunting obstacle to overcome. After procuring some financial consideration from a few of Virginia’s more wealthy gentry, Blair made an eight-month trip to London where he enlisted the support of some of the leading clerics with whom he was formerly acquainted when living in London. Through the connections of Archbishop and close friend, John Tillotson, Blair received an audience with King William and Queen Mary, who, after his presentation, were pleased to support the college endeavor. Tillotson later confided in Blair that he never “saw the King take anything better than he did the very proposal of our college and that he promised frankly if ‘I could find anything in

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<sup>16</sup> Minutes recorded in “Papers Relating to the Founding of the College,” in *The William and Mary College Quarterly*, No. 3 (Jan. 1898), 158.

<sup>17</sup> While Oxford and Cambridge may have gone through periods of Anglican exclusivity, their long history of instruction was not tailored to a specific denomination. For further treatments see Jan Morris, *Oxford* (Oxford: University Press, 2001); G.R. Evans, *The University of Oxford: A New History* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2010); Elisabeth Leedham-Green, *A Concise History of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge: University Press, 1996); Damien Leader, *A History of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge: University Press, 1996); Christopher N.L. Brooke, *A History of the University of Cambridge*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1988-2004).

that country which was fit for him to give towards it [I] would give it.”<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, the king’s approval was not enough to convince many of the English clergy. After many more months of deliberation and a continual battle against those who feared an American college would “take our planters off from their mechanical employments, and make them grow too knowing, to be obedient and submissive,” Blair secured a royal charter on February 8<sup>th</sup> of 1693 and immediately began plans for the erection of the buildings and curriculum.<sup>19</sup>

The charter authorized the establishment of a college in Virginia in the namesake of William and Mary. Finding no other reasonable candidate for the presidential position, Blair accepted the appointment, and Compton became the first chancellor. Thinking through the leadership process, Blair remarked that while there were “many men in England much fitter for it upon the account of learning, prudence, and authority, yet perhaps there is none to be found that has a greater zeal for the country, or is more concerned in point of honor to see this work prosper than I am.”<sup>20</sup> The authorization ordered Blair to serve as the president “during his natural life,” and he therefore became “America’s first tenured professor.”<sup>21</sup>

That same year Blair purchased a tract of 330 acres for a total of £170 and marked the College site with boundary stones.<sup>22</sup> Unlike Harvard College, or the later-established Collegiate School (present-day Yale University), the College of William and Mary was inextricably tied to both English political and religious governing bodies. To further complicate matters, after the completion of the College’s first building, Middle Plantation became the capital of the state, and

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<sup>18</sup> John Tillotson to James Blair, cited in William Stevens Perry, *The History of the American Episcopal Church: 1587-1883, Vol. 1* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1885), 117.

<sup>19</sup> “Commissary Blair to Governor Nicholson, December 3, 1691,” in *Bishop Burnet’s History of His Own Time* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1823), 201.

<sup>20</sup> James Blair to Francis Nicholson, in Parke Rouse, Jr., *James Blair in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), 75.

<sup>21</sup> Hoeveler, *American Mind*, 85.

<sup>22</sup> Chris Dickon, *The College of William and Mary* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2007), 12. Two of the boundary stones still exist and are maintained in the College archives.

the College's building, being the most substantial in the state, became the meeting place for all political and social activity.<sup>23</sup> This connection, both necessary and perhaps uneventful at the time, would later play a significant role in William and Mary's slowed progression immediately following the American Revolution.

Despite their differing origins and religious persuasions, the College of William and Mary shared many of the curricular traits employed at Harvard, and later at Yale. As specified in the Royal Charter, the College was divided into three schools of "Grammar, Phylosophy, & Divinity."<sup>24</sup> Prior to admittance, students were required to acquire reading proficiency in both Greek and Latin. Thereafter, students within this traditionally English educational model received a prescribed system of readings and assignments, as demonstrated at both Harvard and Yale. These assignments were certainly not arbitrarily selected, but designed to produce a certain kind of student, and ultimately, a certain kind of citizen within that particular community. Each of the three schools represented choice texts relevant to both the societal and religious agenda in the immediate culture. Education, then, was not a means of emancipation, nor was it intentional about giving students autonomy in their vocational training. Rather, it was a structure specifically designed to meet the needs of the community, not the individual.

As was customary with medieval educational systems, the College resolved to focus on one subject per day. The breakdown of the daily activities would center on this one subject, giving students the opportunity to listen to lectures, to study, and to dispute with fellow students. For the first two hours, students would listen to the professor lecture on the day's given topic, followed by two hours of private study and immersing themselves in the subject. Each student would then publically recite what they researched in the previous hours. Finally, the students

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<sup>23</sup> Morpurgo, *Royall Colledge*, 51.

<sup>24</sup> "The Charter of the College of William and Mary, in Virginia, 1691," in *The History of the College of William and Mary From its Foundation, 1660, to 1874* (Richmond: J.W. Randolph & English, 1874), 38.

would “discuss and dispute, in order to practice and apply independently what they learned.”<sup>25</sup> The strict adherence to these curricular mandates were intended to produce proper, God-fearing members of society, and when possible, ordained ministers within the Anglican tradition. The curriculum placed a heavy emphasis on biblical languages and theological understanding, and the first year of the program strictly dedicated itself to Greek grammar, Hebrew grammar, rhetoric, history, and theological studies. The second year they continued studies in theology and rhetoric, but added ethics, Aramaic, Arithmetic and Geometry, and occasionally, botany.<sup>26</sup> More importantly, every student was responsible for reading Scripture daily. This required the student to be adept “in Theoreticall observations of the Language, and Logick, and in Practicall and Spirituall truths, as his Tutor shall require.”<sup>27</sup>

Given Blair’s Scottish roots, there were some small deviations in the College’s requirements than those characteristic of English institutions. In his “Statutes for the College of William and Mary,” Blair stipulated that the bachelor’s degree would require only two years, as opposed to the three-year English model. Further, whereas English students were primarily instructed through repetitious self-study, and guided Socratic discussion, Blair required that the divinity professors maintain regular lectures in their classroom. Finally, no fees were collected directly by the professors, as was customary in English schools. Blair’s intended that the students could attend “with as little charge as they can.”<sup>28</sup>

Regardless of some Scottish intricacies, the religious dimensions of the school were firmly established both in theory and in practice. While these curricular ideas were in circulation

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<sup>25</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison, *Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), 140. See also *First Fruits*, 27.

<sup>26</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Founding of Harvard College* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1935), 141.

<sup>27</sup> *New England’s First Fruits, Divers other Special Matters Concerning that Country* (London: Henry Overton, 1643; reprint New York, NY: Joseph Sabin, 1865), 26.

<sup>28</sup> James Blair, “The Statutes, 1727,” cited in *The William and Mary College Quarterly*, XXII (1914), 293.

shortly after the chartering of the College, it was not until 1727 that the school had sufficient resources to begin hiring regular faculty on a more permanent basis. That year, the officials of the school sent Blair to England to hire three new professors within the Anglican tradition. Of the three, perhaps the most significant to the future life of the school was Reverend William Dawson. Dawson, a graduate of Queen's College, Oxford, was widely known for his impeccable, if not incessant, religious character. Not only did he take the professorship in moral philosophy at the College, but Dawson also became a curate at Bruton parish, and shortly thereafter, a chaplain in the Virginia House of Burgesses.<sup>29</sup> After generating a core of six faculty members and acquiring sufficient funds to continue the school's viability, Blair succeeded in beginning an overtly Anglican institution of higher learning. Blair died in 1743, leaving Dawson as his presidential successor and new commissary of Virginia.

Despite Dawson's short five-year stint as president, he inherited significant religious tensions that threatened both the culture of the established church and the intellectual foundations of the College. New religious groups multiplied on the Virginia frontier and while the Toleration Act of 1689 gave the "Protestant Subjects dissenting from the Church of England" exemption "from the Penalties of certain laws," Virginia Anglicans continued to persecute and harass those religious bodies.<sup>30</sup> Being the intellectual hub of Anglican Virginia, the College was caught in the middle of rising controversy with the frontier religious groups.

Although tolerated by English law, the continued harassment of local dissenters and the opening of new land in the western parts of the colony led many eastern habitants to mobilize into the Piedmont. Initially only dissenters and former servants moved westward; the dissenters to avoid harassment and form homogeneous religious communities, and the former servants to

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<sup>29</sup> Hoeveler, *American Mind*, 90.

<sup>30</sup> "Toleration Act, 1689," in Andrew Browning, *English Historical Documents, 1660-1714* (New York: Routledge Publishers, 1966), 392.

acquire new accessible land. News spread quickly of the Piedmont's fertile land, and by the mid-eighteenth century, elite members of the Tidewater also began migrating into the center of Virginia. Notable families of wealth, including the Randolphs and the Byrds, obtained thousands of acres of land throughout the region, forcing the servants and dissenting groups further west to the border of the Blue Ridge Mountains.<sup>31</sup>

Through their access to political power in the east, these men not only acquired considerable amounts of fertile land, but they gained new positions in political authority. Perhaps the most successful among these pioneering elites was Alexander Spotswood. Spotswood, born into a north British middle-class family, won the patronage of the Duke of Marlborough who appointed him as lieutenant governor of Virginia.<sup>32</sup> After finding little room to expand in the central Piedmont region, Spotswood turned his attention to the Rappahannock River Valley where he managed to acquire nearly 83,000 acres.<sup>33</sup>

Aside from owning mills, mines, ironworks, and fifty-seven plantations, Spotswood was most successful in creating a diverse frontier cohabitation where several different cultures resided concurrently in relative harmony. Among the most prevalent immigrant groups making their way through the Virginia backcountry were the Germans. Spotswood recruited the Germans for several reasons, but primarily to save money. Since white servants were both expensive and in short supply on the frontier, the nine passing German families provided the necessary workforce without a high cost.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Fisher and Kelly, *Bound Away*, 74-75.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>33</sup> R.A. Brock, ed., *The Official Letters of Alexander Spotswood, Lieutenant-Governor of the Colony of Virginia, 1710-1722*, in Collections of the Virginia Historical Society, No. 1 (Richmond, 1882). For more information on the life and career of Spotswood, see Leonidas Dodson, ed., *Alexander Spotswood: Governor of Colonial Virginia, 1710-1722* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1932).

<sup>34</sup> German emigrants were both in search of work and lived much more parsimonious lives. As such, they required less pay than white servants who were accustomed to a slightly higher standard of living. Further since

By recruiting these Germans, Spotswood unintentionally brought a plethora of new customs to the area. Whereas white Virginians preferred to have their homes separated by a lot of land, the Germans built their homes very close together. Passing traveler John Fontaine remarked on this domestic anomaly, that there were “but nine families, and they have nine houses, built all in a line.”<sup>35</sup> While seemingly a slight cultural difference, the result was a more tightly knit community than found in the Tidewater.

Only two years into their contract, the Swiss Germans grew displeased with the more lavish lifestyle of their employer and migrated further west at the conclusion of the contract. Spotswood then hired seventy new Palestinian Germans, who like the former residents, brought with them diverse customs and fervent religious convictions. In the century leading up to the Revolution, it is estimated that nearly 100,000 Germans migrated to America, bringing with them a strong work ethic, religious diversity, and an overwhelming commitment to the family unit as over seventy-five percent of the emigrants traveled as a family of at least four people.<sup>36</sup> By 1790, the Germans had advanced so prolifically through the Virginia landscape that an estimated twenty-eight percent of all white Virginians were of German ancestry.<sup>37</sup>

Despite their prevalence, the Germans were not the only migrant group to populate the western parts of Virginia. With an expanding spirit of cultural and religious diversity in the backcountry, the Quakers were officially given permission to populate certain areas as well. Considering frontier religious liberties, the House of Burgesses concluded the “people called the Quakers shall have the same liberty of giving their evidence, by way of solemn affirmation and

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white, English-speaking servants were in short supply and emigrants in higher supply, naturally the cost of maintaining a servant was also higher.

<sup>35</sup> John Fontaine, *The Journal of John Fontaine: An Irish Huguenot Son in Spain and Virginia*, Edward Porter Alexander, ed. (Williamsburg: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundations, 1972), 12.

<sup>36</sup> Ida Altman and James Horn, *“To Make America”: European Emigration in the Early Modern Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 242.

<sup>37</sup> John Walter Wayland, “The German Element of the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia” (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1907), 52. Also see Fisher and Kelly, *Bound Away*, 114.

declaration, as it is described by an Act of Parliament.”<sup>38</sup> Consequently, Quakers arrived in Virginia in large numbers, accounting for nearly 5,000 of the backcountry residents in years directly preceding the Revolution. They brought with them larger families who, unlike other migrants, were seeking permanent residence. Ultimately they sought areas to establish exclusive rural Quaker communities where they could raise their children uncontested by other faith systems. Their resettlement in Virginia, while providing the necessary space, did not provide the closed society they sought. Moving into the same areas as both the Germans and Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, the Quakers found it difficult to intermingle given German and Scotch-Irish aggressive natures and positive stances on slavery.<sup>39</sup>

Thus the Quaker contribution to the pluralization of the backcountry was not necessarily in assimilating cultures around them, as they were one of the few groups that maintained a relatively consistent religious and ethnic identity. Rather, their presence in the west caused other cultures to assimilate some of their religious and cultural tendencies. Along with the Germans, the Quakers instilled a different type of notion of freedom in the backcountry region than was present in the Tidewater areas. Quaker and German concepts of freedom were more personal and communal. Contrarily, the Tidewater Anglicans approached freedom from a political perspective. While the terms “freedom” and “liberty” were used loosely in literature throughout this period, in general there were two prominent approaches toward freedom. The eastern parts of Virginia stressed political freedoms. Prior to the Revolution that meant freedoms from

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<sup>38</sup> Henning, *Statutes at Large*, 298

<sup>39</sup> While seemingly a stereotype of the two groups, numerous studies have demonstrated that both Germans and Scotch-Irish were accustomed to a “rougher” lifestyle. The Scotch-Irish hailed from northern England, a relatively desolate living situation during this time. It is not surprising that they were attracted to the wilderness of Virginia and the Carolinas. Likewise, the Germans were more hostile toward help from outsiders and appeared both restless and rude to many travelers. Since the Quakers were normally a timid and reclusive group, both the Scotch-Irish and the Germans would have been quite abrasive to their otherwise quiet personalities. See Altman and Horn, *European Emigration*; Edmund Burke, *An Account of the European Settlements in America: Vol. II* (London: R&J Dodsley, 1760; Reprint, General Books, 2009).

oppressive taxes and proper representation when necessary. While certainly not in exclusion to personal liberties, Tidewater focus was more political and corporate. The western parts of Virginia, being largely made up of non-English emigrants groups, tended to focus on personal liberties. These included, but were not limited to, exercise of free religions, autonomy from government interference with daily affairs, and the right of each man to govern his own household. While there were many exceptions to these generalities, the majority of eastern and western constituents gravitated toward these respective considerations of liberty. In the middle parts of the eighteenth century, frontier notions of personal freedoms grew as a result of voluntary migration. Large scale migration created condition in which ideas of toleration grew into “broader, more expansive concepts of freedom” within a multicultural society.<sup>40</sup>

Perhaps the most religiously influential group in the backcountry was the Presbyterians. As contemporary Edmund Burke recalled, they “took up new ground in the remote counties in Virginia, Maryland and North Carolina. These are chiefly Presbyterians from the Northern part of Ireland, who in America are generally called Scotch-Irish.”<sup>41</sup> Originally from the northern parts of England, the Scotch-Irish accounted for more than three-hundred thousand residents in the American backcountry.<sup>42</sup> Because of their substantial and swift entrance into the western parts of Virginia, the Presbyterian perceptions of freedom also spread quickly. Like the Germans and Quakers, they held personal liberties in high regard. Additionally, the Presbyterians encouraged the concept of “natural freedom” whereby each person was his or her own master.

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<sup>40</sup> Fisher and Kelly, *Bound Away*, 107; See also Altman and Horn, *European Emigration*; Edmund Burke, *An Account of the European Settlements in America: Vol. II* (London: R&J Dodsley, 1760; Reprint, General Books, 2009).

<sup>41</sup> Burke, *European Settlements in America*, 216. See also David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (Oxford: University Press, 1989), 785; Lyman Chalkley, *Chronicles of the Scotch-Irish Settlement in Virginia, Extracted from the Original Court Records of Augusta County, 1745-1800* (Mary S. Lockwood, Daughters of the American Revolution, 1912); Margaret C. Pilcher, *Historical Sketches of the Campbell, Pilcher and Kindred Families* (Nashville: Press of Marshall & Bruce Co, 1911).

<sup>42</sup> Cecil Headlam, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies* (London: Public Record Office, 1910), 721.

Freedom in this context was not just the right to be heard, but rather the right to be left alone to their own devices.

By the 1750 the western parts of Virginia became a checkerboard of religious persuasions, some assimilating tenants of their neighboring faiths, others choosing to coexist without mitigating their traditional beliefs. Even those Anglicans who migrated to the Piedmont adopted a more liberal definition of toleration and, in many places, lived along side their dissenting neighbors. The idea of universal religious toleration, however, was not a natural occurrence in the Tidewater. In addition to harassment, gentry who sat on local juries often convicted other Protestants and completely disregarded the Toleration Act.<sup>43</sup> But the persecution did not stop some dissenters from exercising their right to hold worship and speak openly of their faith.

Further adding to the gentry's long list of annoyances were itinerant preachers who made a profession out of traveling and proselytizing. The rapid growth in popularity of itinerant ministers such George Whitefield, Samuel Davies, John Wesley, Devereux Jarratt, and others stirred the Anglican community. Throughout the eastern coastal cities, Whitefield made significant progress in his efforts to convert individuals to the emerging "New Light" religious persuasion.<sup>44</sup> The New Lights encouraged a personal connection with God, evidenced in many cases by a tangible or emotional spiritual experience. In Virginia, the New Light Presbyterian Samuel Davies quickly gained converts to his ministry. Located in the rural backcountry of Virginia, Davies ministered to those areas that were often neglected by the Anglican Church.

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<sup>43</sup> Fisher and Kelly, *Bound Away*, 105.

<sup>44</sup> For detailed treatments of "New Light" and "Old Light" controversies, see Wesley M. Gewehr, *The Great Awakening in Virginia, 1740-1790* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1965); Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); John C. Pollock, *George Whitefield and the Great Awakening* (Garden City: Doubleday Publishers, 1972); David Harlan, *The Clergy and the Great Awakening in New England* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980); Mark Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003); and Noll, *Princeton and the Republic*, 1989.

Because the rural communities were too far spread out for Anglican officials to comprehensively manage, it was common that the parishioners would go weeks or months without an official Anglican minister. More often, there were simply no churches within traveling distance to these communities, which made the backcountry fertile for Davies and his itinerant ministry.

Theologically, Davies found a middle-ground between the some extremes of the progressing evangelical movement and the liturgical culture of the Anglican traditions. Commenting on this balance, Davies urged the Virginia New Lights to find a middle ground between “the wild reveries of enthusiasm and the droning heaviness of serene stupidity.”<sup>45</sup>

The growth of New Light groupings throughout the Virginia backcountry, with a particular concentration in Hanover County, spurred on a fearful debate between the Established Church and the New Lights that would last nearly a century. To the Anglicans, leadership and parishioners alike, the rural evangelicals were radicals who were in constant violation of Virginia law, and ultimately were challenging the governance of the English crown.

Given the inseparable connection between the College and the Established Church, the school soon entered into the controversies over the dissenters as well. William Stith, a grandson of William Randolph I, was one of the colony’s paramount intellectuals, being Oxford educated and a master of the grammar school attached to the College. Further, he maintained his position as rector of Henrico Parish for more than sixteen years and served in the House of Burgesses. Stith became the College’s third president in 1752, and being a staunch Anglican, he sharply and promptly opposed the New Light movement. In a sermon titled, “The Nature and Extent of Christ’s Redemption,” Stith feverishly argued against the evangelical “fiery zealots,” and

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<sup>45</sup> Samuel Davies, 1752, in George William Pilcher, *Samuel Davies: Apostle of Dissent in Colonial Virginia* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1971), 59.

contended, in typical Anglican form, that salvation was grounded in morality, and judgment was “according as they [humanity] have acted up to the laws of nature.”<sup>46</sup>

Stith’s reaction to the evangelical movement set forth a precedence of religious exclusion in the history of the school. Since there was no bishop present in America, many decisions were left to the intellectual hubs of Anglican theology. In Virginia, the decisions regarding the fate of the frontier Protestants surfaced at the College of William and Mary. Resulting from the feud, the College’s enrollment dipped significantly throughout the middle of the eighteenth-century. The exclusively-Anglican board allocated resources in other directions, and few in the community seemed eager to give to its cause.<sup>47</sup> Religious tensions continued, and the intellectual fervor formerly very evident at the College, refocused on the problem of radicals in the backcountry.

It was also during this time that the notorious William Small, professor and lifelong friend of Thomas Jefferson, began his brief teaching career at the College. Originally appointed as a professor of mathematics, Small later acquired the post of teaching moral philosophy.

Describing Small, Jefferson noted:

It was my great good fortune, and what probably fixed the destinies of my life that Dr. Wm. Small of Scotland was then professor of Mathematics. A man profound in most of the useful branches of science, with a happy talent of communication, correct and gentlemanly manners, and an enlarged and liberal mind.<sup>48</sup>

Small’s lasting influence, however, was perhaps less than is typically conveyed through Jeffersonian literature.<sup>49</sup> While furthering the lecture system and breaking the

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<sup>46</sup> William Stith, *The Nature and Extent of Christ’s Redemption*, 1753, 25.

<sup>47</sup> Hoeveler, *American Mind*, 96.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Autobiography*. <http://libertyonline.hypermall.com/Jefferson/Autobiography.html> (accessed on February 19, 2011).

<sup>49</sup> Many treatments on Jefferson and his educational ideas elevate the significance of Small in the progression of the College of William and Mary. While he was certainly instrumental in the lives of Jefferson and George Wythe, his influence in the College’s overall direction may not be as drastic as is often conveyed. See Herbert Adams, *Thomas Jefferson and the University of Virginia* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1888);

characteristic English forms of repetitiveness in the classroom, Small only remained at the College for six years before retiring back to England in 1764. Leaving behind a lasting friendship with Thomas Jefferson and some small scientific paraphernalia for the school to use, Small's influence remained relatively smothered by the larger quarrels taking place both within and outside of the College walls. The College was floundering and had not maintained its formerly rigorous academic standards. Because of this, it was nearly impossible to keep quality professors, and consequently, to retain promising students. Small held to an enlightened worldview, one in which Jefferson admittedly gleaned. Singled out by the Anglican leadership and his faculty colleagues, Small found the quarrels at the College to be degrading to the profession and opposing to his core values. It is for these reasons that the College of William and Mary is usually attributed the title of "enlightened" when in fact, it was only a brief six-year stint of one man, whose influence extended, as far as evidence allows, to only a few students.<sup>50</sup> The majority of the faculty and College leadership, however, were patently Anglican and retaliatory to any universal, enlightened ideas of religious autonomy. While America can be thankful for Small's lasting impressions on Jefferson, treatments have long-missed the

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Cameron Addis, *Jefferson's Vision for Education, 1760-1845* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003); Charles F. Arrowood, *Thomas Jefferson and Education in a Republic* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1930); James B. Conant, *Thomas Jefferson and the Development of American Public Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962); James Gilreath, ed., *Thomas Jefferson and the Education of a Citizen* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2002); Robert M. Healey, *Jefferson on Religion in Public Education* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1970); Jennings Wagoner, *Jefferson and Education* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Lorraine and Thomas Pangle, *The Learning of Liberty: The Educational Ideas of the American Founders* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1993).

<sup>50</sup> For a few references of William and Mary as "enlightened," see Glenn Patton, "The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, and the Enlightenment," in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, No. 1 (March 1970); Mark R. Wenger, "Thomas Jefferson, the College of William and Mary, and the University of Virginia," in *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, No. 3 (July 1995); Norman Fiering, "The First American Enlightenment: Tillotson, Leverett, and Philosophical Anglicanism," in *The New England Quarterly*, No. 3 (September 1981), and to some extent, Cremin, *American Education*.

College's fundamental position as a breeding ground of Anglican theology in response to their rural, radical opponents.

Smith's influence on the College, though certainly positive, did not impede the continued hostility of the faculty toward religious and cultural diversity. Entering one of the most influential disputes colonial Virginia's intellectual transformation, the College faculty engaged in the Episcopalian Debate of 1770-1773 when Virginia Anglicans contested for an American episcopate. The notion of establishing an American episcopate was not a novelty. Years earlier James Blair, the College's first president, urged for the establishment of the position and for the church officials to elect him into it. Despite Blair's efforts otherwise, the head of the church did not feel it was appropriate to have an American ambassador with equal responsibility.<sup>51</sup> As only the London-based bishop could elect and appoint church leadership, the inability of American clergy to ordain their own ministers often hindered the advance of Anglicanism in America. So when the polemical exchange began in the *Virginia Gazette*, there were many willing to consider the idea of an American episcopate for practical purposes.

In consideration of this, a dozen clergymen convened in a 1771 meeting to discuss whether a petition should be made to the King. Though the majority approved, a small minority of four exhorted the rest to "reflect upon the Disturbances occasioned by the Stamp Act," and consider the possible rebellion and anarchy if a bishop was imposed on the colony.<sup>52</sup> Two of those opposing the installation of an American bishop were newly arrived professors to the College, Samuel Henley and Thomas Gwatkin. Their rebuttal to the American bishop was not based on their reluctance to the idea itself, but rather that the majority consisted of only eight clergy members, when there existed nearly one hundred others in Virginia who had no say in the

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<sup>51</sup> Morpurgo, *Royall Colledge*, 147.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas Gwatkin, *A Letter to the Clergy of New York and New Jersey Occasioned by an Address to the Episcopalians in Virginia, May 9, 1771* (Purdie & Dixon; Reprinted Gale Ecco Publishers, 2010), 5.

matter. Protesting the impropriety of a small religious faction acting on behalf of a much larger, unrepresented body, Henley and Gwatkin declared the movement “an Usurpation directly repugnant to the Rights of Mankind.”<sup>53</sup>

As the hub of Anglican education in America the College of William and Mary was sensitive to all the implications of the episcopacy debate and there existed complications that did not exist elsewhere in the colony. The presiding Bishop of London, whose authority over American Anglicanism was in question, was also the Chancellor of the College. The Bishop was also the means by which the school could approach and encourage continuing British philanthropy. The College was also the seminary for American ordinands, which meant the varying positions in the debate among the faculty stifled the already failing ministerial training center. As each of the six faculty members were potential runners in the race to an American bishopric, the debate became a regular part of collegiate conversation.

Henley and Gwatkin’s sentiments “brought on a Severe Paper War” of which faculty in the College took opposing positions.<sup>54</sup> Henley, then a professor for moral philosophy, continued to oppose the installation of a bishop. Opposing Henley, the outspoken John Camm “commenced Champion for a Bishop” in his typical controversial fashion.<sup>55</sup> The protagonists for the bishop, led by Camm, pointed out that the disordered state of the established church amidst the growth of dissenting religions necessitated a more direct form of ecclesiastical governance. With the bishopric located in London, church discipline and clerical enthusiasm were in continual decline. An American representation, they argued, would make the clergy more efficient and productive, but would not change the laity.

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<sup>53</sup> *The Virginia Gazette*, June 6, 1771 (Purdie & Dixon).

<sup>54</sup> Perry, *Historical Collections*, 471.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 472.; Also cited in Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 184.

The antagonists, led by Henley, asserted that a direct ruler over the American Anglican church would have too much power. They argued that curbing such a great authority, especially during such a turbulent period, would be nearly impossible and those who employed the proposal held a “conspiracy against the liberties of America.”<sup>56</sup>

Matters of doctrine and ecclesiology may not have held much significance to the average gentrymen, but in midst of a rapidly diversifying Tidewater culture, questions of church allegiance aroused considerable attention. Given both internal and external disturbances on the colony, the Anglican altercations, chiefly emanating from the College of William and Mary, reveal pervasive anxieties about the nature and legitimacy of authority within a developing society.

Virginia patriots, both in the frontier and in the Tidewater, expressed sincere fear at the political uses to which an American bishop could be used by a British monarchy set on subduing American liberties. Images of spiritual lordship, while “benign” symbols for some, were significant to many others.<sup>57</sup> Even to those who affirmed Anglican membership, the idea of an American bishop was a frightening one. Colonel Richard Bland, a committed member of Anglican gentry, professed himself a “sincere son of the established church,” but while he could “embrace her Doctrines” he still disapproved of the church’s hierarchy, labeling it a “relick of the Papal Ineroachments.”<sup>58</sup> While many considered the movement a practical good for the advancement of Anglican tradition into the western parts of Virginia, a growing number of

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<sup>56</sup> Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 185.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>58</sup> Bland to Adams, May 11, 1771, in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. V (1896-97), 149.

sincere Anglican members, and nearly all of the dissenting participants in the debate, looked upon an American episcopacy as perhaps the least meritorious feature within the denomination.<sup>59</sup>

Perhaps even more important than fears of denominational interests were the definitions of patriotism generated in the debate. As patriotism and separatism rapidly became synonymous terms, many saw those supporting the Church of England as shameful.<sup>60</sup> As London monitored matters of the denomination, antagonists viewed the importation of an institution that typified English hierarchy an affront to the rising spirit of American democracy. Persisting loyalists, however, argued that a closer association with the Bishop of London was valuable both ecclesiastically and politically, and would serve as a powerful link with the monarchy.

At the height of the controversy, fear of a clerical monarch intensified when the *Virginia Gazette* announced that the president of the College, Reverend James Horrocks, “with his Lady, took Shipping for England . . . for the Recovery of their Healths.”<sup>61</sup> Despite the press’s claim otherwise, there were many in Virginia who concluded that Horrocks traveled to England to “lay a foundation for this [Episcopal] Establishment, & that he expects to be the First Right Reverend Father of the American Church.”<sup>62</sup> Horrocks’ untimely death, however, signified that matters of health were likely the primary concern of his trip. Only a few months later the circumstances of the debate altered. The Virginia House of Burgesses formally declared their thanks to Henley, Gwatkin, and the two other opposing members of the controversy. They were grateful for the:

Wise and well timed Opposition they have made to the pernicious Project of a few mistaken Clergymen, for introducing an American Bishop; a Measure by much

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<sup>59</sup> That is, those familiar with their English past considered dispute a remnant of imperious Roman custom. Morpurgo, *Royall Colledge*, 164.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>61</sup> *The Virginia Gasette*, June 20, 1771 (Purdie & Dixon).

<sup>62</sup> Richard Bland to John Adams, August 1, 1771, in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. V (1896-97), 154.; see also Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 185.

Disturbance, great Anxiety, and Apprehension, would certainly take Place among his Majesty's faithful American Subjects.<sup>63</sup>

The House's intervention in this manner put to rest most public fears of an episcopate, and, for the most part, the issue only persisted periodically in small Anglican circles. The lack of diversity at the school amidst an increasingly diverse culture retarded the progress of the school. Whereas the New England colleges incorporated a diverse intellectual culture, the College of William and Mary was slowly suffocating.<sup>64</sup> Since the College was a direct extension of the Church of England, it faced no internal theological threats. For that reason, however, the Anglican college never engaged in the dynamic intellectual and academic exchange necessary to adapt to the rapidly diversifying culture around them. Because "the college inherited an identity and did not have to defend it," the Anglican bastion was rendered largely unprepared to combat the growing enlightened evangelicalism on the frontier.<sup>65</sup> William and Mary could not support a full-time faculty, nor was it concerned with student academic achievement as much as it was its place among Virginia elite culture. Resources were meager, the grounds were in disrepair, and the local habitants seemed uninterested in supporting its continued success.<sup>66</sup> But, as a chartered institution of the English crown and as an unapologetic extension of the established church, the College had very little choice but to defend those principles upon which it was founded nearly a century earlier.

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<sup>63</sup> John Pendleton Kennedy, ed., *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1770-1772* (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1906), 122.

<sup>64</sup> Hoeveler, *American Mind*, 98.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

CHAPTER 2  
THE RISE OF AN ENLIGHTENED BACKCOUNTRY:  
LIBERTY HALL ACADEMY AND HAMPDEN-SYDNEY COLLEGE

With the influx of emigration to the Virginia frontier in the mid-eighteenth century came an influx of cultural and intellectual diversity. White gentry from the Piedmont cohabitated alongside Presbyterians from northern England, Germans Pietists, Pennsylvania Quakers, and French Huguenots. The movement of diverse people groups to the frontier also brought new ideas of toleration. Progressive ideas of freedom grew out of the ideas of toleration, resulting in “a new set of libertarian ideas” that came to embody the educational institutions of the frontier.<sup>1</sup>

Chief among the contributors to the diversity of libertarian ideas within the Backcountry was Samuel Davies. Davies, a graduate of Samuel Blair’s New Light academy in Fagg’s Manor, Pennsylvania, was licensed to preach in 1746 by the Presbytery of New Castle in Pennsylvania. Shortly after, he departed as both a missionary and New Light ambassador to the newly forming Presbyterian movement in Hanover County, Virginia. From that time until his procurement of the presidency at the College of New Jersey in 1759, Davies was “the mind and heart of the dissenting movement” in that region.<sup>2</sup>

During his itinerant ministry throughout the Virginia frontier, Davies spent an inordinate amount of time dealing with Tidewater officials. Narrowly construing the Toleration Act, the Virginia authorities were reluctant to grant freedoms of worship to all who asked. In Davies perception, the dissenting religious bodies were claiming no other “liberties than those granted

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<sup>1</sup> Fischer, *Albion’s Seed*, clvii.

<sup>2</sup> Cremin, *American Education*, 455. Numerous accounts treat the life and ministry of Samuel Davies. For further information see Robert Bluford, *Living on the Borders of Eternity: The Story of Samuel Davies and the Struggle for Religious Toleration in Colonial Virginia* (Mechanicsville: Historic Polegreen Press, 2004); George William Pilcher, *Reverend Samuel Davies Abroad: The Diary of a Journal to England and Scotland, 1753-55* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1967); Gewehr, *The Great Awakening in Virginia, 1740-1790*; Kidd, *The Great Awakening*.

by the Act of Toleration – those only upon our compliance with all its requirements.”<sup>3</sup> Davies eventually earned the right to be heard by both his supporting dissenters on the frontier and because of his budding friendship with English Attorney General, Sir Dudley Ryder. While he had sufficiently convinced some of the authorities to grant more exceptions to dissenter’s practices of worship, his major victory was in unifying the frontier dissenting groups toward a common cause. Thereafter, the frontier pulpit became a frenzy of Whig rhetoric, encouraging the backcountry residents to stand firm in their convictions of personal and political rights. As the rate of literacy began to rise, pamphlets, newspapers, short political works, and published sermons flourished in the frontier areas. They condemned the practice of religious exclusion, and exhorted natural freedoms, both religious and communal.<sup>4</sup>

As with any intellectual development, the issue of training future leaders became a priority for many. Like the churches, the grammar schools and budding academies were also caught up in the politics of the movement. These institutions vigorously sought to provide a catholic plan of education, admitting students of many ethnic, religious, and regional backgrounds. In 1776, the Presbytery of Hanover founded Liberty Hall Academy in Augusta County, Virginia in an attempt to foster further enlightened leaders. Liberty Hall, however, operated under unique societal conditions. As school on the Virginia frontier, Liberty Hall was no exception to the struggle for identity amidst multiple competing ideologies in the late-eighteenth century. Originally founded in 1749, Liberty Hall began as a grammar school, informally called Augusta Academy.<sup>5</sup> However, the initial academy did not grow beyond a

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<sup>3</sup> “Extract of a Letter from the Reverend Mr. Sam. Davies in Hanover County, Virginia, to Dr. Doddridge, dated October 2, 1750,” in William Stevens Perry, *Historical Collections Relating to the American Colonial Church, Volume I* (Hartford: Church Press Company, 1870), 371.

<sup>4</sup> Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 80, 291.

<sup>5</sup> While no immediate physical evidence has survived from this time due to a fire prior to 1770, oral tradition and later records validate the school’s 1749 origin date. Most of these traditions are accounted for in Henry

grammar school until 1776, when the name was officially and patriotically changed to Liberty Hall, making it the second college in Virginia and fourth in the southern colonies. With the growing prosperity of the Hanover Presbytery and the transforming culture of the public in Virginia, the establishment of the school as a frontier locale for higher education became incredibly important. Having proposed the idea to the Presbytery, the establishment of Liberty Hall was formerly agreed upon in October, 1774. The Presbytery “returned the consideration of a school for the liberal education of youth. . . [which it] unanimously judge[d] to be a great importance.”<sup>6</sup> This founding statement demonstrates the clear change in the perception of higher education from ministerial training centers to “liberal” education.

Within the short period of eighty years between the founding of the College William and Mary and the beginnings of Liberty Hall, perceptions of educational purpose transformed from “ministers of the gospel” to “liberal education of youth.” Outside of requiring board meetings to “at all times be open and concluded with prayer,” nowhere in Liberty Hall’s founding charter or the Hanover Presbytery’s commissioning documents are there explicit spiritual requirements or purposes for the institution.<sup>7</sup> Despite the corresponding Presbyterian origins, there is no clear intent to specifically train ministers for the propagation of the Gospel.

A 1776 issue of the *Virginia Gazette* demonstrated their “liberal” education in a publication noting the opening of the new academy. The rector of the school reiterated that the school was “for the liberal education of youth,” and while the “education and morals of youth. . . [are] great objects of view, those peculiarities which form the complexion of any party shall have

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Ruffner, *Historical Papers: Early History of Washington College, Now Washington and Lee University*, (Baltimore: John Murphy and Co. Publishers, 1890).

<sup>6</sup> Washington and Lee University, “Liberty Hall Board of Trustees Minutes,” October 13, 1774, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Liberty Minutes, January 30, 1783, 37.

no place in the scheme.”<sup>8</sup> Neither the founding documents nor the publicized advertisement point to a theological emphasis; rather, they imply that no one “party” will be represented over another.

Liberty Hall’s purpose statement reveals how the Enlightenment ideals of a universal education consisting primarily of modern languages, advanced sciences, and the “arts” were taking over traditional educational models where religious denominations primarily sought to conform and prepare students for public ministry. Interestingly, the daily activities and requirements of Liberty Hall students seem to suggest a struggle in completely following through with this Enlightenment model. Of the thirteen student guidelines listed by the Trustees, five were religious in nature, with the other eight prohibiting immoral behavior. Students were required to attend both morning and evening prayers, attend mid-morning worship, and were responsible “for all transgressions” they had committed throughout the week.<sup>9</sup> Among several other limitations, students could not play cards, dice, swear, lie, or go to the tavern during unruly hours.<sup>10</sup> While the purpose of the College may have been designated for pure liberal education, the day-to-day operations seemingly functioned more as a religious school, with students bound by codes of ethics and committed prayer and worship times.

The most prominent individual in the founding of Liberty Hall was the New Light preacher William Graham. Graham was born in Pennsylvania in 1746 to Scotch-Irish parents. Having spent most of his adolescent life working on a farm, Graham then went to the College of New Jersey at the late age of twenty-one. Following his studies there, he briefly studied theology under the notable Reverend John Roan at the Presbytery in Hanover, Virginia. By Samuel

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<sup>8</sup> *The Virginia Gazette*, November 8, 1776, 3.

<sup>9</sup> *Liberty Minutes*, February, 1784, 37-38.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

Stanhope Smith's recommendation, the Presbytery gave consideration to Graham's leadership and pastoral abilities, which ultimately led to his appointment as rector of Liberty Hall in 1774.<sup>11</sup>

What distinguishes Graham from his contemporaries on the frontier is his seemingly divided approach to education. His personal education under Witherspoon at the College of New Jersey, divinity training under John Roan, and relentless moral code suggest that he was a man of strict religious conviction. The full extent of his personal religious agenda cannot be traced to a journal or personal letter, but his ethical persuasion certainly depicts a man overtly concerned with the morality of his students. Many times throughout the Trustee's Minutes, Graham recorded students' dissolute actions ranging from lying or swearing to a student threatening to burn the school down.<sup>12</sup> At one point he recorded the slight incident of students reprimanded for having "taken a beehive from Charles Kirkpatrick."<sup>13</sup> As the first two decades of the College's existence progressed, these noted misdemeanors took up more of the Trustee's energy, or at the very least, more of Graham's recorded minutes.

As an ordained Presbyterian minister and rector of the academy, Graham had many weekly responsibilities to "warmly recommend" the attendance of worship, to assist in school rule violations, and to account for the "transgressions" of students at the close of each week.<sup>14</sup> Further, he served as the pastor of Lexington Presbyterian Church from its founding to his eventual retirement in 1796.<sup>15</sup> Graham's educational paradigm, historian Robert Calhoon contends, "modeled a religious grounded moderation," a moderation that influenced every area of his life, in both private and public spheres.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Calhoon, *Political Moderation*, 170-171.

<sup>12</sup> Liberty Minutes, February, 1787, 58.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>15</sup> Cremin, *American Education*, 14.

<sup>16</sup> Calhoon, *Political Moderation*, 171.

Despite these seemingly traditional roles of a Presbyterian administrator, Graham's educational practices hint at progressive thinking and a contemporary understanding for enlightened humanistic principles. Liberty Hall's repeated purpose statements for the academy, as noted above, do not allude to religion, nor to the training of Presbyterian ministers. As the *ex officio* secretary of the Trustees, Graham rarely provided explicit sectarian leanings in his recordings, which was uncharacteristic for institutions founded previously in the century, especially the College of William and Mary.

The role of curriculum and resources used at the school is one of the most significant aspects to understanding the entrance of Enlightenment principles to the Virginia frontier. Upon his appointment as rector, Graham went to Philadelphia to purchase "books and... apparatus" for the school's use.<sup>17</sup> Of the one-hundred and one books purchased, only forty-six percent were religious or theological in nature. The remaining books comprised the vast subject matters of language, classics, philosophy, law, history, literature, and the sciences; with languages and the classics composing only eight percent.<sup>18</sup> This contrasts the average private library in Virginia which was composed of twelve percent religious works and twenty-six percent languages and the classics.<sup>19</sup>

This imbalance seems to suggest that Liberty Hall's advertisements and self-proclaimed mission to provide a comprehensive and nonsectarian liberal education are skewed. A further assessment of the books, however, sheds light on this inconsistency. When inspecting the nature of the religious works, it becomes apparent that there is no common theme, nor is there a bias toward a particular theological system. While there are a limited number of Presbyterian works, a

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<sup>17</sup> Liberty Minutes, March, 1776, 14.

<sup>18</sup> Betty Ruth Kondayan, "The Library of Liberty Hall Academy," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 86, No. 4 (Oct., 1978), 434-435.

<sup>19</sup> George K. Smart, "Private Libraries in Colonial Virginia," *American Literature*, 10 (March 1938), 39.

multitude of dissenting religions were all equally represented. What is more notable is that nearly all the authors represented in the library were of mixed religious and political persuasions.<sup>20</sup>

Graham's selection of non-religious books represents some of the most notable resources in Enlightenment literature, including *Universal History*, *Spectacle de la Nature*, *Ancient History* and *Philosophia Britannica*. Further, as evidenced in the binding usage, page connotations, and references in class notes, these Enlightenment works were by far the most widely read and distributed books at the school; whereas many works of religious nature appear to have been rarely, if ever, used.<sup>21</sup>

Liberty Hall maintained a unique approach to its curriculum. Historically, the majority of colleges in the country designed programs to meet the specific purposes of the respective institutions. Mirroring their seemingly disjointed Trustee's notes, Liberty Hall had no set curriculum, and "students were allowed to study in areas of their own choice."<sup>22</sup> Going against the traditional Presbyterian hierarchy and established rules, students were given the freedom to study the subjects they wished. The only set requirement was that every student who graduated from Liberty Hall was to be educated in Greek, Hebrew, Latin, and possibly other languages. The growth of student autonomy and the widespread use of languages and classical literature points toward a growing appreciation for Enlightenment ideals at the expense of the other subjects, including religion and some more traditional sciences.<sup>23</sup> This was not a common trend among contemporary schools, but found later advocates as Thomas Jefferson's proposal in

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<sup>20</sup> To date, Betty Ruth Kondayan's article represents the most accurate account of the earliest works of the Academy. With the exception of one author, every religious work listed in her account was authored by "tolerant" individuals. Highly opinionated works or those strictly espousing to one religious scheme over another are not present in her records.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 439.

<sup>22</sup> Miller, *Revolutionary College*, 185.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

1800.<sup>24</sup> For Jefferson, the primary purpose of education was to “inculcate ethical behavior,” which in turn would lead to moral and responsible citizens.<sup>25</sup> While not explicitly stated in the founding documents, Liberty Hall’s synthesis of a Christian framework with Enlightenment ideals may have led to a loosening of the traditional hierarchy within the classroom with a similar purpose in mind. Without a detailed record of book usage and curriculum mapping, the extent to which Enlightenment themes were specifically illustrated in the classroom remains speculation.

When the school relocated to Lexington in 1782, it petitioned the Virginia legislature for official incorporation. Under this Act, Liberty proposed to abide by the “Constitutions and Laws of this Commonwealth. . . for good order and government.”<sup>26</sup> At this point Liberty Hall was officially renamed Liberty Hall Academy, illustrating the formality of change from a private to public institution. While the explicit avowal of civic responsibility is certainly notable, what stands out more clearly is the fact that Liberty Hall incorporated at all. The action in pursuing government affiliation indicates a break from the control of the Presbytery. Furthermore, unlike the College of William and Mary which was tied directly to British governing bodies, Liberty Hall Academy associated itself with the Commonwealth of Virginia. The *Historical Papers* of the College state that this action caused the Presbytery to lose “control over the academy which they had founded.”<sup>27</sup>

The shift in official control should not be overlooked as part of the broad ideology of the school. As a chartered school, it was now able to attract a more diverse body of students, a growth paradigm the College of William and Mary had not adapted. By incorporating in

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<sup>24</sup> Edward M. Healey, *Jefferson on Religion in Public Education* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 16.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>26</sup> Liberty Minutes, Act of Incorporation, October, 1782, 35.

<sup>27</sup> Ruffner, *Historical Papers*, 31.

Virginia, Liberty Hall was eligible for public funds or grants that were withheld when it was supported by the Presbytery. While incorporating was a logical choice to attract new students with diverse theological backgrounds, on an ideological level, it indicated an internal move away from the traditional private hierarchy of higher education in Virginia toward a progressive public, non-denominational form.

Having incorporated in 1783, the Trustees debated the nature and extent to which degrees should be granted, and in 1785 they “resolved that the . . . young gentlemen alumni of this academy be admitted to the Degree of Bachelor of Arts.”<sup>28</sup> Among these, Samuel Carrick graduated and went on to found Blount College in 1794, which has developed into present-day University of Tennessee. The school was formed based on the “seminary courses once taught from his home.”<sup>29</sup> While the history of Blount demonstrates a foundation of religious courses, Carrick’s intent was to provide education “to students of all denominations,” thus demonstrating the divided educational structure of Liberty Hall Academy.

Moses Hoge was ordained a minister through the Hanover Presbytery and went on to assume presidency of neighboring institution, Hampden-Sydney College, from 1806 until his death.<sup>30</sup> As will be discussed in greater detail, Hampden-Sydney considers its founding as the “southernmost representative of the ‘Log College’ form of higher education. . . whose academic ideal was. . . the Scottish Enlightenment,” a role partially supported by some Enlightened alumni of Liberty Hall.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Liberty Hall Minutes, September, 1785, 53. The following names were listed as the first graduating class: Samuel Blackburn, Samuel Carrick, Moses Hoge, Samuel Houston, William McClung, Andrew McClure, John McCue, James Priestley, Adam Rankin, Archibald Roane, Terah Templin, and William Willson.

<sup>29</sup> University of Tennessee, “UT’s First Presidents,” <http://web.utk.edu/~mklein/firstpre.html> (accessed on March 11, 2009).

<sup>30</sup> Hampden-Sydney College, “Our History: Presidential Gallery,” <http://www.hsc.edu/History-of-Hampden-Sydney/Presidential-Gallery/PresGallery/Moses-Hoge.html> (accessed on March 12, 2011).

<sup>31</sup> Hampden-Sydney College, “Our History: History of Hampden-Sydney College,” <http://www.hsc.edu/hshistory> (accessed March 12, 2011).

Perhaps one of the most notable characters from this first graduating class was Samuel Houston. Houston was the father of the historic Sam Houston who went on to lay the foundations for America's acquisition of Texas. Later in life, Houston's son became a U.S. Senator and was known for his disgust with extremists of any kind, favoring free exercise of religious beliefs.<sup>32</sup>

Lastly, Archibald Roane went on to frame the Tennessee State Constitution, was a general in that state militia, and eventually served on the Supreme Court of Errors and Appeals until his death in 1818. Throughout his political career, he was highly supportive of public and liberal education to youth, echoing, perhaps, his time spent at Liberty Hall.<sup>33</sup>

If the actions of alumni are any gauge to the nature of education received, then it is a fair assessment to understand the educational model at Liberty Hall as one committed to the Enlightenment ideals of balance and civic virtue, while still compelled to produce graduates in professional ministry. While many alumni went on to serve in important roles throughout the country, many still remained committed to the Presbyterian Church and were ordained for public ministry.<sup>34</sup> No matter the career path, however, Liberty Hall had become distinguished for producing contributive citizens. In a letter to the Synod of Virginia in September of 1792, the Trustees at Liberty Hall stated their graduates were "the most useful . . . of any in the state."<sup>35</sup> This distinction indicates both the influence of the graduates and also its growing reputation within the state. During this period Virginia was "developing a utilitarianism about learning,"<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Sam Houston Obituary, *The Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, vol. 29 – Houston, July 29, 1863, No. 3711.

<sup>33</sup> "Governor Archibald Roane Papers 1801-1803," Tennessee State Library and Archives, (Microfilm Processed Elbert Watson, 1964), 3.

<sup>34</sup> Among many examples, see James Mitchell, Andrew McClure, or Adam Rankin; "Catalog of the Officers and Alumni of Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia, 1749-1888" (Baltimore: John Murphy and Co., 1988).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>36</sup> Cremin, *American Education*, 365.

thriving on the Lockean principles of “virtue, wisdom, breeding, and learning.”<sup>37</sup> For a small frontier academy to develop such a significant reputation indicates a sound footing in society and perhaps a growing status among the colonies at large.

Liberty Hall was not the only frontier institution in Virginia to begin during America’s Revolutionary years. The Presbytery at Hanover was also making plans for another higher education institution in the backcountry. Once again at the urging of Samuel Stanhope Smith, the Presbytery considered how to best reach the Anglican population east of the Blue Ridge Mountains as Liberty Hall was meeting the more conservative groups in the west. Well-known for being both handsome and eloquent, Smith greatly impressed both the Presbyterian leadership and the Anglican population in Prince Edward County upon his arrival. Like William Graham, Smith was a 1769 graduate of the College of New Jersey where he studied rhetoric and theology under Witherspoon. More popularly known as Witherspoon’s successor as president at the College of New Jersey, Smith was first an influential promoter and establisher of enlightened education in the backcountry of Virginia.

Convinced of the “necessity of something more extensive and popular” in the eastern parts of the backcountry, the Board of Trustees of what would become Hampden-Sydney College sought to found an institution “expressive of those Ideas of liberty, both civil and religious.”<sup>38</sup> Having deliberated on the name of the institution and the character of the education given, the Presbytery “resumed the consideration of a School for the liberal education of youth, which we unanimously judge to be of great immediate importance.”<sup>39</sup> Remarkably similar to the founding words of Liberty Hall, Hampden-Sydney encouraged the use of “liberal” education in

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<sup>37</sup> John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education: Section 134*.  
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1692locke-education.html> (accessed March 2, 2009).

<sup>38</sup> Hampden-Sydney, *Minutes*, 8.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

youth, a phrase intended to distinguish their purpose from the more restricted education found in the Tidewater.

Like the founding documents of Liberty Hall, the charter materials for Hampden-Sydney never demonstrate sectarian leanings. In fact, due to Smith's remarkably open view of religious openness, he determined that the school would operate in an interdenominational context. For the first time in America's collegiate history, a school intentionally set out to create a pluralistic educational experience. In 1775 the Board made a formal declaration of the school's liberality. While the "strictest regard" would be paid to the morals of their students, "all possible care shall be taken that no [religious] influence be used by any member of this Presbytery, of the Academy, or his assistants to bias the judgment of any of the students." Rather, "every denomination" could enjoy their religious sentiments and were "at liberty to attend that mode of public worship" that was their custom.<sup>40</sup>

A 1775 ad in the *Virginia Gazette* demonstrates the school's notions of religious expression adequately. Designed by Smith to introduce the new Academy to the various local county readers, the ad ran for two months and encouraged readers to attend the nonpartisan school. While this practice was certainly typical of new education ventures during the time, there were uniquely progressive features that Smith intentionally included. Most notably, Smith provided details of the twelve visitors, or board members, who were appointed to lead the College as necessary. Of these visitors, the "immediate and acting members [would be] chiefly of the Church of England."<sup>41</sup> Markedly different than William and Mary, Hampden-Sydney not only proposed to have a "liberal" education for youth, but they ensured that claim with a religiously diverse Board of Trustees. Further, it is fascinating that the Hanover Presbytery

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>41</sup> Samuel S. Smith, "An Academy" in the *Virginia Gazette*, October 7, 1775.

would relinquish intellectual control of the institution they were building. That a Presbyterian governing body would assign the majority of its leadership to an opposing religious persuasion, particularly during the heated Anglican-New Light debates that were taking place throughout Virginia, represents the unique nature of the institution.

The consideration of a truly public institution where religious denominations were equally represented was not well-received by all Anglicans in the backcountry. In a malicious response to Smith's announcement, a respondent by the alias "LUTHER" noted that it was "inconsistent with prudence or good policy to suffer a dissenter to teach in any of our public schools, much less to act as a President."<sup>42</sup> In typical fashion for the period, Luther went on to describe Smith's personal doctrines as a Presbyterian as "repugnant to the doctrines of the Church of England," and even "subversive of morality."<sup>43</sup> More importantly, the respondent was also concerned about the future of Virginia. Since both Hampden-Sydney and Liberty Hall were making quick advances in education throughout the western part of the commonwealth, Luther was concerned that "in a few years" the state's "Senate-house, as well as pulpits" would be filled with dissenters. Concluding, he noted that "small evils, long neglected, have often proved fatal," and with the entrance of an enlightened, and by his estimate, Presbyterian, backcountry into the forefront of Virginia culture, future politics, social patterns, and religious allowances would be directed in their favor.<sup>44</sup>

While Luther more narrowly defined the "evils" of dissenter doctrine, he was correct in foreseeing the rising significance of an enlightened frontier population eventually moving eastward into seats of political and religious significance. Smith responded with sincerity to his concerns, assuring the readers that the school would be "in the hands of trustees, who are chiefly

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<sup>42</sup> LUTHER, "To the Printers," in the *Virginia Gazette*, November 18, 1775.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

members of the Church of England.” Further, he asked the public to trust his account based on his “credit with the world” as opposed to “a man who seems afraid to acknowledge his name.”<sup>45</sup> The final Board count for the first few years remained at twelve persons; of which five were Presbyterians (and graduates from the College of New Jersey), and the remaining seven were Anglican.

Despite some opposing public sentiment, the College moved forward with its plans. In 1776, the Board wrote to the Virginia House of Delegates informing them of their plan for liberal collegiate education. Since the College of William and Mary had become a bastion for military camps in the Revolutionary War, the Delegates were thrilled to hear news of a location for education in the state, regardless of its theological leanings. Given both Edmund Pendleton and George Wythe were serving in the House and were advocates for the College of William and Mary, in true republican spirit, they acknowledged the need for competition in an educational marketplace. Further, they concluded that “knowledge should be diffused as equally and as extensively as possible among the people . . . [The Hampden-Sydney] designs carry in them no opposition to any place, or party of men; their system is catholick, and calculated to banish those insidious distinctions, which, however little they may have been felt under a monarchical government, are improper and injurious in a replublick State.”<sup>46</sup>

Thus Hampden-Sydney quickly earned a reputation both in the backcountry of Virginia and among the State’s governing bodies as a rising center for enlightened education. While Smith’s reputation as a mediator between religious factions played an important role in that distinction, the curriculum and resources utilized further demonstrate the College’s important role in the dissemination of a moderate frontier Enlightenment. In light of Smith’s earlier

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<sup>45</sup> Smith, “To the Printers,” in the *Virginia Gazette*, November 23, 1775. Also see Hampden-Sydney, *Minutes*, 15-17.

<sup>46</sup> Cornelius J. Heatwole, *A History of Education in Virginia* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1916), 142.

announcement, the school's system of education resembled the format of the College of New Jersey.<sup>47</sup> As such, the students were divided into three traditional classes – sophomore, junior, and senior. Prior to admission to the sophomore class, students needed to be acquainted with “proper English Grammar, Caesar's Commentaries, Sallust, Virgil, and the Roman Antiquities.”<sup>48</sup> Following this, they would become proficient in Greek, Latin, Arithmetic, Geography, and Cicero's *Orationes*. Lastly, in order to graduate the students were to defend their knowledge of Lucian, Xenophon, Euclid's *Elements of Geometry*, Trigonometry, and Algebra, both publically and in the presence of an academic testing council.<sup>49</sup> The council could also test their knowledge of philosophy, history, chronology, and rhetoric as they saw fit.<sup>50</sup>

Interestingly, despite its broad use of subjects in the classroom, Hampden-Sydney did not adopt the autonomous curriculum set forth by Liberty Hall. Whereas students at Liberty Hall were free to study whichever subjects they felt appropriate for both learning and occupation, Hampden-Sydney held to a strict curriculum, which, ironically, was “rather out of date by Princeton standards.”<sup>51</sup> Given the College's reputation as an early adopter of Enlightenment principles in Virginia, the limited curriculum, while perhaps lagging relative to its Northeastern neighbors, was revolutionary for higher education in Virginia. In addition to required textbooks, the documentation of Hampden-Sydney's earliest library volumes indicate a much more secular education than the curricular structure would indicate.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Hampden-Sydney, *Minutes*, 14.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>49</sup> The testing council consisted of the president and trustees of the university.

<sup>50</sup> With the exception of French language books, the library at Hampden-Sydney was remarkably similar to that of Liberty Hall. While Liberty Hall had a larger selection earlier on, after the first decade of existence their libraries incorporated many of the same works. Students were required to purchase their own modern language textbooks.

<sup>51</sup> David W. Robson, *Educating Republicans: The College in the Era of the American Revolution, 1750-1800* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985), 207.

<sup>52</sup> Brinkley, *On This Hill*, 57.

Like Liberty Hall, Hampden-Sydney's literature covered both ancient and modern resources popular in the Enlightenment. The emphasis on language acquisition, while not new to the academic world, does suggest a renewed interest in the classics; a trait commonly associated with the Scottish Enlightenment. Further, as Smith insisted, the two foundations of the course of study would rest on mathematics and natural philosophy, it is evident that a sharp move away from the conventional Anglican means of education was underway.

By comparison, the College of William and Mary during this time likely had several hundred more volumes than Liberty Hall or Hampden-Sydney.<sup>53</sup> This was due in part to their sustained existence for nearly a century longer, but also because of a generous donation from Archbishop William Wake in 1730s. While the library maintained a large and well-stocked reputation, its contents, reported a contemporary in 1781, were mostly "ancient authors, but the modern authors are few."<sup>54</sup> The lack of modern sources demonstrates a sharp distinction between the frontier institutions and William and Mary. Whereas William and Mary continued to promote "ancient authors" well into Virginia's political revolution, Liberty Hall endorsed modern languages, progressive sciences, and subjects relevant their students' future occupations. Intentionally designed to create Anglican "Gentlemen, and accomplish'd Citizens," William and Mary's library incorporated old English customs and educational traditions.<sup>55</sup> The backcountry schools, alternatively, promoted enlightened and republican virtues amidst a pluralistic culture.

The transition toward a more "liberal" education was also evident in the recorded "Laws & Ordinances" for the regulation of Hampden-Sydney. Earlier colleges in the country

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<sup>53</sup> Morpurgo, *Royall Colledge*, 203. Exact records of William and Mary's earliest library volumes were burned down in a fire later in the eighteenth century.

<sup>54</sup> Chaplain Evans, "Journal of the Siege of York in Virginia by a Chaplain of the American Army, 30 September 1781," in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Vol. IX (Boston: Hall & Hiller Publishers, 1804; Reprint, T.R. Marvin, 1857), 104.

<sup>55</sup> "Journal of the Meetings of the President and Masters of William and Mary College: May 1770" in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Jan., 1905), 151.

maintained long lists and pamphlets dedicated to the strict moral and religious code students were required to abide by. This was particularly true with the College of William and Mary, which adamantly clung to its original guidelines for proper Anglican behavior despite the denomination's rapid decent in popularity after the conclusion of the Revolution. Contrarily, Hampden-Sydney had only twenty-five rules that governed the entire operation. Of those, only ten pertained to the students, with only one guideline dealing with religious matters. Those three rules "Of Religion & Morality" instructed the students to attend a public worship gathering of their choice so long as it was located within three miles of the College grounds.<sup>56</sup> While the exact number of local churches is uncertain, there was both a Presbyterian and Episcopal church that the school encouraged their students to attend.

Moving beyond the "religious grounded moderation" of Liberty Hall, Hampden-Sydney pioneered nonpartisanship with either moral or religious persuasion. As a result, their student body quickly grew, as did their influence throughout Virginia. After a four year term as the College's president, Smith resigned his office in 1779 and returned to Princeton, New Jersey where he later assumed the presidency of the College of New Jersey. In 1779 Samuel Smith was succeeded by his brother, John Blair Smith. Having also gone through the College of New Jersey, John Smith was determined to continue and expand the institution's reputation as a pioneer in enlightened education. After the Revolution the school endured a four-year battle for a legal charter as an incorporated entity. Unfortunately, the continued debates at the College of William and Mary and the ongoing tensions between Anglicans and dissenters caused the process to stall. Without the incorporation, the school could not formally grant degrees, which nullified their previous efforts to create a notable educational center. After a four year battle,

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<sup>56</sup> Hampden-Sydney, *Minutes*, 29-31.

John Smith, with the assistance of Patrick Henry,<sup>57</sup> secured a state charter, freeing them to grant degrees that same year.<sup>58</sup>

Among those who graduated in the first few classes, both Clement Carrington and William Cabell became presiding Justices in the General Assembly of Virginia. William Giles assumed a position first as a lawyer, and then as United States Senator in 1829. In the following year, William H. Cabell graduated and went on to lecture at the College of William and Mary, and then on to be the governor of Virginia.

Perhaps the most distinguished early-alumni of Hampden-Sydney was future war hero and President of the United States, William Henry Harrison. Harrison entered the academy under the permission of his Episcopalian father. Following his tenure at the school he moved to Philadelphia, where he studied law at the Collegiate School under Dr. Benjamin Rush, and, where, some argue, he converted to Quakerism.<sup>59</sup> After a successful career warring against the Native Americans, Harrison was elected to the U.S. Presidency in 1841.

Though the actions of an institution's alumni are not the most accurate or consistent gauge for the effectiveness of an educational paradigm, it is apparent that Hampden-Sydney's enlightened influence rapidly spread throughout the state of Virginia. With numerous graduates filling places of influence in the state and federal governments, a sundry of religious bodies, and sprouting academic institutions further south, Luther's fears that the "repugnant" influence of a liberal, enlightened backcountry were coming to fruition. A major intellectual shift was taking place in Virginia's history where the backcountry fought for intellectual freedoms, and secured

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<sup>57</sup> Then the governor of Virginia and a Trustee for the College.

<sup>58</sup> There are very few detailed Board records from the years 1779-1883. Those that exist deal mainly with inter-school quarreling over the issue of food portions allotted to both students and faculty.

<sup>59</sup> See Samuel Jones Burr, *The Life and Times of William Henry Harrison* (New York: R.W. Pomeroy, 1840); Freeman Cleaves, *Old Tippecanoe: William Henry Harrison and His Time* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1939); Robert M. Owens, *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer: William Henry Harrison and the Origins of American Indian Policy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007);

those freedoms through the new broadly focused enlightened colleges. The American Revolution and the changing notions of freedom , however, challenged that focus of Virginia's higher education, and fueled even more the hostility between Anglican and dissenting education.

CHAPTER 3  
“ENLIGHTENED LEADERS OF AN EXTENSIVE REPUBLICK”  
HIGHER EDUCATION IN REPUBLICAN VIRGINIA

In 1783 Noah Webster quipped that “for America in her infancy to adopt the present maxims of the old world, would be to stamp the wrinkles of decrepit age upon the bloom of youth and to plant the seeds of decay in a vigorous constitution.”<sup>1</sup> To associate something with the “old world” during America’s formative years as a new nation was a dire claim, and particularly ominous when associated with the education of youth. As a republican form of government that relied on an educated people, the proper installation of colleges throughout America became a priority for the founding generation. This was particularly true in Virginia where three existing colleges underwent significant transformation in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The transformations provide a lens through which to view the movement of intellectual vitality into the backcountry.

The three colleges in Virginia wrestled with ideas of patriotism, citizenship, and ultimately, what the nature of education should look like in a republic. The College of William and Mary, operating for nearly a century under the same curricular and religious standards, encountered significant opposition both internally and externally. Alternatively, frontier institutions Liberty Hall and Hampden-Sydney readily adopted the emerging republican rhetoric into the curriculum and daily activities of the students. The sharp differences in their approaches to changing times in Virginia illustrate the broader movement of the intellectual centrality of the Tidewater into the backcountry. The frontier schools, while not directly starting the movement, were highly influential in organizing the multitude of social, religious, intellectual, and political

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<sup>1</sup> Noah Webster, *A Grammatical Institute, of the English Language, Comprising, an Easy, Concise, and Systematic Method of Education, Designed for the Use of English Schools in American*. Pt. 1 (Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin, 1783; facsimile reprint, Menston, England: Scholar Press, 1968), 3-4.

ideas established in the frontier into a unified course of study; a feat the College of William of Mary was both unable and unwilling to do.

The College of William and Mary was a product of the culture in which it matured, and as such, the broader social changes taking place throughout the Tidewater in the decades leading up to and after the Revolution swayed the school's direction. Anglicanism, though not as rapidly spreading as some dissenting religions in the western parts of Virginia, grew steadily throughout the eighteenth century. In the period 1700-1776, Tidewater Virginians built at least 166 new Anglican churches and made sizable additions to at least 46 others.<sup>2</sup> Just as manor houses and large plantations demonstrated power for the gentry, so new churches and additions to existing churches proclaimed the centrality of the Church of England in Virginia's collective social, political, and spiritual life.<sup>3</sup> Being America's foremost Anglican educational center, the College of William and Mary had a responsibility to cater to the needs of the genteel culture that supported it. And while the College maintained this mission for the first fifty years of its existence, the entrance of dissenting religious groups into the Tidewater caused great tribulation on the campus grounds and threatened their traditions.

While the Presbyterian movement was mostly contained to the central and western parts of the colony, minority groups of Baptists and Quakers still resided in southeastern Virginia and caused irritation among Tidewater gentry. In the earlier parts of the century they were only a relatively small nuisance to the Tidewater elite. However, the swift growth of Baptists in North Carolina during the 1750s led itinerant preachers to travel into Virginia and aggressively recruit

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<sup>2</sup> Dell Upton, *Holy Things and Profane: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), xiv.

<sup>3</sup> Randolph Ferguson Scully, *Religion and the Making of Nat Turner's Virginia: Baptist Community Conflict, 1740-1840* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 24.

Tidewater and eastern Piedmont converts.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately for the Anglicans, the Baptists were reluctant to leave and did not fear punishment for their “subversive” evangelicalism in the area.<sup>5</sup> As late as 1777, Tidewater residents complained that the dissenting Baptists were “ignorant and unwary to embrace their erroneous tenets,” which they held were “not only opposite to the doctrine of true Christianity, but subversive of the morals of the people, and destructive of the peace of families.”<sup>6</sup>

As culture in Virginia grew increasingly diverse, controversies threatening the social fabric of Tidewater residents also threatened the life of the College of William and Mary. In October of 1764 the president of the College, William Yates, passed away and the position soon became a point of sharp contention among the faculty. William Small, the College’s most famous eighteenth-century lecturer, plagued the Board of Visitors for increases in his compensation and responsibilities at the school. While the more open-minded Visitors originally brought Small onto the staff to balance the continuing trend of religious dogmatism among the faculty, they increasingly disdained his requests and allowed him only minor increases in salary and one trip to England.

While in England, Small learned of the death of President Yates and promptly wrote to the Visitors requesting that he be made president.<sup>7</sup> The audacity of his proposal surprised the Visitors as the College’s bi-laws clearly stated that the President must be a minister of the Church of England. There were a few on the Board who admired his tenacity, and even a few more open-minded members who considered that his appointment might silence the unceasing

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> “A petition of sundry inhabitants of the county of Cumberland, 21 May, 1777,” in Scully, *Nat Turner’s Virginia*, 77; See also Garnett Ryland, *The Baptists of Virginia, 1699-1926* (Richmond: The Virginia Baptist Board of Missions and Education, 1955).

<sup>7</sup> Morpurgo, *Royall Colledge*, 138.

religious quarrels perpetrated by the faculty. However, after more deliberate consideration, even the more sanguine and anti-clerical Board members could not justify amending the Charter.<sup>8</sup>

Small was not the only faculty member who had his attention on the presidential position. Senior faculty member Richard Graham was confident that his lengthy tenure at the school would result in his appointment as president, but the Visitors had no intention of appointing the most ardent Anglican on the staff. For the same reason, faculty member John Camm, whose history of contention had been consistent and by no means quiet, was not considered for the position. Emmanuel Jones, the teacher of the “Indian school,” a peripheral component to the College, also received no consideration and the Board asked him to continue his training of the six natives present at the time.<sup>9</sup>

With Small and Graham rejected, Camm intolerable, and Jones never in the running, there was left only one candidate among the faculty, the youngest and newest member, James Horrocks. The Board asked Horrocks to assume the presidential position, but only upon his swearing of acceptance of proposed statute revisions the Board wished to impose into the Charter in 1765. The statutes encouraged more religious and intellectual diversity within the College and required the faculty to teach a curriculum relevant to occupations within a republican state. Previously, President Yates declined to sign this petition as had the faculty. In his desire to take the position, however, Horrocks affirmed their proposals and then apologized to his faculty colleagues, explaining that he would not have agreed to such terms if he could have taken the presidency by other means.<sup>10</sup> Camm rebuked Horrocks’ action, stating that “he had sold the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>10</sup> Despite his signing of the petition, the statutes were never worked into the curriculum.

Society, upon the best terms that he could obtain, for a precarious advantage.”<sup>11</sup> The action also disgusted Graham, who, though less vocal than Camm, resigned his Chair and followed Small back to England.

The trend of fleeting professorships became a staple in the next five years of the school’s existence. Though explicit records do not exist recording the daily decisions of the Board during this period, there were several instances where faculty members were hired and let go within a period of weeks. Horrocks did his best to appear unaffected by the pitiable staffing situation, and fighting temptations otherwise, he refused to appoint professors unless they satisfied his sterling academic standards.

Significantly, throughout the eighty years of the College’s life the faculty made no appreciable attempt to alter the founding principles of curriculum. The prospectus consisted of “the Pursuit, first, of Classical Knowledge; [secondly] of Philosophy natural & moral; & lastly of such Sciences as are to become the business of the Students during the Remainder of their lives.”<sup>12</sup> Unlike the frontier institutions that adopted a more practical approach to their studies where students trained for occupations and not simply in theory, the College of William and Mary considered itself the “best Place for training up Youth, who are intended to be qualified for any of the three learned Professions, and to become Gentlemen, and accomplish’d Citizens.”<sup>13</sup> Contemporary Hugh Jones noted that in general, Virginian youth preferred practical rather than “theoretical” subjects. It was perhaps for this reason that the College of William and Mary sought to distinguish itself from the average school as a school for genteel culture. Unlike the

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<sup>11</sup> John Camm to the Bishop of London, September 8, 1768. Fulham Palace Papers, Virginia, vol. 14. (Bishop of London: Lambeth Palace Library, London. Microfilm, 20 reels. World Microfilms, London ), 179.

<sup>12</sup> Nicholas Hans, *New Trends in Education in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Routledge Publishers, 1951), 209-210. “Sciences” in this context referred to scholarly subjects and not disciplines relevant to a career in science.

<sup>13</sup> “Journal of the Meetings of the President and Masters of William and Mary College: May 1770” in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, No. 3 (Jan. 1905), 151.

large amounts of “unruly” frontier children educated at dissenting educational institutions, William and Mary continued to train Virginia “gentlemen” and “accomplished citizens,” holding to educational patterns present in England.<sup>14</sup>

With the recent Stamp Act and colony-wide movement toward natural rights for both the state and individual, the College’s mission to prepare gentlemen and citizens was challenged as the very definition of a “citizen” was transitory. Since the first Virginians settled Jamestown, the colony struggled to resolve the paradox in their own situation as loyal subjects to a distant monarchy “wished nevertheless to be masters in their own house.”<sup>15</sup> The strain created by this paradox directly influenced many of the conflicts between Virginia and Britain, and the very unpopular Stamp Act heightened these tensions. Whereas Americans, and Virginians in particular, formerly sought to emulate their British counterparts in every way, the limiting policies of British parliament forced many to seek independence. Through most of the eighteenth century, Britain allowed colonies to grow in their own ways and incorporated policies that encouraged American commercial and political autonomy. Salutary neglect resulted in growth on both parts; the English Empire was profoundly more prosperous than ever before, and the colonists were free to exercise local government practices. With the relationship between English monarch and peripheral colony being largely undefined, late-eighteenth century questions of authority, as with the Stamp Act, caused sharp divisions between the Virginians and England.<sup>16</sup>

The College intentionally recruited and reared “gentlemanly” citizens, and loyalty was intrinsic to gentlemanly behavior. The historical definition of loyalty and citizenship in Virginia, however, came under scrutiny as the divisions between Virginia and England progressed. This became a daily battle for the faculty who struggled to instill virtues of gentleman loyalty when no one could say for sure where loyalty was to be placed. Further, many of the fathers of students were engaged with this battle on a

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<sup>14</sup> Morpurgo, *Royall Colledge*, 143.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>16</sup> Edmund S. Morgan and Helen M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953), viii.

political level, and on varying positions, thus making it challenging for faculty who were accustomed to traditions from decades prior.

With a dated educational purpose, the College's efforts to produce a consistent representation of a proper Tidewater citizen appeared convoluted. In the ten years prior to American independence, the faculty revealed its lack of acumen not by a conscious and conscientious opposition to the political philosophies that were propounded in discussion throughout the Commonwealth, but by an intense commitment to continue the same domestic disputes and forms of learning as if they were still all-important.<sup>17</sup> Graduates were still fluent in principles of John Locke and the Anglican teachings of their English roots, yet they lacked the necessary forums to engage in present political discussion within a pluralistic Virginia culture.

Forced to serve as a military outpost for American soldiers during the Revolutionary War, the College did not commence any degrees for several years. As a result, enrollment was considerably low and faculty attention directed toward internal quarreling. At the outbreak of the War, William and Mary held a reputation as the richest institution of higher education in the country.<sup>18</sup> During the course of the War, however, the College's reputation was severely hampered for several reasons. The most obvious challenge during the period was the multifarious financial constraints. Not only had paper money depreciated considerably, but since the College was largely funded through British means, conflict with England diverted those endowments away. Further, the abolishment of the tobacco tax levied against Maryland and Virginia cut off a large domestic source of funding for the institution.<sup>19</sup> While a precise record of the College's pre-war worth is incalculable, it is estimated that by the end of the war "its entire capital in money was but \$2,503. Its other property, besides building and academic equipment, was unproductive lands."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Morpurgo, *Royall Colledge*, 146.

<sup>18</sup> Herbert Baxter Adams, *The College of William and Mary*, 56.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>20</sup> Benjamin S. Ewell, *Remarks Before the Committee on Education and Labor of the House of Representatives*, April 1 (College of William and Mary, Special Collections, Archives LD 6051 W493E78, 1876, 1876).

Despite numerous commentaries indicating otherwise, the greatest loss to the institution was not principally financial. As indicated by the Anglican “Paper War” earlier in the decade, the larger movement in Virginia toward religious and political independence obstructed the College. Continuing to function under old British educational patterns, the College of William and Mary lost favor to many American patriots.<sup>21</sup> Further, unlike the blended cultures in the backcountry, the increasing number of Baptists infiltrating the Tidewater were isolated and, in some cases, persecuted by the Tidewater gentry. Unwilling to compromise its elitist Anglican exclusivity, the decline of intellectual life at the College provides an excellent platform by which to view the final shift of intellectual patterns to the western parts of the state.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to financial concerns, the College wrestled with the faculty’s mixed opinions about independence. Since the College still functioned under a royal charter commissioned in England, the authority of the faculty stemmed from British decrees, and a British bishop held the highest position at the school, it became evident to some at the school that a new charter amenable to the laws and authority of the nation would be necessary. James Madison, the professor of natural philosophy, was chief among those who supported the righteousness of the American cause.<sup>23</sup> Identifying the problem of an English institution operating under an American government, Madison set out to develop a new comprehensive plan of education for the College which he later posted anonymously in the *Virginia Gazette*. Mirroring those already extant practices in the western parts of the state, Madison suggested changing the curriculum to canvas more practical subjects like modern languages, botany, anatomy, and law.

John Camm, a dedicated Tory and always discriminatory, disapproved of the new plan. Professors Henley and Gwatkin, though disapproving of an American episcopate, ultimately fled to England and left Camm to fend for himself. Retorting to Madison’s new plan for the school, Camm noted that he was bound by an oath to perform his duties under the founding charter granted by English

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<sup>21</sup> Adams, *College of William and Mary*, 57.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Though related, this was the Anglican Reverend James Madison, not the future United States President.

governance, because Madison's "resolves are totally inconsistent with and subversive of the same Charter, as in my Opinion will easily appear to any unprejudiced Person."<sup>24</sup>

Both Camm and Madison knew that few left in Virginia would accept Camm's definition of "unprejudiced," and certainly none among the Board of the College.<sup>25</sup> Camm was not dismissed immediately, but after five months he was accused of "neglect and misconduct," and Madison took his place as professor and then president of the institution.<sup>26</sup> Despite his best intentions, Madison was a committed Anglican and saw no reason to steer the school away from those roots. Anglicanism, in his understanding, did not represent an English institution, but as a religious entity, it was separate from the affairs of American independence. However, the increasingly diverse population in Virginia did not view the denomination in the same light. To many, independence from Britain also symbolized freedom from religious persecution from the Tidewater elite.<sup>27</sup>

Ironically, despite his efforts to preserve the College, then governor of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson, deepened William and Mary's tribulation in the last parts of the eighteenth century. Until 1779 the capital of the state resided in Williamsburg. The same year of his education bill, however, Jefferson proposed to move the capital to Richmond out of fear of British invasion of the Yorktown peninsula. The move severed the very chord that kept the College financially viable. The political and social support in Williamsburg moved with the capital to Richmond, leaving the College to raise its own support from the local tenants they had previously ostracized.

While the facilities at the College fell into disarray and the faculty continued to quarrel over issues relating to an American bishop, the schools in the backcountry grew rapidly in popularity; in part because of the pluralistic approach to education, and also because of their

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<sup>24</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, November 22, 1776.

<sup>25</sup> Morpurgo, *Royall Colledge*, 180.

<sup>26</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, April 4, 1777. Interestingly, Madison agreed to the presidency on the terms that he only would serve one year. He ended up serving thirty five years in that role and is considered one of the College's most distinguished leaders.

<sup>27</sup> Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 295.

patriotic considerations. Without the financial support of a distant monarch and lacking local assistance with the removal of the capital, the College of William and Mary was forced to endure its reputation as an English religious institution for the foreseeable future.

While financial matters were grim, the removal of William and Mary as Virginia's premier educational institution was not necessarily inevitable. In a last effort to bring a republican spirit to the school, Jefferson, a 1762 graduate of the College, proposed his "Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge" to the Virginia House of Delegates in 1778. The bill outlined a model that gave all children the opportunity to attend local, public schools for three years free of charge. At the conclusion of the three years, the state selected one boy from each school to advance to a grammar school.<sup>28</sup> After one or two years, only the best few were chosen to remain for six more years, learning Latin, geography, and the "higher branches of numerical arithmetic." At the end of these six years, half of the youth would be dismissed, while the other half would attend the College of William and Mary for three years.<sup>29</sup>

In a second bill proposed at the same time, Jefferson explained that the remodeling of the College needed to fill three propositions. First, the Virginia legislature would be responsible for choosing the Board of Visitors over the College. Not only would this increase public support of the College, and therefore increase public financial assistance, but it would secure that governing bodies of the institution would not be bound by the ecclesiastical or royal confines of the original charter.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Jefferson proposed the establishment of twenty new grammar schools in Virginia to facilitate this program.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Jefferson, "A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge, 1778," in Julian P. Boyd, ed., *Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. II: January 1777-June 1779* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 526-527.

<sup>30</sup> Cremin, *American Education*, 441.

Secondly, Jefferson's bill sought to broaden the curriculum to include more practical subjects relevant to occupations within a republic. Among these, Jefferson specifically encouraged the studies of ethics, fine arts, history, law, advanced mathematics, anatomy, medicine, and modern languages.<sup>31</sup> Noticeably missing from Jefferson's list of subjects was a professor of religious studies. The study of religion, Jefferson believed, ought to be relegated only to the studying of the habits of the neighboring Indian tribes. This was Jefferson's third condition upon which the College would be transformed; the professorship for training natives would be transformed into one studying their laws, languages, religions, and customs.

Unfortunately for Jefferson, several members of the House, and even more members on the Senate were proponents of an Anglican College and were reluctant to make such drastic changes. There were also some members of the House that were Presbyterian, and they did not want to support funding to the Episcopalian institution that had persecuted their beliefs for decades. Several years later foreign commentator on the events, William Wirt, noted another potential reason for the bill's failure:

What a place was here to give stability and solid glory to the republic! If you ask me why it has never been adopted, I answer that, as a foreigner, I can perceive no possible reason for it, except that the comprehensive views and generous patriotism which produced the bill, have not prevailed throughout the country, nor presided in the body on whose vote the adoption of that bill depended.<sup>32</sup>

Astute and well-reasoned, Wirt's conclusion was particularly true for the authorities of William and Mary. Still committed to their long-established educational tradition, the College faculty refused to adopt the new wave of republicanism into the classroom. On the surface their reluctance could be dismissed as stubbornness, dogmatism, or a combination of both, but the enlightened language of republican thinkers and educators called for radical reconsideration of

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<sup>31</sup> Boyd, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 527.

<sup>32</sup> William Wirt, *The Letters of the British Spy* (Baltimore; Field Lucas Publisher, 1813; Reprint 2009), 83.

classicalist curriculum, a change many in the College saw as irrelevant to training Tidewater gentlemen.<sup>33</sup> The basic presupposition of a republic appealed for a uniform educational system, producing a consistent and controlled result. Since the power rested in the hands of the people, many argued, it was essential to the survival of both the republic and the country that the general public be educated in rational thought in order to make proper virtuous decisions within the state.<sup>34</sup>

Republicanism, Jefferson contended, “is merely in the spirit of our people. That would oblige even a despot to govern us republicanly.”<sup>35</sup> Unlike the government they had just detached themselves from, the founding generation felt compelled to put the power of governance directly in the hands of the people. A republic requires an extraordinary degree of public-spiritedness and practical wisdom in their citizens.<sup>36</sup> This degree of involvement from the public made educational reform a priority during the first few decades of American’s independence. As a republic thrived on people to be excellent citizens, education became central to providing the context from which they could learn to be citizens.

No one put the republican educational philosophy more succinctly than Noah Webster in his “On the Education of Youth In America.” “In our American republics,” Webster asserted, “where government is in the hands of the people, knowledge should be universally diffused by means of public schools. Of such consequence is it to society, that the people who make laws, should be well informed, that I conceive no Legislature can be justified in neglecting proper establishments for this purpose.”<sup>37</sup> To Webster, education was the cornerstone to a solid republic.

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<sup>33</sup> “Classicalists” refers to the continuation of studies in ancient languages, religion, Bible, and moral philosophy.

<sup>34</sup> Wagoner, *Jefferson and Education*, 9.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas Jefferson Letter to Samuel Kercheval, 12 July 1816

<sup>36</sup> Pangle, *Learning of Liberty*, 1.

<sup>37</sup> Noah Webster, “On the Education of Youth In America,” Collection 23-28, 1788.

Without a knowledgeable citizenry, there would be no way to ensure power stayed in the hands of the people.

The thoughts on education during the revolutionary period were partially a reaction to the American's British adversaries. Webster commented on this, noting, "For America in her infancy to adopt the present maxims of the old world, would be to stamp the wrinkles of decrepit age upon the bloom of youth and to plant the seeds of decay in a vigorous constitution."<sup>38</sup>

Educational plans underwent the same consideration. Reconsidering educational practices, Webster declared that "it is necessary to frame a liberal plan of policy and build it on a broad system of education."<sup>39</sup> In theory, this republican government was inseparable from the education that supported it. In order for the republic to operate as it should, the people whom the power was given should be educated in order to be responsible.

Benjamin Rush wrote at length on what a republican education should look like. Emphasizing the gravity of the initial years of the republic, Rush noted "there is nothing more common, than to confound the terms of the American Revolution with those of the late American War." The "American War," Rush continued, "is over; but this is far from being the case with the American Revolution."<sup>40</sup> The entire process of education, he continually reminded, was the backbone of a republican society. In his renowned plan for elementary through collegiate public education, Rush asserted that every student should "be taught that he does not belong to himself, but that he is public property." "Let him be taught" he urged, "to love his family, but let him be taught at the same time that he must forsake and even forget them when the welfare of this

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<sup>38</sup> Webster, *A Grammatical Institute*, 14.

<sup>39</sup> Webster, "On the Education of Youth In America," 1788.

<sup>40</sup> Benjamin Rush, "Address to the American People", 1787.

country requires it.”<sup>41</sup> This was his system of “liberty,” that each student be a disciplined citizen, trained in republican dogma, and willing to put his state before himself.

While Rush’s realization of an educational “republican machine” never came to fruition, the republican body of ideas relating to patriotism, political and religious pluralism, and “natural” freedoms were highly circulated throughout the thriving intellectual life in the backcountry areas of Virginia.<sup>42</sup> With a wide assortment of religious factions and emigrant groups, the republican educational mantra became an appealing alternative to the oppressive nature of Anglican classicalists in years prior. The founding of Liberty Hall Academy and Hampden-Sydney College demonstrated the increasing need for frontier alternatives to the sectarian education at William and Mary. More importantly, the founding of the pluralistic institutions demonstrates the movement of educational and intellectual dominance away from William and Mary and the Tidewater into the western parts of the state.

One of the most significant aspects of this movement was the continued distinctiveness of the Virginia backcountry. The earliest migrations were widely spread out and attempted to maintain their cultural and religious heritage on their own terms. Pioneering settlers did not move into the frontier in contiguous, successive waves. Rather, they were dispersed loosely along water sources, and maintained “open-country neighborhoods.”<sup>43</sup> These discrete and scattered neighborhoods formed the foundation of Virginia’s backcountry throughout the early to mid-eighteenth century. But developments within the region in the few decades leading up to the Revolution induced permanent changes that would ultimately cultivate a new intellectual center.

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<sup>41</sup> Rush, *A Plan for the Establishment of Public Schools*, 1786.

<sup>42</sup> In his 1786 “Mode of Education Proper in a Republic,” Rush considered it not only possible, but necessary to a republic state to “convert men into republican machines”

<sup>43</sup> Robert D. Mitchell, “‘Over the Hills and Far Away’: George Washington and the Changing Virginia Backcountry,” in Warren R. Hofstra, ed., *George Washington and the Virginia Backcountry* (Madison: Madison House Publishers, Inc., 1998), 72.

Agricultural specialization, the first of these developments, converted many of the backcountry counties to centers of industry rather than self-sufficient farming communities. Unlike the Tidewater planters who primarily farmed tobacco, backcountry residents specialized in farming cattle, hemp, and wheat products.<sup>44</sup> As population in the area increased, production of these crops increased as well. By the 1770s, Virginia's frontier counties began exporting their products in large numbers, any formerly small farming communities transformed into commercial production towns.<sup>45</sup>

As a result of the commercial transformation, wholesale merchants throughout the country gained interest in western Virginia production.<sup>46</sup> Their attention, in addition to local merchants dealing directly through shops, stimulated new avenues of trade. Unlike the eastern merchants, however, frontier merchants used their middle colony connections to sell dry goods to Pennsylvania, Maryland, and other northern investors. Retail trade in the backcountry was thus organized locally, allowing for quicker movement and a greater assortment of products. Conversely, Tidewater tobacco farming utilized the consignment and "factor-store" systems.<sup>47</sup> These systems were controlled by British mercantile firms, rendering them slow moving prior to the Revolution and highly disorganized thereafter.

With thriving frontier commercial interest and a rapidly increasing population, the disjointed and widely dispersed local authorities reorganized into productive county governments. In the earlier parts of the century, western territories organized their government in

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>45</sup> Richard K. MacMasters, "The Cattle Trade in Western Virginia, 1760-1830," in Robert D. Mitchell, ed, *Appalachian Frontiers: Settlement, Society, and Development in the Preindustrial Era* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 130.

<sup>46</sup> Hofstra, *Virginia Backcountry*, 77.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 80. See also Robert D. Mitchell, *Commercialism and Frontier: Perspectives on the Early Shenandoah Valley* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977); Thomas M. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

similar fashion to their eastern Tidewater neighbors. Like their social life, settlers in the Tidewater and eastern Piedmont regions had organized administrative governance. County government generally consisted of courthouses, jails, and law offices at “sites that seldom attracted permanent economic activities.”<sup>48</sup> With little demand for centralized governing, Tidewater governing seats rarely evolved into active villages or towns. As a result, towns in eastern Virginia were either underdeveloped or non-existent.<sup>49</sup> This was the case for western Virginia as well, until the increase of commerce the mid-century when the formerly scattered people in the backcountry gravitated toward growing centers of trade.

The creation of towns and county governments in the backcountry thus varied significantly from those in the eastern parts of Virginia. Whereas the Tidewater gentry dominated political matters in the east, the western elite class lacked the stature and pedigree of the planter-gentry and they were unsuccessful in creating the “differential political climate” of their eastern neighbors.<sup>50</sup> Rather, the people of the backcountry created an alternative political culture where governance centered in towns, and political leaders were both appointed and involved with the “ordinary” people in their counties.<sup>51</sup>

In addition to the continued amalgamation of religious traditions throughout the backcountry, improvements in agricultural specialization, trade networks, and the development of involved county governments created a distinct frontier culture from that in the Tidewater. Educational institutions Liberty Hall Academy and Hampden-Sydney were instrumental in unifying this new culture in a systematize framework. Ideals of self-governance, free expression of religion, and enlightened reasoning were circulated by both students and faculty. The result,

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>49</sup> Excluding occasional Tidewater ports, a few “fall-zone” settlements, and the capital city.

<sup>50</sup> Turk McCleskey, “Rich Land, Poor Prospects: Real Estate and the Formation of a Social Elite in Augusta County, Virginia, 1738-1770,” in *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, No. 98 (July 1990), 450.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 455.

contrary to the College of William and Mary's more narrowly defined purpose, was a formal pattern for education that integrated the diverse cultural framework of the frontier with virtues of the newly forming republican state. While many of these ideas stemmed from larger political and religious discussions coming from the College of the New Jersey, the college movement in Virginia's backcountry demonstrated an incredible organization of pluralistic, enlightened rhetoric unseen previously in the area.

Following its incorporation into the State of Virginia in 1783, Liberty Hall Academy increasingly adopted republican notions into the classroom. Both Hampden-Sydney and Liberty Hall, despite their lack of funds, attempted to define themselves as the southern "outposts" of the College of New Jersey. As the royalist stigma attached to the College of William and Mary tainted its effectiveness as a truly American college, Virginians lauded the frontier schools' efforts to produce enlightened citizens of a republic. The Board of Trustees at Liberty Hall acknowledged this, stating that graduates were the "most useful men upon the stage of public action . . . yea in this respect we have purposed every seat of learning in the State."<sup>52</sup> Unlike the College of New Jersey, however, Hampden-Sydney and Liberty Hall attempted to work out their republican ideologies without attachment to any particular denomination.<sup>53</sup> Whereas religion was central to Witherspoon's republican synthesis, the Virginia frontier institutions incorporated the diverse religious culture around them into their purpose, catering to no particular branch, but encouraging each student to hold to whichever creed they saw fit.<sup>54</sup>

To most dissenters, the established church and the institution that supported it, appeared so sacrosanct in Tidewater culture that relief from the tempestuousness religious culture seemed

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<sup>52</sup> Liberty Hall Minutes, September, 1792, 73.

<sup>53</sup> Mary-Elaine Swanson, *The Education of James Madison: A Model for Today*, (Montgomery: The Hoffman Center Publishers, 1992), 24.

<sup>54</sup> Garrett Ward Sheldon, *The Political Philosophy of James Madison* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 7.

distant. The unassailable position of Anglicanism in Virginia, however, was undermined during the mobilization of revolutionary efforts in the state. In May of 1776, a convention gathered to discuss political ramifications of the Revolution, and they concluded by producing an article proclaiming that all men “should enjoy the fullest toleration in the exercise of religion.”<sup>55</sup> Future president James Madison felt the term *toleration* was suggestive of the established church, and the phrase *free exercise* would endorse more sincere equality “according to the dictates of conscience.”<sup>56</sup> While it would not be for another five years until equal consideration would be given to all religious entities in the state, the change in political language promoted further outspokenness by the frontier educational institutions.

Liberty Hall’s rector and founding president William Graham became one of the most outspoken participants in the development of Virginia’s Republic. During the campaign for ratification of the United States’ Constitution in 1787, Graham made a direct ideological appeal against Federalist opinion. Not only did he raise public sentiment in Rockbridge County against ratification, but through his itinerant ministry, his public speeches, and the Academy’s students, Graham’s fierce opposition to the proposed Constitution spread rapidly as his students encouraged his notions throughout Hanover, Rockbridge, and Augusta counties.<sup>57</sup> According to one contemporary observer, by November of that year citizens of Rockbridge and Augusta counties almost unanimously opposed ratification, critiquing it as one of the “most villainous

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<sup>55</sup> George Mason, “‘Article 16’, Virginia Declaration of Rights, June 12, 1776,” in Sheldon, *James Madison*, 31.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Albert H. Tillson, Jr., *Gentry and Common Folk: Political Culture on a Virginia Frontier 1740-1789* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 136.

peases of arbitrary assumption tending directly to the overthrowing of all liberty among Citizens & quickly terminating in absolute monarchy introduce by some blood thirsty President.”<sup>58</sup>

Having raised an “uncommon commotion” throughout the backcountry inhabitants, Graham and his anti-federalist sympathizers provoked neighboring institution Hampden-Sydney to join the cause against centralized government as well.<sup>59</sup> Hampden-Sydney, however, needed to first deal with their President, John Blair Smith, who staunchly held to a federalist position amidst a student body and leadership firmly committed to the anti-Federalist principles of Patrick Henry. Already at odds with Trustee Henry for waiver in his position on the 1785 Assessment Bill, Smith further polarized Henry by abandoning the Articles of Confederation in favor of a stronger centralized government.<sup>60</sup>

Initial political disagreement fostered deeper animosity between Henry and Smith that evidenced itself in 1788 when Henry ran for delegate for the Virginia Convention. Smith, running against Henry, could not attend the meeting to present his speech for candidacy. In his stead, he sent a reluctant Hampden-Sydney student to transcribe Henry’s “blistering” speech.<sup>61</sup> A few weeks later at the Washington’s Birthday Intermediate Celebration, Smith arranged a student debate where one student reenacted Henry’s speech verbatim, and another student, reading a prepared manuscript from Smith, proceeded to rebuke every point of Henry’s previous speech. Not only did the event exasperate Henry’s disdain for Smith, but it provoked others from the school’s Board of Trustees, all of whom were ardent anti-Federalists, to ostracize Smith from future discussions of the academy. Seeing that he was rapidly becoming unwelcomed at both the

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<sup>58</sup> Thomas Wilson to Archibald Stuart, 4 November 1787, “Stuart Family papers, 1758-1881,” Section 1, Folder 3, Virginia Historical Society. Also see William Graham to Zachariah Johnston, 3 November 1787, “Zechariah Johnston Papers,” Box 1, Folder 2, Washington and Lee University.

<sup>59</sup> Archibald Stuart to John Breckinridge, 1 March 1788, “Breckinridge Family Papers,” Grover Batts and Thelma Queen, eds., 4, No. 627, Library of Congress. ID: MSS13698.

<sup>60</sup> Brinkley, *On This Hill*, 34.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

school and in the county at large, Smith vacated his position as President of Hampden-Sydney and moved to pastor a church in Philadelphia. His departure freed Henry and the rest of the Trustees to join Graham at Liberty Hall in their attempts to unify the western counties in Virginia under the anti-Federalist persuasion.

After Smith's departure in 1779, Hampden-Sydney College continued its effort in adopting an enlightened educational paradigm. Like Liberty Hall, Hampden-Sydney encouraged professional courses and discontinued the sole use of traditional English subjects. Rather, the school incorporated studies in botany, chronology, law, medicine, modern languages, physics, and chemistry.<sup>62</sup> The Faculty designed the instruction to produce useful students in a republic, not simply knowledgeable scholars. There were still some local supporters who still urged for the traditional studies as the core to the curriculum. In an effort to appease both these contestants, and to further encourage their "liberal" form of education within the backcountry, the administration began a "two-track" bachelor's degree course; one classical, the other highly scientific.<sup>63</sup>

Also important to the education of students was their immediate involvement with local politics. During the Revolution Hampden-Sydney remained conspicuously patriotic, continuing teaching of natural freedoms and encouraging students to defend the cause of liberty in America. Late in the War when Governor Patrick Henry, then a member of Hampden-Sydney's Board of Trustees, called men to preserve Virginia's capital, a group of students rallied together and

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<sup>62</sup> Brinkley, *On This Hill*, 53.

<sup>63</sup> D.R. Come, "The Influence of Princeton on Higher Education in the South," in *William and Mary Quarterly*, No. 3 (July 1945), 360.

joined his cause. Further, when General Nathanael Greene requested recruits, Hampden-Sydney's students joined him and became members of Lee's Legion.<sup>64</sup>

The students' patriotism continued well-into the creation of Virginia's republic. So pervasive their nationalism in the backcountry portions of Virginia that the thirteen counties in the west and south accounted for over two-thirds of the anti-Federalist element in the Continental Convention. Understanding this trend, Hampden-Sydney incorporated patriotic virtues into the curriculum, making permanent their mission to train "enlightened leaders of an extensive Republic." Likely penned by Henry, the new Charter affirmed:

[T]hat in order to preserve in the minds of the students, that sacred love and attachment which they should ever bear to the principles of the present glorious revolution, the greatest care and caution shall be used in electing such professors and masters, to the end that no person shall be so elected unless the uniform tenor of his conduct manifest to the world sincere affection for the liberty and independence of the United States of America.<sup>65</sup>

Unlike the College of William and Mary where both faculty and administration often focused internally, the frontier colleges sought to incorporate the existing mentalities around them. Whereas the culture at William and Mary was forced from governing bodies in England, and later from the American Episcopal Church, Hampden-Sydney and Liberty Hall grew in an organic manner, by unifying the various religious and political persuasions of the frontier inhabitants into a defined educational system. As the state adopted a republican form of governance, the backcountry schools sought to incorporate their pluralistic culture into the

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<sup>64</sup> William Henry Foote, *Sketches of Virginia: Historical and Biographical* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Co., 1855), 146-147.

<sup>65</sup> Patrick Henry, "Charter of Incorporation," in William Wirt Henry, *Patrick Henry: Life, Correspondence, and Speeches, Vol. II* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), 200.

expanding body of republican ideas in the state, thereby creating “useful” and productive citizens.<sup>66</sup>

While the frontier schools were intentionally creating a culture of enlightened republicanism, financial matters became a strain and prohibited their immediate student growth. Desperately in debt from the erection of new buildings, Liberty Hall applied to the legislature to vest in them the title “to certain escheated land in Rockbridge and the adjacent countries.”<sup>67</sup> Unfortunately, the legislature denied the request. The appeal to the legislature, however, signified Liberty Hall’s gradual movement toward a more public governing body; a purposeful shift toward financial security and completely non-sectarian governing.

Though the indebtedness was surely an embarrassment to the leadership, they were not without hope. The Board was of the opinion that “some aid from the public was necessary to preserve it from sinking into an useless condition,” an opinion that encouraged them to once again apply for public funding in 1796.<sup>68</sup> In January of that year, Graham called a meeting of the Board and urged them to “take under consideration some direct information he had received of the Legislature of this State having resolved there . . . that the President of the United States was about to bestow his hundred shares in the James River Company to aid” a school in the “upper part of the State.”<sup>69</sup> The James River Company, through the legislature, originally bestowed the one hundred shares on George Washington as a sign of gratitude for all he had done to promote their project. Additionally, for his surveying efforts, the Potomac Company also presented fifty shares to Washington.<sup>70</sup> Washington, already one of the wealthiest men in the country, sternly

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>67</sup> Henry Ruffner, ed., “Historical Papers, No. 1 – 1890,” of Washington and Lee University (Baltimore: John Murphy and Co., 1890), 48.

<sup>68</sup> Liberty Hall Minutes, October 22, 1795, 143.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., January 5, 1796, 143-144.

<sup>70</sup> Adams, *College of William and Mary*, 33.

opposed the “principle of gratuities” and continued to be apprehensive about accepting the shares.<sup>71</sup> However, he feared his dismissal of the funds would undermine public confidence in the canal project he had helped establish.<sup>72</sup> Vocalizing his dilemma to Benjamin Harrison, he questioned, “How would this matter be viewed then . . . when it comes to be related that George Washington has received twenty thousand dollars and five thousand pounds sterling of the public money as an interest therein!”<sup>73</sup>

After much deliberation, Washington decided to accept the stock on the condition they be delegated to public use. Believing education “was the most worthy object of his philanthropy,”<sup>74</sup> he requested of the legislature that the funds be released to a school “at such a place in the upper country as . . . may be convenient to the inhabitants thereof.”<sup>75</sup> Hearing of this, the Board at Liberty Hall anxiously prepared a letter to the President, appealing to the public benefits of giving his charity to their school.<sup>76</sup> In the letter, they persisted that the gift would be used to enhance the quality of education for the local public in “essential” areas of “Mathematical and Philosophical Apparatus.”<sup>77</sup> Starkly contrasting the letters sent to local Synods requesting assistance, this letter made no mention of religious leanings whatsoever in its recounting the purpose and history of the institution.

Neighboring institution Hampden-Sydney also requested the funds from the President, but their appeal came later than Liberty Hall’s and lacked any specifics as to their proposed uses

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<sup>71</sup> Crenshaw, 27

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> George Washington to Benjamin Harrison, 1785, in Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., *The Writings of George Washington, 1782-1785: vol. 10* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1891), 435.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> “A Collection of All Such Acts of the Assembly of Virginia of a Public and Permanent Nature as Have Passed Since the Session of 1801” (Richmond: Samuel Pleasants, 1808), 7; <http://books.google.com/books?q=a+collection+of+all+such+acts&btnG=Search+Books> (accessed on April 24, 2010).

<sup>76</sup> Liberty Hall Minutes, January 1796, 185-191.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 187.

for the funds. Since Washington requested the funds be used for “the most enlightened and patriotic” means, omitting possible uses of the funds was a rather significant error by Hampden-Sydney.<sup>78</sup> Beyond the letters of request, the reputation of the presidents of the two institutions may have led to Washington’s final decision. William Graham, founding member and long-time rector of Liberty Hall, was an excellent businessman and fundraiser, a staunch proponent of republican government, a tactful teacher, and well-regarded in Washington’s genteel Anglican circle.<sup>79</sup> Contrarily, Drury Lacy, then acting president of Hampden-Sydney, was not known for good delegation of funds, and on more than one occasion he caused disruptions in relations between Anglicans and Presbyterians in the eastern Piedmont.<sup>80</sup>

Also among those in the lottery for the funds, Washington considered the neophyte institution in New London at Jefferson’s urging.<sup>81</sup> After two months of deliberation, Washington and the Virginia Legislature decided to release the funds to Liberty Hall based on their “zealous and persevering exertions . . . made, for the promotion of learning.”<sup>82</sup> Writing to the school in 1798, the retired president explained his decision to the Board, stating, “To promote literature in this rising empire, and to encourage the arts, have ever been amongst the warmest wished of my heart. And if the donation . . . is likely to prove a means to accomplish these ends, it will contribute to the gratification of my desires.”<sup>83</sup>

While it would be several years before the funds returned a profit, both the act of applying for the funds and Liberty Hall’s acceptance of such application by George Washington strongly indicates a movement toward publicizing education in the frontier. This public

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<sup>78</sup> Adams, *College of William and Mary*, 34.

<sup>79</sup> Brinkley, *On This Hill*, 37.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>81</sup> Andrew Moore speaking of George Washington, in Crenshaw, *General Lee’s College*, 28.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> George Washington letter to Liberty Hall Academy, June 17, 1798; in “Historical Papers No. 1,” 54.

transformation, however, soon resulted in a significant dilemma at Liberty Hall. Three months after Washington's release of the funds, the Virginia Legislature held an assembly that passed a new charter requiring the school to adopt a new name, Washington College. Further, the charter disposed the old Board and named a new leadership that was to include the Governor of Virginia.<sup>84</sup> The curriculum would change as well, as four "schools" were to be constituted: languages, natural philosophy, mathematics, and logic.<sup>85</sup> However, having intentionally designed the curriculum to meet both the demands of the diverse frontier culture and the tenants of a republican state, Liberty Hall opposed the eastern legislature's intervention in their daily operation.

While the transfer of James River shares to the academy was likely viewed as a conveyance of public funds to a private school, the Legislature possibly thought the charter would provide substance and necessary conversion of the school into "an enlarged and more useful state institution."<sup>86</sup> There has been speculation as to whether Jefferson was influential in this decision as there are many similarities between the curricular and operational changes proposed on Liberty Hall and those proposed in his later plans for the University of Virginia.<sup>87</sup> Further, the explicit removal of Presbyterian control insinuates a Jeffersonian-like ideology behind the quickly passed charter. Jefferson's former William and Mary classmate and resident in Staunton wrote to Washington specifically requesting that Liberty Hall would not receive the funds, stating, "their regulations are too contracted and professedly formed to produce

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<sup>84</sup> James Morrison Hutcheson, "Virginia's 'Dartmouth College Case,'" in *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, No. 2 (Apr., 1943), 135.

<sup>85</sup> Crenshaw, *American Education*, 29.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*; See also Herbert Baxter Adams, *Thomas Jefferson and the University of Virginia* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1888); Addis, *Jefferson's Vision for Education, 1760-1845*; Arrowood, *Thomas Jefferson and Education in a Republic*; Conant, *Thomas Jefferson and the Development of American Public Education*; Wagoner, *Jefferson and Education*; Mary N. Woods, "Thomas Jefferson and the University of Virginia: Planning the Academic Village," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, No. 3 (Oct., 1985).

Presbyterian clergymen rather than produce the general purposes of education.”<sup>88</sup> Perhaps confirming this suspicion, both Liberty Hall’s minutes and the “Historical Papers” of the college show concern that in the new leadership “not one was a clergyman, much less a Presbyterian clergyman, and scarcely one, if even one, was a member of a Presbyterian church.”<sup>89</sup> However, there is no explicit evidence to link the policy makers’ decision with the influence of some Jeffersonians seeking to eradicate schools associate with religious institutions altogether.

Upon the news of this change, the Board at Liberty Hall considered the charter’s contents and “unanimously declared it as their opinion that the same is an unjustifiable infringement of the Rights of the Corporation of Liberty Hall and an instance of Tyrannical imposition in the Legislature.”<sup>90</sup> They were not as concerned with a non-Presbyterian leadership as much as they debated the infringement of their rights as an incorporated institution. After electing a member of the Board to represent them at the next Virginia Assembly meeting, the school moved to have the act repealed. Beyond the infringement of the school’s incorporated rights, the Board was also concerned that the rapid change in leadership and curriculum would be contrary to the wishes of “those good Citizens who for the promotion of Virtue and Literature gave largely of their estates to the Academy.”<sup>91</sup>

Zechariah Johnston, a trustee of the Academy and a member of the House of Delegates in Rockbridge Country, took up Liberty Hall’s case with the Legislature in 1798, and after winning the battle, the original Act of Incorporation of 1782 was once again restored.<sup>92</sup> The principle of this scenario later became the core line of argument of Dartmouth College against a similar charter that had come down from the Federal level. Alumnus of Dartmouth and prolific

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<sup>88</sup> Archibald Stuart letter to George Washington in “Virginia’s ‘Dartmouth College Case’,” 137.

<sup>89</sup> Liberty Hall, “Historical Papers, No. 1,” 68.

<sup>90</sup> Liberty Hall Minutes, January 31, 1797.

<sup>91</sup> Liberty Hall letter to Legislature of Virginia, 1797; in Crenshaw, *General Lee’s College*, 30.

<sup>92</sup> Hutcheson, 137.

educational author, Daniel Webster, cited this Virginia ruling in his defense of Dartmouth's state rights against those promulgated by the Federal government. Like Liberty Hall, Webster won the case, providing a further illustration of the significance of education "to the integrity of . . . [all] kinds of legally chartered organizations."<sup>93</sup>

Liberty Hall and Hampden-Sydney's involvement with the changing political scene in Virginia is an important facet to the movement of the intellectual culture away from Williamsburg and into the backcountry. Unlike students at William and Mary who studied under constant disputing faculty who disagreed on basic ideas of citizenship in the new country, the backcountry schools gathered the multitude of ideas of frontier groups into a defined educational model. Provoking the free exercise of religion and encouraging enlightenment ideals, the frontier colleges naturally embraced hallmarks of republican government. The College of William and Mary, despite attempts from outsiders, could not immediately depart from their earlier English roots, thus creating for themselves a reputation as an ancient form of education. With the movement of the capital city out of Williamsburg and the widespread diversity in the backcountry, William and Mary lost its support system and was thereafter compelled to function upon its history and within its reputation as an English church institution.<sup>94</sup> Noting the distinction, future Illinois governor Edward Coles, commented on the differences between the frontier schools, specifically Hampden-Sydney, and the College of William and Mary noting:

I have been disappointed in the idea that I formed of Williamsburg, I see nothing very prepossessing in the town or the College; the police [administration] of College I am not better pleased with than I was with the police of HS College, and the advantages of improvement are not much superior; books are uncommonly dear, and I can obtain none but what I buy, as they have no library worth any thing, in short I see nothing superior here to what they have at HS...<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Crenshaw, 31.

<sup>94</sup> Adams, *College of William and Mary*, 57.

<sup>95</sup> Edward Coles to John Coles II, Unpublished Letter, 6 December 1805, in Brinkley, *On This Hill*, 31.

With republican educational ideologies of public forms of higher education inundating Virginian life, both Liberty Hall and Hampden-Sydney moved to encompass that ideology as well. Rather than rejecting the cultural diversity in local society, these two schools ought to encompass many traditions, and thereby provided a model for republican institutions after the Revolution. Largely surpassing the enrollment of William and Mary, the backcountry institutions remained the most prolific centers of collegiate education in Virginia until the opening of the University of Virginia fifty years later.

CONCLUSION  
IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDIES IN COLONIAL HIGHER EDUCATION AND ITS  
RELEVANCE IN AMERICAN HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING

Colonial Virginia's collegiate transformation provides one avenue by which to view the movement of intellectual life away from the Tidewater and into the backcountry. Political changes, migration patterns, religious disturbances, and commercial growth all contributed to the rise of an enlightened backcountry and the decline of intellectual culture in the eastern regions. In the early parts of the eighteenth century, Tidewater planters grew hostile and reluctant to adopt the new cultural dynamics of migrants to the region. Their institution of higher education, the College of William and Mary, rallied around the elite Anglican cause and allowed the intolerance to fester until it became a cultural norm in both the College and the social life surrounding it. As Williamsburg was the American epicenter of English custom, those restrictive trends demonstrated in the town and College carried significant intellectual weight in the colonies.

With the entrance of the American enlightenment into the Virginia frontier a shift in this intellectual monopoly took place. In the middle part of the eighteenth century, immigrants formerly residing in Delaware, Maryland, and Pennsylvania migrated into the western corridor of Virginia. This movement created a diverse frontier cohabitation where many different cultures resided concurrently in relative peace. Various dissenting religious groups, in many cases, adopted customs and religious practices from their neighbors, thus constructing a new pluralistic society not as prevalent in the Tidewater regions.

In an effort to provide a learning system distinctive to these various religious traditions, the Presbytery of Hanover established two institutions for higher learning, each dedicated to a

nonpartisan curriculum. The Presbytery founded Liberty Hall Academy west of the Blue Ridge Mountains in order to reach the more rural, and perhaps, more conservative groups living in that area. Hampden-Sydney established east of the mountains in an effort to reach the Anglican, Quaker, and Presbyterian groups. Both of the schools were designed to allow the “free exercise” of all backcountry religious traditions, attempting not to “bias the judgment of any of the students.”<sup>1</sup>

While the effort to educate all religious traditions without bias was one of the first attempts in America, and certainly the first in Virginia, what is perhaps more important to the change in Virginia intellectual culture was the frontier college’s ability to synthesize their pluralistic culture, providing an enlightened backcountry rhetoric that not only embraced, but assisted with the establishment of a Virginia republic after the Revolution. The College of William and Mary, funded by a foreign monarch and governed by an English bishop, was unable and unwilling to adopt the new language of American freedom. Thomas Jefferson, among many others, attempted to reconcile the rapidly decreasing reputation of the school, but the conservative Virginia House and intolerable College faculty dismissed the proposals and ultimately sentenced the school to an “ancient” religious educational paradigm. The school not only lost its English funding after America’s independence, but with the removal of Williamsburg as Virginia’s capital city, the College lost its immediate political and cultural support as well. Then residing in a rapidly declining town, the College’s formerly stellar reputation as the intellectual bulwark of Virginia custom waned, leaving the school to rely solely upon its reputation as the foremost Anglican institution in the country. Unfortunately for the

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<sup>1</sup> Hampden-Sydney, *Minutes*, 12.

school, the Church of England lost favor in Virginia after the Revolution, leaving the school the champion of a dying religious tradition.<sup>2</sup>

Already adopting the language of enlightenment often employed in republican political designs, the backcountry colleges quickly rose to preeminence in Virginia as the guardians of republicanized education. Encompassing ideas of natural freedom, republican virtue, and civic responsibility, the frontier colleges grew both numerically and in reputation, enrolling far more college students in the last few decades of the century than William and Mary's grammar school and college combined.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to a curriculum dedicated to enlightenment principles, the backcountry colleges encouraged their students to engage in contemporary political discussion. Unlike the College of William and Mary where students primarily engaged in the internal religious disputes of their faculty, the students at both frontier institutions demonstrated a remarkable amount of political involvement during the revolutionary period. Not only did the students enlist in several war efforts, but they encouraged the anti-Federalist agenda throughout the backcountry, ultimately becoming part of the widespread dissemination of anti-Federalist ideas throughout the frontier.<sup>4</sup>

Liberty Hall Academy and Hampden-Sydney College maintained nearly equal enrollment throughout the first fifty years of their existence despite Liberty Hall's more successful fund raising efforts. They not only educated more students, but commenced more degrees during that

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<sup>2</sup> Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 296.

<sup>3</sup> Brinkley, *On This Hill*, 42.

<sup>4</sup> Specifically, Patrick Henry, William Graham, Archibald Alexander, and in some cases, Rev. James Madison.

time than the College of William and Mary. Their tenure as Virginia's two premier collegiate institutions lasted until the opening of Jefferson's University of Virginia in 1823.<sup>5</sup>

A more thorough understanding of higher education in Virginia helps identify the movement of intellectual culture during the formative years of the state. Studies often treat colleges on their own terms and rarely expound on the larger continuities that unite patterns of thought in colonial Virginia. Bailyn's instrumental work *Education in the Forming of American Society* entertained the idea that the local customs and traditions often had a more significant influence in the establishment of colleges in America than did English precedent.<sup>6</sup> Further, he proposed that the fundamental shift in colonial education was not necessarily the result of the Enlightenment or changing educational paradigms. Rather, because of westward movement into America's expansive unpopulated land, the longstanding traditional family unit began to dissipate. In Virginia's tradition of Anglican education, it took both the entrance of enlightenment principles and a westward expansion into the colony's frontier to eventually disrupt the Tidewater's intellectual dominance. Whereas much of colonial Virginia educational history can be best appreciated as a series of "reactionary efforts aimed at fostering, and preserving a rigidly homogenous or tribal" way of life, the backcountry efforts in creating colleges were marked from the beginning by diversity, individualism, and dissent, creating wholly different models of advanced learning.<sup>7</sup>

One of the most important factors in the emerging Virginia backcountry culture was its conception of society where people could freely exercise personal and communal liberties, not, as the Anglican model perpetuated, controlled homogenous behavior and beliefs.<sup>8</sup> The three

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<sup>5</sup> Brinkley, *On This Hill*, 42-43.

<sup>6</sup> Bailyn, *Education in the Forming of American Society*, 15.

<sup>7</sup> Urban and Wagoner, 16.

<sup>8</sup> See Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness*.

colleges founded before the nineteenth century provide one means to view these intellectual transformations as they both reflected and promoted the cultures around them. While the College of William and Mary thrived as a premier Anglican institution, it could not preserve its cultural heritage in Virginia's radically changing face after the Revolution. The frontier schools, having already adopted a culture of religious pluralism and intellectual openness, came along side the new republican state and promoted a pragmatic curriculum designed to produce "enlightened" citizens fitted for employment in Virginia. Synthesizing the cultures around them, the backcountry schools capitalized on and promoted the changing attitudes in Virginia, causing the hub of intellectual activity to move westward.

Understanding of the Virginia collegiate transformation can shed further light on the formerly isolated treatments of culture, religion, and education in the period. Migrant patterns caused religious pluralism, and religious pluralism promoted the creation of a unifying system of instruction for the new culture. As such, each of these movements were dependent on each other, and, contrary to the many educational historical surveys, they should not be looked at outside of their regional context. While analyzing the progression of educational thought is but one conduit to study the change in colonial Virginia intellectual life, it provides a clearer foundation through which to view the movement than either institutional or denomination specific studies.

Education lends itself to many fascinating dynamics in American history. Institutions often reflect the intellectual culture they are part of, but, as seen with the frontier colleges, they can often be a catalyst for new cultural and intellectual transformations as well. While the study of particular colleges in isolation certainly has its place in historical inquiry, analyzing the influence in and of schools in their larger societal context can provide a more lucid understanding of changes in regional intellectual and political movements.

This study opens avenues for further research of education in Virginia's formative years as a state. There exist no detailed studies of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson's plans for a national university. A career-long vision followed Washington where he dreamed of opening a national university "to educate our youth in the science of Government."<sup>9</sup> While there are sporadic treatments that briefly discuss their discussions, no lengthy treatment seeks to understand the significance of their propositions, the design of their intended school, and why their attempts ultimately proved to be unsuccessful.<sup>10</sup>

Also specific to Virginia's early-national history, there have been no extensive treatments of the Episcopalian debates in the 1770s. Nearly all accounts of the subject provide only cursory information in an attempt to demonstrate a larger purpose. However, given the magnitude of the decision, the length of the dispute, and the significance it held in both discussion and print, a more thorough treatment of the debate could provide fascinating new insights into the years directly preceding America's formulation as a country.<sup>11</sup>

The study also opens doors for further studies addressing the meaning of "public" and "private" education within a republic. For the Virginia Legislature in 1798, public meant non-religious. It was the religious classes at schools that made them private. Explicit ideologies found

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<sup>9</sup> George Washington to Alexander Hamilton, 12 December 1799, "Washington Papers," Library Congress; Will, 9 July 1799, Fairfax County Courthouse, Fairfax, VA.

<sup>10</sup> For brief secondary treatments see Hofstra, *George Washington and the Virginia Backcountry*; Cremin, *American Education*; and Miller, *Revolutionary College*. For contemporary discussions of a proposed national university see Webster, "On the Education of Youth in America;" Samuel Knox, "An Essay on the Best System of Liberal Education, Adapted to the genius of the Government of the United States," Rudolph, ed., *Essays*; Washinton to the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, 28 January 1795, Fitzpatrick, ed., *Writings*; Rush, "To Friends of the Federal Government: A Plan for Federal University," 29 October 1788, in Butterfield, ed., *Letters*, 1 National Character: Paradox in the Educational Thought o the Revolutionary Generation," *Harvard Educational Review*, 26 (Winter, 1966).

<sup>11</sup> For brief secondary treatments see Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*; Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation: The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York, 1966); Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*; Pocock, "Machiavelli, Harrington, and the Eighteenth Century," *William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 3, Ser., XXII (1965); Ray Hiner, Jr., "Samuel Henley and Thomas Gwatkin: Partners in Protest," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, 37 (1968); Fraser Neiman, "The Letters of William Gilpin to Samuel Henley," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol. 35 (1971-1972).

in Enlightenment literature, however, were not considered sectarian and were still encouraged in the classrooms. Among the many studies analyzing the wave of colleges beginning at the turn of the nineteenth century, few address the meanings of public and private during the period. Furthermore, while gauging the effectiveness of an institution is a highly subjective endeavor, there lacks any focused treatments on the quality of education received in public schools verses that at private institutions.

While this account of Virginia's colonial colleges may easily serve as a single part of a much larger intellectual development taking place, it also opens doors for further studies related to regional variances in higher education during this period of change. A larger comparative study specific to regional transformations during the mid-eighteenth century may place the often-discussed ideological origins of the country in a new context. Ultimately, a comparative study of Revolutionary educational history reveals that education means not only the development of manual and intellectual skills, but is also, and perhaps more importantly, "an integral part in both causes and effect of the psychological, demographic, economic, and social change taking place in society."<sup>12</sup> While extensive works of this nature are few, specific treatments, such as the entrance of Enlightenment values into the Virginia backcountry provide a further step in clarifying American ideological origins and how culture transmits and alters itself across generations.

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<sup>12</sup> Ronald D. Cohen, "Socialization in Colonial New England," *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 13. (Spring, 1973), 79-80.

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