

**“Beyond the Character of the Times”:
Anglican Revivalists in Eighteenth-Century Virginia**

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Introduction

While preaching Devereux Jarratt's funeral service, Francis Asbury described him thus: "He was a faithful and successful preacher. He had witnessed four or five periodical revivals of religion in his parish. When he began his labours, there was no other, that he knew of, evangelical minister in all the province!"¹ However, at the time of his death, Jarratt would be one of a growing number of Evangelical Anglican ministers in the province of Virginia. Although Anglicanism remained the established church for the first twenty three years of Jarratt's ministry, the Great Awakening forcefully brought the message of Evangelicalism to the colonies. As the American Revolution neared, new ideas about political and religious freedom arose, and Evangelical dissenters continued to grow in numbers. Into this scene stepped Jarratt, his friend Archibald McRobert, and his student Charles Clay. These three men would distinguish themselves from other Anglican clergymen by emulating the characteristics of the Great Awakening in their ministries, showing tolerance in their relationships with other religious groups, and providing support for American freedoms.

Devereux Jarratt, Archibald McRobert, and Charles Clay all lived and mainly ministered to communities in the Piedmont area. Jarratt pastored in Dinwiddie County, McRobert in Chesterfield and Prince Edward County, and Clay in Albemarle County. All three men were Anglican ministers as well as Evangelicals. Despite being distinctive from the rest of the Anglican clergy, these three men have been nearly forgotten to history. Allowing them to fade into obscurity would be a loss to early American religious scholarship. Bringing Jarratt, McRobert, and Clay back to the attention of historians is valuable because their ministries

¹ Francis Asbury, *Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury* (London: Epworth Press, 1958), 3:21.

support a long First Great Awakening, and their acceptance helped Evangelicalism take root in Virginia. Their thinking also furthered religious and political freedom.²

Much confusion surrounds the definition of the often-used term “Evangelical.” Some people confuse it with a denomination or use it as a synonymous term for “Protestant.” For the purpose of this study, Evangelicalism will refer to the historical “movement beginning in the 1730s.”³ Those involved in this movement held to four foundational principles outlined by the Bebbington quadrilateral, which is the most popular, scholarly definition of Evangelicalism provided by British historian David Bebbington in the 1980s.

First, Evangelicals believed in conversionism. This consisted of a change from the old to the new, usually occurring during a religious experience. According to Bebbington,

Conversion was bound up with major theological convictions. At that point, Evangelicals believed, a person is justified by faith. Because human beings are estranged from God by their sinfulness, there is nothing they can do themselves to win salvation. All human actions, even good works, are tainted by sin, and so there is no possibility of gaining merit in the sight of God. Hence salvation has to be received, not achieved.⁴

In particular, this aspect of Evangelicalism was threatening to eighteenth-century Virginian society since it seemed to remove a person’s need to live a moral, upstanding life.⁵ Evangelicals, meanwhile, countered that gratitude for their conversion provided “the strongest motive for

² The long First Great Awakening is a theory proposed by Thomas Kidd. Instead of the First Great Awakening ending in the 1730s, Kidd suggests that it continued to the beginning of the Second Great Awakening in the 1790s. See Thomas Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2007), xiv.

³ David Bebbington, “The Nature of Evangelical Religion,” in *Evangelicals: Who They Have Been, Are Now, and Could Be*, ed. Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George M. Marsden (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Co, 2019), 32-33; this term will be capitalized everywhere except for quotations to adhere to Bebbington’s explanation that “the term ‘Evangelical,’ with a capital letter, is applied to any aspect of” this historical movement.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁵ *Ibid.*

moral behavior.”⁶ Many opponents of Evangelicalism feared that society would fall into chaos if Evangelical numbers continued to grow.

Next, Evangelicals believed in activism. After conversion, an Evangelical would seek to convert others and spread the gospel message. While preaching was an obvious form of activism, other ways of spreading the gospel included visiting the sick, sharing the story of conversion with others, serving in the church, and helping those in need.⁷ The prevailing Evangelical attitude in the eighteenth-century was that actively spreading the gospel was essential, while laziness was seen as both sinful and detrimental to the gospel cause.

The third characteristic of Evangelicals was biblicism – a devotion and focus on the Bible as the source of all “spiritual truth.”⁸ Throughout the eighteenth-century, Evangelicals had a hearty respect for the Bible, and they also agreed that the Bible was the inspired word of God.⁹ Bible references were used to support more than sermons. Scripture was referenced in political speeches, personal and published letters, as well as newspaper articles.

Finally, the fourth feature of Evangelicalism was crucicentrism. This was characterized as a central focus on Christ and the cross. Essentially, “The standard view of Evangelicals was that Christ died as a substitute for sinful mankind.”¹⁰ Evangelicals believed that their conversion was only possible through the blood of Christ. As Bebbington explains, “To make any theme

⁶ Bebbington, “The Nature of Evangelical Religion,” 45, 48.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 48.

⁹ Ibid., 49, 50.

¹⁰ Ibid., 53.

other than the cross the fulcrum of a theological system was to take a step away from Evangelicalism.”¹¹

In colonial Virginia, Evangelicalism was not a new concept. The term Evangelical can be traced back to New Testament authors and was actively used during the medieval period.¹² When the Reformation began in Europe, Evangelical was applied to those who followed Martin Luther’s example.¹³ Applying the term to adherents of historical religious movements became common practice after the Reformation, so when the Great Awakening swept colonial America, the term was rapidly adopted by its proponents. With the term, came the understanding that an Evangelical believed in the aforementioned principles. However, Thomas Kidd found that Bebbington’s quadrilateral lacked a crucial aspect unique to Evangelicalism in colonial America – the importance placed on revivalism and the moving of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴

Revivalists held to the basic principles of Evangelicalism, and they emphasized the need for salvation to be both acknowledged in the head and felt in the heart. Concepts, such as the new birth and justification by faith alone, were central to revivalist preaching. Most revivalists were characterized by fiery preaching and frequently traveled as itinerants. With revivals sometimes came sensationalism – intense emotional or physical reactions to revivalist preaching such as uncontrollable weeping, falling down, or speaking in tongues. Since revivalists were also

¹¹ Bebbington, “The Nature of Evangelical Religion,” 52.

¹² Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 16; Noll points out that the word “Evangelical” comes from a Greek root word used to reference the “good news” or gospel of Jesus Christ. By the middle ages, Evangelical was used in several different ways including “to describe the message about salvation in Jesus.”

¹³ *Ibid.*, 16, 20; as Noll explains, not all Bebbington’s principles are emphasized equally at any given time in history. For example, greater weight might be placed on Bibliocentrism at one time or amongst one Evangelical group while another time or group might emphasize activism.

¹⁴ Kidd, *The Great Awakening*, xiv.

Evangelicals, the two were often equated with sensationalism. This presented another hurdle for Evangelicals to overcome, along with the other problems confronting them in Virginia.

In addition to revivalism, two basic issues faced Evangelicals in Virginia. Thomas Kidd explains that “Evangelicals in Virginia had to deal with two main challenges. First, ... they faced an unfriendly established church ... Second, evangelicals had to confront the reality of Virginia’s slave society and make decisions about the social implications of the movement.”¹⁵ These challenges were not unique, and Virginia was one of the colonies where they overlapped, which made the task of Evangelicals arduous and some Anglicans hostile.

Because of the threat Evangelicalism posed to Virginian society, the Anglican Church faced a dilemma. Evangelical ideas eventually led to a break in the Anglican Church, which resulted in high-churches that retained the Anglo-Catholic nature of the Church of England and low-churches which were more Evangelical and Protestant in nature. After the Revolution, Anglicans changed their name to Episcopalians to provide separation from England. Episcopalian churches would remain separated into high-church or low-church congregations. Yet, the Episcopalian church would remain governed by a bicameral general convention which served as a unitary body, meaning the church is governed as a single entity.¹⁶

An Evangelical Episcopalian himself, Meade focused on those who furthered Evangelicalism in the Anglican Church in his *Old Churches, Ministers, and Families of Virginia*. Similarly, E. Clowes Chorley, historiographer of the Episcopalian church in the 1940s, traced various movements within the Anglican/Episcopal church starting with Evangelicalism. He

¹⁵ Kidd, *The Great Awakening*, 235.

¹⁶ “The Office of Public Affairs,” Episcopal Church Structure and Organization, The Episcopal Church, <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/public-affairs/episcopal-church-structure-and-organization>; a bicameral convention simply means a two-body governing system. The United States legislature is a prime example of this as it has a Senate and a House of Representatives.

specifically singled out individuals that helped establish the Protestant Episcopalian church, beginning with Devereux Jarratt.¹⁷ In the 1940s, George M. Brydon wrote *Virginia's Mother Church and the Political Conditions Under Which It Grew Up* to show the history of the Anglican Church in Virginia. He was the historiographer of the Diocese of Virginia at the time.

Referring to the documentation of Virginia's religious heritage by church historians, Joan Gunderson lamented that, in the 1980s, "New social historians... continued to accept the old evangelical assessments of the Virginia clergy."¹⁸ Most church historians concentrated on the formation of the church and important members of the clergy. Few explored the role of the Anglican Church or members of the congregation. These scholars primarily looked at how the Evangelical movement impacted the Anglican Church rather than individual people or society. John Frederick Woolverton's *Colonial Anglicanism in North America* is a good example of this.

While Woolverton noticed that no one had conducted a "general study of Anglicanism... between the settlement of Jamestown and the outbreak of the American Revolution," Joan Gunderson realized that no study investigated the Anglican clergy.¹⁹ She was one of the first historians to investigate the role of the Anglican clergy in Virginian society – specifically how the clergy were their own unique social class. With her work, Gunderson opened the door to an alternative way of studying Anglicanism and Evangelicalism in America. Rather than concentrating on the church as a single entity with a select group of people influencing it,

¹⁷ E. Clowes Chorley, *Men and Movements in the American Episcopal Church* (New York: Charles Scribener's Sons, 1946), 1.

¹⁸ Joan R. Gunderson, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia, 1723-1776: A Study of a Social Class* (New York: Garland Pub, 1989), iii.

¹⁹ John Frederick Woolverton, *Colonial Anglicanism in North America* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), 9.

Gunderson studied how individuals were responsible for the stability and instability of the church as a whole.

Overtime, historians tended to move away from studying the clergy and started to investigate beliefs and how they shaped society. As Brent Tarter stated in his article “Reflections on the Church of England in Colonial Virginia,” more recent scholarship has turned its attention away “from questions about whether the clergy were numerous enough or good enough to minister properly to the colonists. They direct our attention to the subject of religious beliefs and how those beliefs mattered in the way Virginians lived.”²⁰ In line with this focus, Edward L. Bond’s *Damned Souls in a Tobacco Colony: Religion in Seventeenth-Century Virginia*, explores religion in Virginia beginning shortly after Jamestown was established. Bond refutes the stereotypical beliefs that the more pious folk in colonial America were in the Puritan north and that Virginians (as well as other southerners) were more interested in money than God.²¹ To repudiate these views, Bond digs into the true course of Anglican religion, showing that, to Virginians, “the entire world pointed toward God.”²² The strength of Bond’s research lies in his careful study of Virginia’s colonial development. For example, he investigates the construction of a polity as “a system that pleased God so that the English could maintain the deity’s friendship.”²³

Another advocate of a more faithful, religious Anglicanism in Virginia is John K. Nelson. His research indicates that Anglican faith permeated the religious, political, and cultural aspects

²⁰ Brent Tarter, "Reflections on the Church of England in Colonial Virginia," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 112, no. 4 (2004): 339-71, Proquest.

²¹ Edward L. Bond, *Damned Souls in a Tobacco Colony: Religion in Seventeenth-Century Virginia* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2000), viii-ix.

²² *Ibid.*, 280.

²³ *Ibid.*, 52.

of Virginian society.²⁴ Lauren F. Winner shows that Anglican faith was common in the home as well by analyzing household objects for evidence of a sincere Anglican faith and discovering a link between home life and church life.²⁵

There is also a common assertion that religiosity was more prevalent in the North. This argument stems from stereotypes surrounding established religion. Since residents were expected to attend church by law, religion became a compulsory activity. Forcing church attendance supposedly resulted in a “cold” faith, where attending church was more of a social rather than a spiritual event. However, more evidence from historians like Bond is pointing to “a Virginia more tolerant, more concerned about religion, and more religiously diverse than the traditional stereotype suggests.”²⁶

The new evidence does not necessarily indicate a more Evangelical Anglicanism. In her examination of the clergy, Gunderson reveals a distinct lack of Evangelicals. In fact, she identifies only four, Devereux Jarratt, Archibald McRobert, Charles Clay, and Samuel Shield, that “were probably evangelicals” with a handful of others that “encouraged evangelicals.”²⁷ In addition, she indicates that most of the clergy “rejected the entire Great Awakening.”²⁸ Considering that George Whitefield served “as a catalyst ... to help initiate the Great Awakening” and was both an Anglican and an Evangelical, Gunderson might have

²⁴ John K. Nelson, *A Blessed Company: Parishes, Parsons, and Parishioners in Anglican Virginia, 1690-1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

²⁵ Lauren F. Winner, *A Cheerful and Comfortable Faith: Anglican Religious Practice in the Elite Households of Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

²⁶ Edward L. Bond, *Spreading the Gospel in Colonial Virginia: Sermons and Devotional Writings* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2004), 4.

²⁷ Gunderson, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia, 197-198*.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

underestimated the number of Evangelical Anglicans.²⁹ Still, the Great Awakening initially failed to permeate Anglicanism in Virginia as thoroughly as it did in other colonies. How did the efforts of the Great Awakening fall to the wayside so quickly in Virginia amongst Anglicans?

Jewel L. Spangler suggests that an Anglican monopoly might be partly to blame for resistance to Evangelicalism. By “monopoly” Spangler meant that each and every community in Virginia was tied into the Anglican Church – it was the center of religious, social, cultural and political life (which Nelson and Winner’s work reinforces).³⁰ Spangler also agrees that “Many Virginians were committed to a religious practice in the eighteenth-century even before evangelical revivals quickened the spiritual pulse of the region.”³¹ So, Evangelicalism may have struggled in Virginia partly because of the Anglican grip on every aspect of life.

Then again, Spangler suggests that Baptists could potentially play a role in Anglicans’ preliminary distaste for Evangelicalism. For many colonial Anglicans, Baptists were the prime example of Evangelical dissenters. If, as Spangler argues, Baptists were able to “flip” Virginia from predominantly Anglican to predominantly Baptist, Anglicans most likely saw them as a serious threat. Rhys Isaac focuses on “themes of religion and the roles assigned to an ecclesiastical establishment” in *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790*.³² By analyzing the interconnectedness between religion and society in Virginia, Isaac lends further credence to the importance of religious and societal unity in the minds of Anglican Virginians.

²⁹ Kidd, *The Great Awakening*, 40; George Whitefield was an Evangelical Anglican that helped spread revivalism during the First Great Awakening.

³⁰ Jewel L. Spangler, *Virginians Reborn: Anglican Monopoly, Evangelical Dissent, and the Rise of the Baptists in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 11.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 6.

Since the Anglican Church's main goal was for the colonies and congregations to be a united front (according to Woolverton), anyone who interfered was deemed dangerous. In his *Men and Movements in the American Episcopal Church*, E. Clowes Chorley suggests that Baptists shattered "the unity of the fellowship."³³ Chorley indicates that Baptists' "wild and untempered evangelism" contributed to the disunity.³⁴ Some of the "wildness" Chorley mentions refers to Baptists' fiery preaching, but the larger concern was their belief in full immersion of adults. To Anglicans, undermining infant baptism was to over-emphasize the new birth in ways that could cause the collapse of Virginian society. If unity was created by morality, then it could only be maintained through works-based salvation. The full immersion practiced by Baptists was a testament to salvation by grace alone. This salvation meant that no one had to live a morally upright life in order to be saved, which suggested that the unity and peace found in Virginia would be ruined by people who had a free pass to live as they pleased. What most Anglicans could not comprehend was the idea that those saved by grace alone would choose to act morally out of gratitude for their salvation.

Perhaps the nature of the Great Awakening itself proved too revolutionary for Virginia. Since the Great Awakening often included episodes where people experienced an intense physical, emotional, and spiritual response, some ministers feared these reactions were indicative of "false converts."³⁵ This concern, among others, caused rifts to form. Woolverton mentions George Whitefield's famous argument with South Carolina Commissary Alexander Garden. According to Woolverton, Garden saw Whitefield's Evangelical characteristics as too impulsive

³³ Chorley, *Men and Movements*, 10.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 11.

³⁵ Kidd, *The Great Awakening*, 57.

and rejected the concept of sudden regeneration.³⁶ So great were Garden's objections that he worked to have Whitefield suspended from the ministry.³⁷ Persecution not only effected Whitefield, who was well-known and respected, but other Evangelicals as well. They all had an uphill climb against Anglicanism, particularly in the Anglican stronghold of Virginia.

Mark A. Noll, in his *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys*, sums up Virginia's concern with some forms of Evangelicalism.

At its worst, this new evangelicalism neglected, caricatured and distorted the inherited traditions of Reformation Protestantism. Evangelical beliefs and practices could foster a self-centred, egotistic and narcissistic spirituality and also create new arenas for destructive spiritual competition ... They could turn so obsessively inward as to ignore the structures of social evil. Most importantly, evangelicals could trivialize the Christian gospel by treating it as a ballyhooed commodity to be hawked for its power to soothe a nervous, dislocated people in the opening cultural markets of the expanding British empire.³⁸

More than likely, there were those in Virginia who could overlook their concerns and see Evangelicalism at its best – using the gospel as a purpose-giving, lifesaving, breathe of fresh air for all people (and Protestant Christianity as a whole).³⁹ So, coming out of the Great Awakening, there is a possibility that many parishioners were Evangelical, in spite of their Anglican ministers.⁴⁰

Devereux Jarratt, Archibald McRobert, and Charles Clay all saw the positive aspects of Evangelicalism. These three men all desired to further the gospel message in their preaching,

³⁶ John Frederick Woolverton, *Colonial Anglicanism in North America* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), 9.

³⁷ George Whitefield, *Memoirs of Rev. George Whitefield*, ed. by John Gillies (Hartford: E. Hunt, 1852), 119.

³⁸ Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism*, 280.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 280-281.

⁴⁰ The fact that Charles Clay was readily accepted by St. Anne's Parish despite his connection with Devereux Jarratt supports this possibility. Evangelicalism was also more accepted in the western regions of Virginia in general. This will be discussed later.

ministries, and politics. To accomplish these goals, each man took a different path. Jarratt became an itinerant preacher and partnered with Methodists to hold revivals. McRobert provided for future Evangelicals through his work at Hampden-Sydney College. Clay used his social standing and patriotic fervor to reach the gentry. Unlike others such as Samuel Harris, who started as an Anglican and immediately changed denominations upon his conversion, these three men stayed in the Anglican Church until disestablishment, even when, as Gunderson and Jarratt himself suggested, they were essentially the only Evangelical Anglican ministers in Virginia before the Revolution. As Gunderson also notes, other members of the clergy may have had “evangelical leanings” or even realized “that the movement had it’s good points.”⁴¹ Even if Gunderson’s statements are too severe and there were more Evangelical Anglican ministers in Virginia, Jarratt, McRobert, and Clay stand apart from the majority of the Anglican clergy because they aggressively held to revivalist beliefs in their ministries, showed tolerance to other Evangelical denominations (and each another), and opened minds to the concepts of political and religious freedom.

⁴¹ Gunderson, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia*, 194.

Chapter One: Beyond Evangelical – Anglican Revivalists

Anglican clergy in Virginia generally followed a “mold.” First, most of the Virginia clergy came from one of two places in society – either men from yeoman families seeking to improve their station or sons from the gentry that needed to support themselves with a respectable occupation. Candidates for the ministry also went through a particular series of steps in their training before they qualified for ordination or could be placed at a parish. This background and education helped ensure that most ministers kept canon law.¹ Secondly, many ministers had non-religious motivations for accepting orders from the Anglican Church such as increasing their social standing or earning a decent living. Because of these motivations, some ministers focused on shepherding only their parishes and lacked interest in increasing their ministerial reach. Lastly, many of the Anglican clergy in Virginia offered a theology of “virtuous happiness,” preached over the heads of their parishioners, and condemned revivalism fearing its sensational side-effects. Devereux Jarratt, Archibald McRobert, and Charles Clay all show distinctive differences societally, motivationally, and behaviorally from the Anglican “norm.” These distinctive qualities not only set them apart from others in the clergy but also reveal revivalist leanings.

Out of a sea of these “normal” Anglican clergymen stepped Devereux Jarratt. Jarratt was born in 1733 to a “simple” family that lived in Kent County, Virginia. In his youth, he was taught to “look upon, what were called *gentle folks*, as beings of a superior order.”² Although his parents taught him the “*Church Catechism*,” Jarratt could not recall “any serious conversation

¹ Canon law consisted of the rules and regulations set by the established church.

² Devereux Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 14.

respecting God and Christ, Heaven and Hell” nor was he ever in church as a child.³ Jarratt’s journey to conversion occurred slowly beginning with sermons read aloud by his landlord’s wife and ending with his reading Isaiah 62:12 – “And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.”⁴ Because of his yeoman roots and inexperience with the ways of Anglicanism, Jarratt approached the ministry from an unusual place both societally and religiously.

Archibald McRobert was born in Scotland around 1736.⁵ During his young life, McRobert lived through troublesome times in Scotland. Waves of immigration to the colonies swept through brought on by increased rent, crop failures, the collapse of the clan system following the Battle of Culloden, and upheaval within the Church of Scotland.⁶ In 1707, the old method of appointing ministers to parishes was overturned resulting in the resignation of many ministers.⁷ With so much stigma surrounding the Church of Scotland, which had recently declared itself officially Presbyterian in doctrine, McRobert pursued the ministry through the more settled Anglican Church. He might have attended one of the major schools in existence at

³ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 15, 21; E. Clowes Chorley, "The Reverend Devereux Jarratt 1732-1801," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 5, no. 1 (1936): 47.

⁴ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 33, 48.

⁵ This date is based on the age provided in the Virginia Argus obituary upon his death in 1807. See the *Virginia Argus*, 16 Oct. 1807, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024710/1807-10-16/ed-1/seq-3/>.

⁶ Jim Webb, *Born Fighting: How the Scots-Irish Shaped America* (New York: Broadway Books, 2004), 132.

⁷ “History,” Our Structure, The Church of Scotland, <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/our-structure/history>.

the time such as the University of Edinburgh, Glasgow, St Andrew's or Aberdeen.⁸ He was “licensed for Virginia” by the Bishop of London in 1761.⁹

While Jarratt came from poverty and McRobert from Scotland, Charles Clay came from a prominent Virginian family that traced its lineage in the colony back to the 1620s. Born in Powhatan County in 1745, Charles Clay was named after his father and was the third of eleven children. Despite his well-off family, there is no evidence to suggest his parents assisted him in becoming a minister. Although his father’s estate had an estimated “four hundred acres” (plus another four hundred he inherited from a brother), Charles Clay received only “a feather bed and furniture” at the time of his father’s death (less than any of his other siblings – even his sisters).¹⁰ There are no sources to indicate hostility between Charles Clay Sr and Charles Clay Jr, but what little data is available suggests that he was mostly on his own financially especially after his father’s death. However, regardless of financial concerns, simply being part of the Clay family meant that he had less ground to make up in the eyes of Virginians compared to Jarratt and McRobert.

Neither Devereux Jarratt, Archibald McRobert, nor Charles Clay followed the conventional trajectory for becoming an Anglican minister. Early in colonial Virginia’s history, the Anglican Church struggled to keep up with rapid population growth. To overcome this hurdle, the church had hastily ordained ministers from both England and Virginia without thoroughly checking their character. As such, some seventeenth century ministers had created a

⁸ Danielle Spittle, email message to author, March 9, 2021.

⁹ G. MacLaren Brydon, "The Clergy of the Established Church in Virginia and the Revolution (Continued)" *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 41, no. 3 (1933): 239.

¹⁰ Charles Clay, Will dated October 28, 1788, proved July 16, 1789, Powhatan County Registry of Probate, Scottsville, VA; Charles Clay’s sisters received money (five shillings), slaves, and livestock while he did not.

poor reputation for Anglican clergymen.¹¹ By the eighteenth-century, this was corrected through efforts to better educate and examine ministerial hopefuls. Thus, education was at the heart of clerical preparation. Generally speaking, potential ministers first went to a prestigious school (William and Mary was the school of choice for Virginia-born clergymen).¹² Then, they acquired at least two testimonials from other Anglican ministers that provided approval of character and behavior for the three years prior.¹³ Next, they sailed to England for ordination and orders. Often, new ministers took their ordination papers to the governor to receive his recommendation. Finally, they would seek placement at a parish. Yet, Jarratt, McRobert, and Clay all missed one or more of these steps.

In Jarratt's case, his ministerial education began before his conversion. Having learned early on that normal yeoman occupations such as farming or tradesmanship were not for him, Jarratt became a teacher. To make ends meet, he moved from place to place based on the pay rate and stayed with whichever family was willing to provide room and board. In one such arrangement, the lady of the house was "engaged in religion" and provided Jarratt's first taste of religious education.¹⁴ From there, Jarratt began attending local Presbyterian sermons and conversed regularly with the minister and other "religious friends."¹⁵ As he grew in knowledge, he had the opportunity to read printed sermons aloud and pray during meetings at his host family's residence.¹⁶ Eventually, Jarratt gave way to the pressure of his friends and decided to

¹¹ G. MacLaren Brydon and Joan R. Gunderson, "The Episcopal Church in Virginia, 1607-2007," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 115, no. 2 (2007): 182.

¹² Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 100.

¹³ Gunderson, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia*, 43.

¹⁴ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 45.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

pursue ministerial training in the Presbyterian vein by first learning Latin and Greek.¹⁷ After studying Anglican theology on his own, Jarratt chose to be ordained in the Anglican Church. So, he acquired the necessary documentation and booked his passage to England.¹⁸ Through this roundabout education, Jarratt circumnavigated the typical schooling of clergymen.

As noted above, McRobert's clergy training likely took place in Scotland. Some authors suggested that he studied at the prestigious University of Edinburgh.¹⁹ However, the University records do not show that he matriculated there, so it is possible that McRobert went to his ordination without completing the normal process of ministerial education.²⁰ Another possibility is that he studied at a different institution or that he moved from one school to another school to finish his education as this was common among Scots.²¹ No record of any testimonials exists for McRobert. Nevertheless, he was successfully ordained and provided the standard £20 given to new ministers towards their passage to the colonies.²² McRobert settled in Chesterfield County and became the minister of Dale Parish.²³ Upon first meeting McRobert, Jarratt thought he

¹⁷ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 53-54.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁹ Hugh Blair Grigsby, *Discourse on the Lives and Characters of the Early Presidents and Trustees of Hampden-Sidney College* (Richmond: Hermitage Press, 1913), 10.

²⁰ Danielle Spittle, email message to author, March 3, 2021; Ms. Spittle confirmed that "McRobert isn't listed in our list of graduates (1587-1858), so it doesn't look like he graduated from the University of Edinburgh."

²¹ Nelson, *A Blessed Company*, 100; Danielle Spittle, email message to author, March 9, 2021; Ms. Spittle could not find McRobert in the matriculation records of the University of Edinburgh, but she suggested further investigation into the records of Glasgow, St Andrew's or Aberdeen. There is also a possibility that he studied in England at Oxford or Cambridge.

²² Missionary Bonds: Archibald McRoberts, February 25, 1761, Fulham Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, London, UK.

²³ William Meade, *Old Churches, Ministers and Families of Virginia* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1910), 1:448.; Chesterfield County, Virginia, Deed Books 6: 217; 7: 211.; McRobert's name first surfaces in deed book 6 after he acts as an attorney in fact for another Anglican minister. Deed book 7 mentions McRobert buying 300 acres in Chesterfield county.

had great gifts for the pulpit, and spoke with a degree of animation, very unusual at that time; but like another *Apollos*, stood in need of being instructed in the way of the Lord more perfectly. We conversed together freely, and familiarly; and as he seemed both humble and teachable, I opened to him my view of the gospel and manner of preaching it. What I said met his approbation, and in him I found a dear brother and faithful fellow laborer in the work of the Lord.²⁴

At least in Jarratt's mind, McRobert needed additional theological guidance.

Dissimilar to Jarratt and McRoberts, Charles Clay's ministerial education came straight from an Evangelical Anglican clergyman. After Clay chose to pursue the ministry, he was mentored privately by Devereux Jarratt.²⁵ In addition, Jarratt and McRobert provided the two required recommendations of Clay's character for his ordination – “the only candidate... [they] ever mutually approved in the colonial period.”²⁶ Despite his unusual education and heavily Evangelical backing, Clay was offered the position of minister at St. Anne's Parish in Albemarle County in 1769, without the governor's recommendation. Normally, when a parish selected a minister, they would wait until the governor provided his approval. Yet, in Clay's case, St Anne's Parish was comfortable enough to approve him without the additional endorsement. This

²⁴ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 100-101; Jarratt refers to McRobert here as “another Apollos,” referring to the Apollos mentioned in the Biblical books of Acts, 1 Corinthians, and Titus. Specifically, Jarratt is comparing McRobert to Apollos in Acts 18:24-26 where Scripture says, “And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.” (All Scripture references unless otherwise noted will be the King James Version of the Bible.)

²⁵ Gunderson, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia*, 194; Mark Beliles, “The Christian Communities, Religious Revivals, and Political Culture of the Central Virginia Piedmont, 1737-1813,” in *Religion and Political Culture in Jefferson's Virginia*, 3-40, ed. Garrett Ward Sheldon and Daniel Dreisbach (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 9.

²⁶ Gunderson, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia*, 195; Beliles, “The Christian Communities,” 9.

speaks highly of Clay's character especially in light of Anglican concerns about Evangelicalism.²⁷

Many Virginians believed that the security of the social hierarchy was in jeopardy because of Evangelical teachings. For instance, morality was synonymous with social harmony in colonial Virginia. After all, the established church sought to ensure that people lived moral lives.²⁸ The Evangelical concept of conversion nullified the need for people to "be good" in order to obtain eternal life. Since the gospel message extended to all people regardless of social standing, there was also no special treatment for those in the upper tiers of society. Evangelical equality threatened the entire Virginian social hierarchy. Since Anglican clergy often held a distinct social status that allowed them to enjoy a more comfortable lifestyle removed from the manual labor of planters and tradesmen, social collapse was a threat to their livelihoods. Then, with Evangelicalism, came questions about the morality of slavery.²⁹ For some, this was the clear-cut issue of whether to free slaves or not. Others ignored the larger issue and quibbled about smaller problems such as teaching slaves to read so they could study the Bible. All of these anxieties surrounding Evangelicalism applied to many parishioners as well as Anglican ministers.

Devereux Jarratt, Archibald McRobert, and Charles Clay viewed their status as ministers more as an opportunity to share the Gospel than a chance to move up in society. All three used their improved social standing to further the cause of Christ. For example, Jarratt, coming from a

²⁷ There is evidence that St. Anne's Parish would have known that Clay was an Evangelical because he was Jarratt's student. Jarratt was well known at the time as a revivalist. See Beliles, "The Christian Communities," 9.

²⁸ Dell Upton, *Holy Things and Profane: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 9.

²⁹ Concerns about Evangelicalism and slavery became more apparent following the American Revolution.

Presbyterian background, was confronted by the choice to become a minister in the denomination he was familiar with or join the Anglican Church.³⁰ After discovering that Wesley and Whitefield were Anglicans, finding that the Book of Common Prayer was not completely objectionable, and having doubts about the Calvinist teaching of predestination and election in the Presbyterian church, Jarratt found the choice between the Presbyterian and Anglican Church an equal one.³¹ To break the tie, he weighed the monetary concerns related to a voyage to England for ordination against the tediousness of receiving annual support in the Presbyterian church.³² He also believed he would reach more Virginians with the gospel in the Anglican over the Presbyterian Church because of the people's disdain for Evangelical dissenters.³³ For these reasons, rather than a need to improve his societal standing, he opted to make the journey to England and become an Anglican minister. Jarratt's decision would allow him to assist the growing Methodist church, conduct revivals, and preach itinerantly.

McRobert, on the other hand, came to the colonies with an established clerical social standing. His marriage to Elizabeth Mumford further improved his social status.³⁴ As an Anglican minister, McRobert had glebe lands to live on, but he still purchased an additional 270 acres in 1776, after he moved to Prince Edward County. This suggests that his finances were well-settled. Because McRobert was secure socially and financially, he had no fear of social stigma to keep him from eventually breaking with the Anglican Church in 1780 and trying to

³⁰ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 56.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 57-58.

³² *Ibid.*, 58-59.

³³ *Ibid.*, 59.

³⁴ Elizabeth's father, Robert Mumford, was a prominent member of the Virginia gentry. He also served in the French and Indian War as well as the Revolutionary War. See John Frederick Dorman, *Adventurers of Purse and Person, Virginia, 1607-1624/5* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co, 2012), 347.

start his own “independent church.”³⁵ From his place of social stability, McRobert was able to extend his reach into political circles, assist Jarratt with revivals, and help found Hampden-Sydney College to train new ministers.

Unlike McRobert who married into high society, Charles Clay’s family heritage gave him an extra boost among the gentry. The Clay name opened doors and offered protection from persecution. Charles Clay’s brother, Eleazar, also used the family name and his standing within the community to further the Baptist cause in Chesterfield County. Because of his social standing and prominence, Eleazar was not imprisoned like many other Baptist ministers in Chesterfield.³⁶ Fortunately, Albemarle County was friendlier to Evangelicals, so Charles Clay had less use for the protection his name afforded. Instead, he used his security within the social hierarchy to make friends with members of the gentry who needed to hear the gospel.

Varying from the “average” Anglican minister both societally and motivationally, Jarratt, McRobert, and Clay differed slightly from their clerical peers in background, training, and purpose. Yet, their behavior was nearly a complete departure from traditional Anglican thinking. Ultimately, the actions of these three men in their theology and ministries identified them as Revivalists. The closest comparison to Jarratt, McRobert, and Clay’s Anglican Revivalism was fellow Evangelical Anglican and forerunner George Whitefield.

Born in an English inn to a “humble tradesmen’s background,” Whitefield grew up assuming he was bound for a trade and that schooling beyond the basics would be pointless.³⁷

³⁵ Meade, *Old Churches*, 1:448-449.

³⁶ Wesley M. Gewehr, *The Great Awakening in Virginia, 1740-1790* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1930), 124.

³⁷ Jessica M. Parr, *Inventing George Whitefield: Race, Revivalism, and the Making of a Religious Icon* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), 12-13; George Whitefield, *A brief and*

However, he was able to attend Oxford by participating in the servitor program which helped pay for his education by serving students from wealthy families.³⁸ During his school years, Whitefield began his slow journey to conversion. Whitefield believed that the taunts of wealthy students and his own physical ailments were part of his path to redemption.³⁹ On this torturous path, Whitefield befriended the Wesley brothers. Calling their first formal meeting “one of the most profitable visits I ever made in my life,” Whitefield benefitted from the Wesleys’ guidance.⁴⁰ Part way into his schooling, Whitefield had a conversion experience in which he stated that “God... [took] full possession of my soul.”⁴¹

Shortly after his conversion, Whitefield felt a desire to become a minister.⁴² Not wanting to run ahead of God and enter the ministry too soon, he opted to fight against the urge for some time.⁴³ He finally proceeded to seek holy orders earnestly after the Bishop of Gloucester provided his blessing and offered to ordain him despite his youth.⁴⁴ In 1736, at the age of 21, he was ordained, and a week later he graduated from Oxford.⁴⁵ From his first sermon, Whitefield’s speaking ability captured his audiences.⁴⁶ His popularity grew throughout England especially

general account, of the first part of the life of the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield, from his birth, to his entring [sic] into holy-orders (Philadelphia: Bradford, 1740), 5-6.

³⁸ Whitefield, *A brief and general account*, 9-10; Parr, *Inventing George Whitefield*, 13.

³⁹ Thomas Kidd, *George Whitefield: America’s Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2014), 20-21.

⁴⁰ Whitefield, *A brief and general account*, 16-17.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 45.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁴⁶ Kidd, *George Whitefield*, 38.

after he spent time preaching in London.⁴⁷ After receiving letters from the Wesley brothers encouraging a visit to the new colony of Georgia, Whitefield made the decision to head to America.⁴⁸ When he arrived in 1738, Whitefield decided to establish an orphanage and worked to raise money for this project by expanding the geographical reach of his preaching.⁴⁹ This is when Whitefield introduced “the field meeting” which resulted in a fresh wave of revivals erupting throughout England and the colonies.⁵⁰

Revivals, which Mark Noll defines as “intense periods of unusual response to gospel preaching linked with unusual efforts at godly living,” created great controversy in the colonies.⁵¹ More instances of intense emotional and physical responses to the moving of the Holy Spirit emerged as revivalism spread. The sensationalism that became intertwined with revivals separated Evangelicals into two groups – “Old Lights” who opposed revivals and “New Lights” who supported them. These groups fail to represent those like Jarratt, McRobert, and Clay who fall somewhere in between. A more apt breakdown of Evangelicals during the Great Awakening are Kidd’s three factions – “anti-revivalists,” “moderate evangelicals,” and “radical evangelicals.”⁵² Anglicans were generally anti-revivalists who wanted nothing to do with revivals since they often stoked sensationalism.⁵³ On the other hand, Jarratt, McRobert, and Clay

⁴⁷ Kidd, *George Whitefield*, 40-41.

⁴⁸ Kidd, *The Great Awakening*, 43; John and Charles Wesley were the founders of Methodism.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 43-44.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism*, 18.

⁵² Kidd, *The Great Awakening*, xiv.

⁵³ Anglican anti-revivalist notions are a major reason why Baptists were so persecuted in colonial Virginia. Many Anglicans saw all Baptists as radical evangelicals because of Separate Baptists (these Baptists believed any moving of the Holy Spirit was perfectly acceptable – no matter how strange or outlandish). Regular Baptists worked hard to overcome this impression with their

were all moderate evangelicals who supported revivals wholeheartedly at first but became increasingly concerned by some of the sensational reactions to their preaching. Like Whitefield, the three revivalists all possessed a fiery style of preaching – what modern-day language would call “fire and brimstone,” and they brought the same message of Justification by faith alone.

Although Whitefield was a powerhouse revivalist, his sermons were somewhat plain.⁵⁴ What then drew the huge crowds to hear Whitefield preach? Part of Whitefield’s popularity stemmed from the image he built for himself. He knew how to use the power of publication to gather interest. By publishing his sermons, an autobiographical work on his early life and conversion, and even letters between himself and his opponents, Whitefield increased people’s curiosity and his own fame.⁵⁵ Furthermore, his youth and handsome face added to his growing notoriety.⁵⁶ However, his greatest strength was his oratory abilities. Even fastidious Devereux Jarratt noted Whitefield’s ability to speak. While in London, Jarratt heard both John Wesley and Whitefield preach “but... got little edification from either... though... [they] spoke well, and to the purpose.”⁵⁷ Whitefield’s youthful days, where he enjoyed acting in and “reading plays,” had laid the groundwork for his formidable speaking skills.⁵⁸ People were drawn to Whitefield’s preaching, but even so, it is hard to imagine that a sermon could drive people “mad.”⁵⁹ What

denomination but struggled to do so in Virginia. For more information on this see Kidd, *The Great Awakening*, 244-252.

⁵⁴ Kidd, *George Whitefield*, 38.

⁵⁵ Parr, *Inventing George Whitefield*, 22, 33, 49.

⁵⁶ Kidd, *The Great Awakening*, 49; though many considered Whitefield handsome, others made fun of him because he was likely cross-eyed.

⁵⁷ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 73.

⁵⁸ Whitefield, *A brief and general account*, 5.

⁵⁹ Kidd, *George Whitefield*, 38.

kind of preaching could lead to such intense reactions as uncontrollable tremors, fainting, and crying?

There were three distinctive theological concepts in revivalist preaching that might have inspired the “sensational” responses. First, most revivalists warned about the reality of Hell for those who died without faith in Christ. Secondly, justification by faith alone was a focal point of revivalist sermons. Only Christ could save souls. A person’s own good deeds would never be enough. Third, revivalists emphasized the new birth in Christ as a mark of true believers. None of these topics were popular amongst Anglican ministers, but the majority of Evangelical dissenters clung to them as important truths.

Throughout his many writings, Whitefield supported these three principles. For example, Whitefield so championed justification by faith that he wrote “[I] shall be willing to die in the defense of it.”⁶⁰ To Whitefield, this doctrine was crucial to the gospel message. Climactic moments in his sermons focus less on the place of Hell and more on those who professed to be Christians but had not been born again according to Whitefield’s theology. In his “signature sermon,” Whitefield said, “If he that is in CHRIST must be a new Creature, this may serve as a Reproof for some, who rest in a bare Performance of outward Duties, without perceiving any real inward Change of Heart.”⁶¹ Going one step further, Whitefield explained that he “care[d] not” if he was “causelessly denied the further use of the churches, because he preached up the necessity of the new birth, and justification in the sight of God by faith alone.”⁶² Whitefield indicated that

⁶⁰ Whitefield, *A brief and general account*, 40.

⁶¹ George Whitefield, “The Nature and Necessity of Our New Birth in Christ Jesus” in *Early Evangelicalism: A Reader*, ed. Jonathan M. Yeager (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 26.

⁶² George Whitefield, *Some remarks on a pamphlet entitled The enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists compar'd: wherein several mistakes in some parts of his past writings and conduct are*

Preaching about the new birth in Christ made him especially unpopular with Anglican ministers who he often described as “unspiritual and worldly.”⁶³

Devereux Jarratt agreed with Whitefield theologically. After his ordination, Jarratt was able to preach in London. So distinctive was his preaching among the Anglican clergy in England, that “it was strongly suspected that I [Jarratt] was a *Methodist*.”⁶⁴ Throughout his ministry, the elements of his preaching that Londoners saw as “Methodist” persisted. For instance, Jarratt promoted the need for morality, but only following justification by faith. In a book of his published sermons, Jarratt said “true morality can never spring forth from an unrenewed heart... [only] by faith in the blood of Christ” could true morality emerge.⁶⁵ Also, Jarratt warned about the coming judgment of Christ. Resembling Whitefield, Jarratt focused many of his sermons on those unconverted souls who believed themselves saved because of outward religiosity. In his sermon titled *A Solemn Call to Sleeping Sinners*, Jarratt cautions that those who do not know God “shall be punished with everlasting destruction.”⁶⁶ Then, he

acknowledged, and his present sentiments concerning the Methodists explained: (in a letter to the author) (Philadelphia, 1749), 9.

⁶³ Jonathan M., Yeager, ed. *Early Evangelicalism: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 23.

⁶⁴ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 73; originally, Methodism began within the Anglican Church. Methodists were simply Anglicans that sought reform within the Church of England. In 1795, Methodists would break away from Anglicanism and form a new denomination. The term Methodist was also used as a synonym for revivalist which may be what the people here were referring to.

⁶⁵ Devereux Jarratt, *Sermons on various and important subjects, in practical divinity, adapted to the plainest capacities, and suited to the family and closet. By the Rev. Devereux Jarratt, rector of Bath, in the state of Virginia* (Raleigh: Glendinning, 1805), 8; because these are published sermons, they do not read as fiery revival sermons. Jarratt likely toned down his enthusiasm to appeal to a wider audience. However, Jarratt’s theology shines through. This particular publication includes much language that other members of the Anglican clergy may have seen as inflammatory.

⁶⁶ Devereux Jarratt, *A Solemn Call to Sleeping Sinners* (Philadelphia: Johnson & Justice, 1792), 7.

elaborates with an emotional monologue interspersed with Scripture about the day of judgement.⁶⁷ Jarratt uses his words to literally and figuratively “awaken” his listeners to the gospel message. At the end of the sermon, Jarratt extends an invitation for sleeping sinners who have awakened during the sermon to come before Christ for salvation and renewal.⁶⁸ This type of sermon is reminiscent of revivalism both in the eighteenth-century and in the modern day.

Although, Archibald McRobert’s sermons are lost to time, his preaching endures through the testimonies of those who heard him speak. Gressett Davis, a businessman, wrote to John Wesley in 1780 explaining that he had been converted under McRobert’s ministry eleven years earlier.⁶⁹ Davis wrote that “under the preaching of good Mr. McRoberts, my eyes were opened to see the spirituality of the law. I was convinced of sin. This was the fourth sermon I had heard from this minister.”⁷⁰ McRobert’s preaching certainly left an impression on Davis. In both Jarratt’s description and McRobert’s obituary in the *Virginia Argus*, he is also hinted at having a preaching style suggestive of revivalism. The *Virginia Argus* explained that, “There are many now living who have witnessed with what awful pathos, he displayed the terrors of the law, to awaken and alarm the careless and secure sinner.”⁷¹ These testimonies endure as lasting records of his revivalist attributes.

Charles Clay also exhibited the same fiery, revivalist preaching similar to Whitefield, Jarratt, and McRobert. Bishop William Meade wrote that Clay’s “sermons are sound, energetic,

⁶⁷ Jarratt, *A Solemn Call to Sleeping Sinners*, 8-9.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁶⁹ John Atkinson, *History of the Origin of the Wesleyan Movement in America: And of the Establishment Therein of Methodism* (Jersey City: Wesleyan Pub. Co, 1896), 377; Davis was the first person to invite Robert Williams to Virginia.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Virginia Argus*, 16 Oct. 1807, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024710/1807-10-16/ed-1/seq-3/>.

and evangelical beyond the character of the times.”⁷² The energy in Clay’s sermons came from his enthusiastic calls for sinners to come to Christ for salvation. In one sermon preached out of Ephesians 5:14, Clay first warns his listeners of the “everlasting destruction” that awaits them, and he explains that an outwardly holy person without justification by faith is seen by God as a “painted sepulcher, an appearance beautiful without, but nevertheless is full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness.”⁷³ Then, he inquires “art thou prepared to meet death & judgement?”⁷⁴ Yet, he does not leave his hearers without hope. Instead, he asks them:

Seest thou the necessity of that inward change, that spiritual birth, that life from the dead, that holiness? & art thou thoroughly convinced that without it no man shall see the Lord? art thou labouring after it? Giving all diligence to make thy calling & election sure? Working out thy salvation with fear & trembling? ... and canst thou say to the searcher of hearts, thou O God, art the thing that I long for! Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I would love thee!⁷⁵

The way Clay stacks his questions creates an emotional highpoint in his sermons – one can almost hear him beating his Bible for emphasis. These climatic moments are characteristic of revivalist preaching and are present in the vast majority of Clay’s surviving sermons. For example, Clay explains that “there is not one word in the whole Bible, that promises you grace here after, if you refuse the offer now given you.”⁷⁶ Clay was also passionate about rebuking “those who preach... works without laying the foundation on Jesus Christ as the Chief Cornerstone [who] are like men building without materials.”⁷⁷

⁷² Meade, *Old Churches*, 2:49.

⁷³ Charles Clay, “Ephesians 5 Chap. 14 Ver,” Clay Family Papers, Section 2, 1745-1820, Virginia Museum of History and Culture, Richmond, VA, 5, 7.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

⁷⁶ Charles Clay, “2 Cor. 5:17,” Clay Family Papers, Section 2, 1745-1820, Virginia Museum of History and Culture, Richmond, VA, 5, 7.

⁷⁷ Charles Clay, “General Epistle of St. James, Chap. 2 V. 24,” Clay Family Papers, Section 2, 1745-1820, Virginia Museum of History and Culture, Richmond, VA, 25.

Even though Clay's sermons are packed with indefatigable calls to repent and be saved, he noted that they often fell on deaf ears.⁷⁸ For example, Clay preached "Should you chance to die in this [unconverted] condition, unfit as you are, [what] in the Name of God will become of you? For they who are unfit for Communion with Jesus Christ upon Earth must be unfit for Communion with him in heaven."⁷⁹ In another sermon, Clay explains that "no man shall be accounted worthy of the future heavenly Glory, but he, who steadfastly believing it, does desire, & pants after it above everything else, & thinks he can never do too much to obtain it."⁸⁰ These are the kinds of sermons Clay's congregations heard weekly. How could such powerful sermons not stir the hearts of the listeners? Clay's repeating calls to conversion were directly proportionate to how little he believed his audience was hearing.⁸¹ Perhaps, Clay preached so constantly on the new birth and repentance that his listeners became hardened to his passionate pleas. Then again, maybe a character flaw or problem with his preaching style stifled the effectiveness of his sermons. Whatever the true reason, Charles Clay's ministry was likely hampered by the gap between his words and his listener's ears.⁸²

Despite being revivalists, Whitefield, Jarratt, McRobert, and Clay all remained faithful to the Anglican Church. Some historians try to paint Whitefield as a tireless self-promoter who

⁷⁸ Jacob Blosser, "New Light Establishment: Evangelical Anglicans in Revolutionary Virginia" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, Denver, CO, March 21, 2019).

⁷⁹ Charles Clay, "Romans 5:8 – for G. Fryday," Clay Family Papers, Section 2, 1745-1820, Virginia Museum of History and Culture, Richmond, VA, 37.

⁸⁰ Charles Clay, "Ephesians 2: 1-2," Clay Family Papers, Section 2, 1745-1820, Virginia Museum of History and Culture, Richmond, VA, 54.

⁸¹ Jacob Blosser, "New Light Establishment: Evangelical Anglicans in Revolutionary Virginia," 2019.

⁸² Perhaps the frustration of preaching to people who would not listen added to Clay's decision to leave the ministry.

worked to market his image and his theological concepts.⁸³ In this thinking, Whitefield's desire to remain Anglican comes across as a move to maintain an acceptable reputation – essentially a public relations ploy. On the contrary, Whitefield's own writings point to his sincere desire to remain connected to Anglicanism. For example, the way in which he writes to the Bishop of London reveals an almost familial affection for the Church of England.⁸⁴ Normally, Whitefield does not hold back when correcting theological principles. In writing to the Bishop of London, he showed a milder side of himself saying "Another Thing, My Lord, to me seems darkly expressed in... (Oh! Let not your Lordship be angry, for indeed I will endeavour to speak with all Gentleness and Humility)."⁸⁵ Additionally, Whitefield believed that his theology was in sync with Anglicanism, but that other Anglican ministers had strayed from the original message of the church.⁸⁶

Jarratt, though originally associated with Presbyterianism, chose to become an Anglican minister. His loyalty to Anglicanism would remain throughout his entire life. Much in the thinking of Whitefield, Jarratt believed the Anglican Church had simply strayed from its original focus on the true gospel message. Upon learning more about the Methodists, Jarratt initially appreciated how they sought to reform the Church of England.⁸⁷ On the other hand, McRobert began as an Anglican, but later became a Presbyterian minister (although he chose to be buried

⁸³ Parr, *Inventing George Whitefield*, 15.

⁸⁴ George Whitefield, *The Rev. Mr. Whitefield's answer to the Bishop of London's last pastoral letter* (Philadelphia: Bradford, 1739), 1-16.

⁸⁵ Whitefield, *The Rev. Mr. Whitefield's answer to the Bishop of London's last pastoral letter*, 5; when addressing such an influential Anglican, Whitefield watched his mouth, which was out of character. This could be because he wished to stay in the Bishop's good graces or out of genuine respect and affection for the Church of England.

⁸⁶ Whitefield, *A brief and general account*, 40.

⁸⁷ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 108.

in an Episcopalian cemetery).⁸⁸ Clay did attempt to start an independent church that was loosely associated with Episcopalianism but returned fully to the Episcopal fold when that church failed. All of these men managed to stay true to their revivalist theologies while remaining in the Anglican Church for the majority of their lives. While Whitefield fanned the flames of the Great Awakening, Jarratt, McRobert, and Clay kept the fire burning in Virginia well past the close of the supposed First Great Awakening.

Although Whitefield did not begin the Great Awakening, he served as a “catalyst” that spread and invigorated Evangelicalism throughout the colonies.⁸⁹ In the same way, Jarratt, McRobert, and Clay energized their local parishes and communities with revival long after the First Great Awakening supposedly ended. Thomas Kidd noted that the First Great Awakening consisted of “persistent desires for revival, widespread individual conversions, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit” and continued well past its “official” end date.⁹⁰ Kidd proposes a “long First great Awakening” that “lasted roughly until the end of the American Revolution.”⁹¹ One might consider our three Anglican subjects examples of Kidd’s theory.⁹²

Because Jarratt, McRobert, and Clay joined the ministry from different societal, motivational, and behavioral avenues, they separated themselves from the majority of Anglican

⁸⁸ J. D. Eggleston, *Prince Edward County, Virginia, Archibald McRobert, Patriot Scholar, Man of God: An Address Before the Daughters of the American Revolution, Chapter of Farmville, February 1928* (Farmville: The Farmville Herald, 1928), 1-2.

⁸⁹ Kidd, *The Great Awakening*, 40.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, xix.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² To further investigate the possibility that Kidd’s theory might be more accurate than the traditional “First” and “Second” Great Awakenings, historians need to study other ministers and Evangelical denominations to see if they also continue their revivalistic ministries through the American Revolution. If so, historians may have been viewing the Great Awakening timeline as too confining.

clergymen. Their revivalist preaching also calls into question the views many historians have about the chronology of the Great Awakening. These men, who have nearly faded into obscurity, might have a lasting impact on the modern-day field of colonial religious history. Regardless of whether they change contemporary historians' ideas or not, they altered Virginia in a mighty way. Since they moved away from other Anglican ministers doctrinally, they brought themselves closer to the theology of Evangelical dissenters. This opened the door for all three men to help new Evangelical denominations gain a foothold in notoriously unfavorable Virginia.

Chapter Two: Beyond Tolerant – Spreading Evangelicalism

Revivalism swept through the colonies “from New England to Georgia,” but its impact was felt differently in each.¹ Virginia reacted to revivalism because the established church was so closely intertwined with the government and the hierarchical social structure. More than in other colonies, Evangelical dissenters faced an uphill battle to build churches and start revivals in Virginia, since many Anglicans feared they would destroy the class system and bring chaos.² Fortuitously for the Methodists and Presbyterians three Anglican revivalists were willing to support fledgling ministries and help reach Anglicans. Jarratt, McRobert, and Clay were more than tolerant – they went the extra mile to aid in the growth of Evangelicalism.

In Virginia, Anglicans believed that moral living would bring earthly comfort. Preaching a doctrine of “virtuous happiness,” Anglican Churches encouraged their congregations to be good people in order to receive God’s blessings.³ Anglicans also viewed difficulties as instruments of God’s wrath and judgment (usually indicating that sin was to blame).⁴ Rather than promise happiness through good works, Evangelicalism offered justification by faith alone. This meant that people did not earn their salvation or happiness nor were negative events such as droughts and floods necessarily a result of God’s anger. Evangelicals, unlike many of their Anglican counterparts, believed that trials and tribulation were to be expected – not because they

¹ Gewehr, *The Great Awakening in Virginia*, 3.

² “Evangelical dissenters” is a term used to reference those in Virginia who did not attend or share theology with the established church. This will mainly refer to Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists since they are the focus of this chapter. However, there are many other Evangelical denominations that can also be considered dissenters, such as the Moravians, Quakers, etc.

³ Jacob M. Blosser, "Pursuing Happiness in Colonial Virginia: Sacred Words, Cheap Print, and Popular Religion in the Eighteenth Century," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 118, no. 3 (2010): 211.

⁴ Bond, *Damned Souls in a Tobacco Colony*, 51-52.

had disobeyed God, but because the Bible said to expect persecution and accept it joyfully. Evangelicals believed that “true morality can never spring forth from an unrenewed heart.”⁵ Instead, out of thankfulness, a redeemed person would live uprightly and reject worldly activities such as dancing, drinking, and gambling.⁶ For Anglicans, these pursuits were social events and a part of everyday life, not something inherently sinful. After his arrival in Bath parish in 1763, Jarratt found that his parishioners were complaining. “We never heard any of our [previous] ministers say anything against civil mirth, such as dancing, &c. nay, they rather encouraged the people in them.”⁷ Evangelicals had to overcome the additional hurdle of differing moral standards between Anglicanism and Evangelicalism.

Having faced the obstacle of morality at Bath parish, Jarratt understood that sharing Evangelical theology with Anglicans posed unique challenges. One of these was an issue of social standing. Jarratt found that “the poorer sort” felt uncomfortable speaking with him about spiritual matters because they “had not been accustomed to converse with clergymen, whom they supposed to stand in the rank of gentlemen, and above the company and conversation of

⁵ Devereux Jarratt, *A sermon preached before the convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, at Richmond, in Virginia, May 3, 1792* (Bristol: Dearth & Sterry, 1808), iv.

⁶ In the eighteenth-century, these activities were considered immoral, primarily by Evangelical dissenters.

⁷ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 85; Meade, *Old Churches*, 1:469; a parish was a geographic district (similar to a county) assigned to a minister. Each parish had several churches within its boundaries (usually two or three). Bath parish, created in 1742, consisted of three churches – Butterwood, Sapony, and Hatcher’s Run. Jarratt’s duty as an Anglican clergyman was to minister to all three. The entire region of Bath parish was in Dinwiddie County (south of Richmond and directly west of Petersburg). There were only two ministers before Jarratt – Mr. Pow (first name unknown) who was originally a British Navy chaplain and James Pasteur. How long Pasteur remained at Bath Parish is undetermined, but he may have left several years before Jarratt arrived. It was not uncommon for parishes to go without a minister for some time. See also David Holmes “Devereux Jarratt: A Letter and a Reevaluation,” *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 47, no. 1 (Mar 01, 1978): 38.

plebians.”⁸ For those of higher social standing, Jarratt felt that the greatest obstacle to their conversion was the information provided by previous ministers. For instance, Jarratt’s parishioners asked,

we have had many ministers, and have heard many, before this man [Jarratt], but we never heard anything, till now, of conversion, the new birth, &c. –we never heard that men are so totally lost and helpless, that they could not save themselves, by their own power and good deeds; if our good works will not save us, what will?⁹

Even as an ordained Anglican minister, Jarratt faced an uphill battle at his own parish. If his parishioners struggled to accept unfamiliar theology from one of their own, it would be understandably more difficult for an Evangelical dissenter to make headway with Anglicans.

Realizing that not everyone attended church, Jarratt expanded his ministry outside of the traditional Sunday duties. He began holding religious gatherings in homes throughout the week and soon realized that they did “more solid and lasting good” than regular church services.¹⁰ At a private gathering, the differences in class were lessened and everyone could ask questions freely. This overcame the main issues Jarratt faced at Bath parish. Additionally, the questions Jarratt collected in these gatherings allowed him to tailor his sermons to the needs of his congregation.¹¹ Armed with his new tactics, Jarratt slowly won his parishioners to Christ.

A successful ministry brought new opportunities for Jarratt. As Bath parish embraced Evangelicalism, the parishioners began to invite others to come to church. Soon, Jarratt noticed

⁸ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 91.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 85; this quote comes directly from Jarratt’s parishioners. According to Jarratt, several of them came to him after their conversion and explained how they felt about his preaching after he first arrived, which Jarratt recorded.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 91; Chorley, *The Reverend Devereux Jarratt 1732-1801*, 52; holding religious gatherings outside of church was not typical of an Anglican minister. Jarratt himself noted that it was “a great novelty in a minister of the church.” However, Evangelical dissenters such as Presbyterians held meetings of this sort often.

¹¹ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 93-94.

that his churches “were now crowded” with people from other places.¹² As the news spread by word of mouth, he was invited to preach outside of Dinwiddie County. By his own estimation, Jarratt traveled an area “of five to six hundred miles” to preach on a regular basis. Essentially, he became an Anglican itinerant preacher. Like Whitefield, Jarratt was rejected by Anglican ministers as he traveled, and the crowds were often too large for a church anyway, so he ended up preaching outside.¹³ From 1765-1783, Jarratt preached throughout Virginia and North Carolina.¹⁴

During his travels, Jarratt became familiar with Baptists. Although he believed the gospel transcended denominations, he found the full-immersion baptism practiced by Baptists concerning. He observed that Baptists also ruined the “unity of the brethren” because joining them meant a complete break from both the Anglican Church and all those who remained Anglican.¹⁵ In his own parish, Jarratt discouraged full-immersion baptism (what he called “going into the water”) and managed to protect his parish from the disunity he feared.¹⁶ However, his concern for the growing Baptist denomination did give him additional incentive to assist the Methodists (who wished to reform the Anglican Church). He hoped that by joining forces and creating a united front, Baptist growth would be slowed.¹⁷

¹² Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 94.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 97; during this time, Jarratt continued to preach in his own parish as well as itinerate. He was careful to travel only as far away as he could turn around and still make it back to his own parish for Sunday services. Occasionally, he went out further and skipped a Sunday at Bath parish, but this was rare. He kept up this grueling pace until issues with the Methodists and his own health made him stay closer to home. See Meade, *Old Churches*, 1:172.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁷ Meade, *Old Churches*, 1:172; the term “Methodist” was used many ways in the eighteenth-century. It was often used as a term of mockery that could refer to anyone that preached Evangelical theology. It was also the name taken by followers of John and Charles Wesley.

The first Methodist Jarratt encountered was Robert Williams. Hailing from Ireland, Williams' fiery criticism of the Anglican clergy in England brought him much chastisement from John Wesley. In his journal, Wesley mentioned that "There was a general love to the gospel here till simple R[obert] W[illiams] preached against the clergy."¹⁸ However, Williams seemed to change his tune after coming to America. There are no recorded instances of him speaking against Anglican ministers in the colonies. After Gressett Davis (one of McRobert's converts) invited him to eastern Virginia, Williams began the first Methodist preaching circuit in Virginia. Curious about the man, Jarratt sent an invitation for Williams to visit Dinwiddie County.¹⁹ In his description of Williams, Jarratt considered him "a plain, simple-hearted, pious man."²⁰ Jarratt also "liked his preaching in the main, very well, and especially the affectionate and animated manner, in which his discourses were delivered."²¹ Through Williams, Jarratt familiarized himself with Methodist beliefs. He was particularly drawn to a phrase in some of the Methodist literature that stated, "He that left the church, left the Methodists."²² To Jarratt, this phrase indicated that the Methodists were determined to remain a part of the Anglican Church.

Initially, these followers wanted to reform the Church of England, but they would later break away and form the Methodist denomination. When Jarratt first became acquainted with the Methodists, they were still a part of the Church of England. So, throughout this chapter, "Methodist" will refer to the followers of John and Charles Wesley. See George Lavington, *The enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists compar'd* (London: J. and P. Knapton, 1749), 1-359.

¹⁸ John Wesley, *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1909), 314-315.

¹⁹ John Atkinson, *History of the Origin of the Wesleyan Movement in America: And of the Establishment Therein of Methodism* (Jersey City: Wesleyan Pub. Co, 1896), 375.

²⁰ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 107.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 108.

²² *Ibid.*; this statement essentially meant that a person who left the Anglican Church was not a Methodist. The Wesley brothers (founders of Methodism) originally sought to reform the Church of England from the inside out. So, leaving the Anglican Church was the same as leaving the Methodists. Only later did the Methodists break away from the church to become their own denomination.

With the hope that the Methodists would unify the church and spread the gospel, Jarratt began to assist them. In his own travels, Jarratt found that many people feared Methodists because they believed them to be Evangelical dissenters.²³ To combat this belief, Jarratt “took much pains to remove that objection.”²⁴ Jarratt did more than break down the fear of Methodism. He opened his own churches up to Methodist preachers, found places for them to meet in places where the Anglican Church was less friendly, helped establish Methodist societies, and even requested that “his parish be included on the Brunswick circuit.”²⁵ While Jarratt had initiated revivals on his own, teaming up with the Methodists ignited even greater revival in both Virginia and North Carolina.²⁶ So significant was the revival in 1775-1776, that fellow Methodist preacher Jesse Lee said “it was the greatest revival of religion that had ever been known in that part of the country.”²⁷

Jarratt was not the only Anglican minister to back the Methodists – Archibald McRobert also aided their cause. One Methodist historian wrote “Those two clergymen, in that dark day in Virginia, labored in unity to spread evangelical doctrines and to save men; and they were

²³ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 110.

²⁴ *Ibid.*; Jarratt used small group settings to connect with people. This worked for him as he shared the gospel in Bath parish, so to help the Methodists, he started Methodist societies (these consisted of small groups of people willing to hold regular meetings for prayer/bible study/etc.) in different communities. These meetings were open to everyone and offered a chance for people to ask questions and address concerns outside of a church setting. Small group gatherings greatly contributed to the growth of Evangelicalism in the colonies. Each Methodist society usually became a full-fledged church overtime. White Oak United Methodist Church in Wilson, Virginia began as one of Jarratt’s Methodist societies and still holds services today. See Richard Lyon Jones, *Dinwiddie County, Carrefour of the Commonwealth: A History* (Dinwiddie: Board of Supervisors of Dinwiddie County, 1976), 294-295.

²⁵ Gewehr, *The Great Awakening in Virginia*, 151.

²⁶ Jesse Lee, *A Short History of the Methodists in the United States of America, Beginning in 1766 and Continued Till 1809: To Which Is Prefixed a Brief Account of Their Rise in England in the Year 1729, &C* (Baltimore: Magill and Clime, 1810), 43-44; Kidd, *The Great Awakening*, 243.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

instrumental in kindling a flame of revival which spread abroad and was seen afar.”²⁸ The same author explained that they were both “zealous and awakening preachers of the Church of England.”²⁹

McRobert likely helped Jarratt because of their close friendship. McRobert is often referred to as Jarratt’s “bosom-friend.”³⁰ If nothing else, McRobert served as a confidant and sounding board for Jarratt. The friends exhorted one another through letters. In one published letter, Jarratt joyfully tells McRobert about fifteen conversions that followed his preaching. Letters were also a means to discuss revival concerns. Jarratt shared that the “loud outcries, tremblings, fallings, [and] convulsions” that occurred during services were unsettling, but that he was persuaded “that wherever these most appeared, there was always the greatest and the deepest work.”³¹

Perhaps, the friendship between these two explains Jarratt’s willingness to pardon McRobert’s decision to leave the Anglican Church. Around 1779, during the latter part of the Revolutionary War, McRobert chose to leave the Anglican Church and become a Presbyterian minister.³² While Bishop Meade thought McRobert’s written “defense” of his decision was “very weak,” Jarratt trusted his friend.³³ Jarratt wrote that “He [McRobert] has never visited me since he left the church, though I have frequently visited him, and have reason to believe he still

²⁸ John Atkinson, *History of the Origin of the Wesleyan Movement in America: And of the Establishment Therein of Methodism* (Jersey City: Wesleyan Pub. Co, 1896), 248.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 375.

³⁰ Meade, *Old Churches*, 1:448.

³¹ Devereux Jarratt and Thomas Rankin, *A Brief Narrative of the Revival of Religion in Virginia* (London: R. Hawkes, 1778), 15.

³² Meade, *Old Churches*, 1:448; Grigsby, *Discourse on the Lives and Characters of the Early Presidents and Trustees of Hampden-Sidney College*, 10.

³³ Meade, *Old Churches*, 1:448.

retains a great regard for me—and what is still of much greater consequence, I believe he still has the cause of God at heart.”³⁴

Jarratt was quick to forgive McRobert but struggled to accept the Methodists’ choice to break away from the Anglican Church to establish their own. This seeming contradiction is largely due to the suddenness with which the Methodists broke from the church. In 1780, McRobert expressed concerns about the Methodist cause. He wrote Jarratt saying “The Methodists are a designing people... Their professed adherence to the church is amazingly preposterous and disingenuous, and nothing but policy either in England or here.”³⁵ However, Jarratt did not heed his friend’s warning. In response, Jarratt believed that it would be unreasonable “to call the sincerity of their profession into question.”³⁶ This was the only warning Jarratt mentions receiving, and he dismissed it as unworthy of note. Four years later, at a Methodist conference in 1784, Francis Asbury brought, read, and discussed John Wesley’s *Reasons Against a Separation from the Church of England*.³⁷ This was done, according to Jarratt, “to render an attachment to the church yet more firm and permanent.”³⁸ Then, to Jarratt’s horror, the Methodists fully severed themselves from the Anglican Church by the end of the year.³⁹ In addition to the speed of this decision, Jarratt felt that in creating their own church, the Methodists had “embraced a new faith” and that “their old mother, to whom they had avowed so

³⁴ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 101.

³⁵ “McRobert to Jarratt [Providence, July 13, 1780]” in *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 149.

³⁶ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 157.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 114-115.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 119.

much duty and fidelity, was discarded, and violently opposed.”⁴⁰ Jarratt later admitted that “Mr. McRobert’s judgement of them was more accurate than mine.”⁴¹

To make matters worse, Jarratt felt snubbed by the Methodists because he opted to remain loyal to the Anglican Church. He believed that he was seen as “a principal butt— a great eyesore— for to the church I still clave, and ever intend to cleave as long as I live.”⁴² Overtime, the backlash settled down. By 1796, Jarratt trusted that he and the Methodists were “on pretty friendly terms.”⁴³ When Jarratt reviewed the Methodist’s actions in his later years, he wrote

Mr. McRobert, perhaps, very justly attributed their [the Methodists] professed adherence to the church to nothing but policy— and I suppose, when that policy failed, they fell upon another, which they liked better: but if this policy was intended for the good of souls and the promotion of religion principally, might not some allowances be made for it, tho’ candor seemed to be lacking?⁴⁴

So, although Jarratt was initially blindsided and hurt by the Methodist separation from the Anglican Church, he forgave them and sought to justify their actions. Additionally, he maintained a high regard for Francis Asbury calling him “the most indefatigable man in his travels and variety of labours.”⁴⁵ This regard he received in like kind from Asbury. Upon hearing of Jarratt’s death, Asbury wrote “The old prophet, I hear, is dead. He was a man of genius... I have reason to presume, that he was instrumentally successful in awakening hundreds of souls to some sense of religion.”⁴⁶ While the Methodists might have mistreated Jarratt after the church break, they certainly remedied their actions with words after his death. Well into the nineteenth

⁴⁰ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 119.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 120.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Asbury, *Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, 3:17.

century, Methodist historians hailed Jarratt as an Anglican founding father of Methodism in Virginia.

Although he had served the Anglican Church faithfully and promoted Evangelicalism in Virginia, Jarratt had stringent requirements for new ministers. He readily admitted to being a vain young man.⁴⁷ Yet, even after his conversion, his ego remained somewhat inflated. However, his vanity shifted from the trivial aspects of youth, such as enjoying fine clothes and desiring people's admiration, to a nitpickiness towards other ministers – even other Evangelicals. Jarratt was always quick to point out the shortcomings in other's sermons. For instance, Jarratt heard Whitefield, Wesley, and one of Wesley's followers preach while he was in London and was unimpressed with all three. In addition to his indifference to their messages, Jarratt had the audacity to make such remarks almost immediately after his ordination. He recorded his sentiments in a letter he knew would be published. In his entire autobiography, he only complimented a handful of ministers on their preaching (McRobert and Roger Williams included). When there was a shortage of ministers in the Episcopal church following disestablishment, Jarratt adamantly opposed the ordination of unqualified ministers. At an Episcopalian convention in 1792, Jarratt refused two candidates for the ministry and was horrified when another clergyman swore them in.⁴⁸ He refused to attend an Episcopal convention for several years afterward. Obviously, Jarratt had high standards for ministers.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 42.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁴⁹ These high standards might have been measured by sermons Jarratt read, as he was an avid reader and devoured all books on religion that he could get his hands on. However, he also may have used his own sermons as a criteria with which to measure others. Since most of Jarratt's surviving letters and documents were intended for publishing, it is difficult to discern a solid answer for where Jarratt founded his high standards.

Archibald McRobert was a partner with Jarratt during the Methodist-Anglican revival, but he also contributed to the growth of the Presbyterian church. After an attempt to start an independent church failed, McRobert elected to join the Presbyterians. In a letter to Jarratt explaining this decision, he wrote “Ecclesiastical matters among the Presbyterians I find every day verging toward my sentiments, and will, I believe, terminate there.”⁵⁰ In 1787, McRobert joined the Presbytery of Hanover as a minister.⁵¹ At the next meeting that he attended, he preached the opening sermon and was chosen as the moderator.⁵² By this meeting, McRobert was actively preaching at churches within the presbytery, including Concord, Hat Creek, and Walker’s Church (which had been his attempt at an independent church).⁵³ Even as he grew older and his health declined, he continued to preach whenever possible. Since he was well off financially, there was no pressing need for him to preach.⁵⁴ Plus, Presbyterian ministers often worked on slim salaries anyway.⁵⁵ Yet, McRobert continued to preach until his health forced him to stop.

⁵⁰ “McRobert to Jarratt [Providence, July 13, 1780],” in *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 146.

⁵¹ Hanover Presbytery Minutes in Manuscript, Vol. 3, 1786-1795, Digital Collections, Union Presbyterian Seminary Library, Union Presbyterian Seminary, Richmond, VA, 14-16.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 26; the Hanover Presbytery met twice a year. McRobert joined the presbytery in September of 1787, missed the April 1788 meeting, and next attended the October 1788 meeting.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁴ McRobert married into a wealthy family and owned a large piece of land which he used for farming.

⁵⁵ Robert F. Scott, "Colonial Presbyterianism in the Valley of Virginia 1727—1775," *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society (1943-1961)* 35, no. 2 (1957): 84-85; this article indicates that securing support for ministers was a constant problem.

Additionally, McRobert faithfully served on the board of trustees of Hampden-Sydney College from 1776 until he resigned due to poor health in 1795.⁵⁶ While on the board, McRobert was frequently elected chairman of board meetings, worked to acquire land for the college (including land from St. Patrick's Parish where he had worked as an Anglican minister), and helped author the original code of laws and regulations.⁵⁷ Although the school was founded as a liberal arts school without any specific religious affiliation, many Presbyterian-connected men served on the board. In fact, the first four presidents of the college were Presbyterian ministers. This was probably because the Presbytery of Hanover acted as the organizers of the school. In February of 1775, the Presbytery "accepted a gift of one hundred acres for the College, elected Trustees (most of whom were Episcopalian), and named as Rector (later President) the Rev. Samuel Stanhope Smith."⁵⁸ Also, The College was the birthplace of Union Theological Seminary (now called Union Presbyterian Seminary) which was the first Presbyterian seminary in the South.⁵⁹ Around 1788, before the seminary was founded, Hampden-Sydney experienced a revival among the student body.⁶⁰ Shortly thereafter, many young men from Hampden-Sydney presented themselves as Presbyterian ministerial candidates.⁶¹ So, Hampden-Sydney, though not directly affiliated with Presbyterianism, became a training ground for ministers. In assisting

⁵⁶ Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Hampden-Sydney College, 1776-1786, 124, 152; two of McRobert's sons were in the first graduating class of Hampden-Sydney College.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 32-33, 41, 42, 130.

⁵⁸ Hampden-Sydney College, *The Key: The Hampden-Sydney College Student Handbook* (Hampden-Sydney: The Office of Student Affairs, 2020), 2.

⁵⁹ "History," Union Presbyterian Seminary, <https://www.upsem.edu/about/history/>; The seminary was founded in 1822 and moved to Richmond in 1898.

⁶⁰ Iain H. Murray, *Revival & Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750-1858* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 96-99.

⁶¹ Ibid., 105.

during the school's formation, McRobert helped lay the foundation for educating the next generation while indirectly furthering the cause of the Presbyterian church.⁶²

As a Presbyterian, Archibald McRobert had the opportunity to preach a “solemn charge” for an incoming minister and the funeral of an influential patriot. In 1794, he gave the gospel charge at the end of Archibald Alexander's ordination service.⁶³ Archibald Alexander was a Presbyterian revivalist that went on to be the first professor and principal founder of the Princeton Theological Seminary.⁶⁴ So, McRobert had the opportunity to usher young Alexander into the Presbyterian ministry and only a few years later, in 1799, McRobert ushered out the life of renowned patriot and fellow Hampden-Sydney board member, Patrick Henry.⁶⁵ Although Henry professed to be an Episcopalian all his life, McRobert preached his funeral. Possibly due to the similarity in first names, Archibald Alexander has sometimes been bestowed with this honor. He was serving as president of Hampden-Sydney College at the time. However, McRobert had both seniority and more interaction with Patrick Henry. McRobert and Henry served on the board of trustees for Hampden-Sydney and were on multiple committees together.⁶⁶ One committee they both sat on was organized “to correspond by letters or otherwise with the members of Congress, or any other literary characters to procure a fit person to act as

⁶² McRobert served in the Anglican Church from his ordination in 1761 to 1787 when he joined the Presbyterian church – a span of 26 years. He remained Presbyterian until his death in 1807.

⁶³ Hanover Presbytery Minutes in Manuscript, vol. 3, 1786-1795, Digital Collections, 198; a charge served to formally entrust the new minister with the duty of proclaiming the gospel and ministering to those under his care.

⁶⁴ John Oliver Nelson, "Archibald Alexander, Winsome Conservative (1772—1851)," *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society (1943-1961)* 35, no. 1 (1957): 15, 20.

⁶⁵ Patrick Daily, *Patrick Henry: The Last Years, 1789-1799* (Brookneal: Patrick Henry Memorial Foundation, 2013), 209.

⁶⁶ In regards to McRobert's seniority, Alexander was young and moving up in the world, while McRobert was older and starting to slow down.

president for the college.”⁶⁷ In the words of the *Hampden-Sydney Bulletin*, “from his [McRobert’s] lips, on a bright Sabbath morning of July, 1799, on the banks of the Staunton, in the presence of a vast concourse of people, fell the parting benediction to the dust of Patrick Henry.”⁶⁸

Charles Clay’s interactions with other denominations are more indirect than Jarratt and McRobert’s. Instead of assisting with large revivals, Clay focused on his parish in Albemarle County for at least eight years.⁶⁹ After a rift developed between him and the parishioners at St. Anne’s over his salary, Clay left the parish.⁷⁰ While Clay did not itinerate, he did preach in a variety of locations within Albemarle County. He preached at the two churches in his parish as well as the courthouse and various homes.⁷¹ During his ministry, he also visited and preached to British prisoners of war that were being held in Albemarle County.⁷² Additionally, Clay

⁶⁷ Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Hampden-Sydney College, 1776-1786, 32-33, 41, 42, 99.

⁶⁸ Bulletin of Hampden-Sydney College, Vol. VII, January 1913, 10.

⁶⁹ Clay was the minister of St. Anne’s Parish from October of 1769 to 1780 according to the vestry book of St. Anne’s parish.; See also Elizabeth C. Langhorne, *A History of Christ Church, Glendower: with an account of the early days of St. Anne's Parish* (Albemarle County: Christ Church, 1957), 6-7.

⁷⁰ Meade, *Old Churches*, 2:49-50; Langhorne, *A History of Christ Church, Glendower*, 6-7; Clay left St. Anne’s in 1784 after a lengthy dispute about money. Supposedly, the trouble began when Clay decided “to make some most ill-advised improvements at the Glebe, at the very moment that tobacco ceased to be negotiable for cash in trade with the mother country.” However, the issue of Clay’s salary might have been the primary problem. Regardless, there was “division in the vestry about it.” Langhorne claims that “The vestrymen passed the hat, they attempted to borrow, they did everything, in fact, except steal, but they were never able to satisfy the demands of Mr. Clay.” At least one lawsuit resulted from this dispute. Few sources corroborate the details of Clay’s monetary conflict at St. Anne’s parish. While Clay might have intended the money for good use (such as repairs to the church), his actions seem to imply a self-interested motive, at least in the eyes of his parishioners at St. Anne’s. Since the church “won” by not having to pay the money Clay sought, this could be a case of “history written by the victors.” There is simply not enough evidence to know for sure.

⁷¹ Meade, *Old Churches*, 2:49.

⁷² Hugh Blair Grigsby, *The History of the Virginia Federal Convention of 1788: With Some Account of the Eminent Virginians of That Era Who Were Members of the Body*, ed. R. A. Brock

preached for friends outside of Albemarle including Devereux Jarratt.⁷³ Even after he moved to Bedford County in 1786 and stopped preaching in an official capacity, Clay served “the Episcopal, Russell, and Lynchburg Parishes” on a “part-time basis.”⁷⁴ Going a different direction than Jarratt and McRobert, Clay opted to pursue politics following his move to Bedford.

Clay used his political views as a platform for sharing the gospel – his patriotism even allowed him to befriend Thomas Jefferson. During his time at St. Anne’s, Clay met Thomas Jefferson who was a vestryman.⁷⁵ Before the Revolutionary War, Jefferson contacted Clay at least twice; once to request a sermon for the funeral service of Dabney Carr (Jefferson’s brother-in-law) and again to request the same for his mother’s funeral.⁷⁶ In 1774, on a fast day that was sanctioned by the Virginia House of Burgesses in response to the impending British invasion of Boston, Jefferson and John Walker (another member of the Virginia House of Burgesses) invited Clay to preach a sermon. In a letter to Clay’s parishioners, they wrote to “recommend to the inhabitants of the parish of Saint Anne that Saturday the 23d instant be by them set apart for the purpose aforesaid, on which day will be prayers and a sermon suited to the occasion by the

(London: Forgotten Books, 2015), 255; Meade, *Old Churches*, 2:49; these British soldiers were primarily captured at the Battle of Saratoga.

⁷³ Mark A. Beliles, “The Christian Communities, Religious Revivals, and Political Culture of the Central Virginia Piedmont, 1737-1813,” in *Religion and Political Culture in Jefferson’s Virginia*, 3-40, ed. Garrett Ward Sheldon and Daniel Dreisbach (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 31.

⁷⁴ Mark A. Beliles, “Rev. Charles Clay and the Calvinistical Reformed Church of Charlottesville, Virginia During the American Revolution,” *Providential Perspective* 12, no. 3, (1997), 6.

⁷⁵ Meade, *Old Churches*, 2:49-50.

⁷⁶ “From Thomas Jefferson to the Rev. Charles Clay, 21 May 1773,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-15-02-0539>; “Testimonial for Charles Clay, [15 August 1779],” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-03-02-0076>; McKinley S. Lundy, Jr., *Thomas Jefferson and Political Preaching: Two Case Studies of Free Religious Expression in the American Pulpit*. Dissertation, 2005; Jefferson’s mother’s funeral took place in the Spring of 1776.

reverend Mr. Clay.”⁷⁷ Clay’s stirring, patriotic sermon possibly roused the citizens of the county to action because “just three days later the freeholders of Albemarle met at the courthouse and denounced the violation of their rights by the Parliament of Great Britain, called for a boycott of trade with England, and said that the only legitimate legislature that they recognized was their own.”⁷⁸ The patriotism of Clay caught Jefferson’s attention, and the correspondence between the two increased in the following years.⁷⁹

After Clay left St. Anne’s, Jefferson hand-picked him to start an independent church. With financial support from several men including Jefferson, Clay established this new church in 1777 under a unique name – The Calvinistical Reformed Church.⁸⁰ Since Jefferson had an intense dislike for John Calvin, even saying that “I can never join Calvin in addressing his god... If ever man worshipped a false god, he did,” his backing of a church with this particular name is all the more surprising.⁸¹ Originally, the name was set to be the “Protestant Episcopal” Church, but Clay might have asked to change it to the “Calvinistical Reformed” Church.⁸² One

⁷⁷ “Thomas Jefferson and John Walker to the Inhabitants of the Parish of St. Anne, [before 23 July 1774],” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-01-02-0087>.

⁷⁸ Beliles, “Rev. Charles Clay,” 2; Historic Courthouse Square Marker, Charlottesville, VA.

⁷⁹ More on Clay’s patriotism in the next chapter.

⁸⁰ Mark A. Beliles and Jerry Newcombe, *Doubting Thomas?: The Religious Life and Legacy of Thomas Jefferson* (Newburyport: Morgan James Publishing, 2014), 40; “Pounds Sterling to Dollars: Historical Conversion of Currency,” University of Wyoming, <https://www.uwyo.edu/numimage/currency.htm>; Jefferson offered the largest sum of money to start the new church – a total of six pounds (£990 or 1,049 U.S. dollars today); from his more than fifty handwritten sermons held at the Virginia Museum of History and Culture, it is obvious that Clay is not a Calvinist. Like the term “Methodist” at the time, “Calvinist” was often used to denote an Evangelical or Republican.

⁸¹ “Comments of Thomas Jefferson on Calvinism.” The Gospel Truth. <https://www.gospeltruth.net/jeffersoncalvinsim.htm>; “Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, 11 April 1823,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-02-02-7803>.

⁸² “Subscription to Support a Clergyman in Charlottesville, [February 1777],” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-02-02-0004>;

possibility for the name change suggests that Clay, saddened by the neutrality displayed by other Anglican ministers at the start of the American Revolution, desired to disassociate himself with the established church for a time. The word “Calvinistical” could also mean “Republican” as they were synonymous in the eighteenth-century. Another possibility implies that Clay briefly converted to Presbyterianism or even the German Reformed Church.⁸³ If this did occur, Clay withdrew from Anglicanism only temporarily. After the Calvinistical Reformed Church was forced to close, Clay returned to the Anglican (now named Episcopalian) church and became the rector of Manchester Parish for a year.⁸⁴ Also, he attended the “Episcopal Convention at Richmond” in 1784.⁸⁵ While the name of Clay’s independent church is curious, it does not necessarily indicate a shift in his beliefs. Throughout this time, Clay continued to preach Evangelical sermons with statements like:

as thou hast borne the image of the earthly, thou shall bear the image of the heavenly; till at length Jesus Christ who loved thee & gave himself for thee, shall present thee to himself a member of his Glorious Church not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing... O glorious dispensation of God’s grace! O blessed hope that is therein set before thee!⁸⁶

This church was one of several congregations that used the Charlottesville Courthouse for services.⁸⁷ Around 1785, Clay’s church faded away because its main supporter, Jefferson, left to

One major difference between Calvinists and other denominations is their belief that only the elect (those God chooses) will receive salvation.

⁸³ “Subscription to Support a Clergyman in Charlottesville, [February 1777],” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-02-02-0004>; the German Reformed Church (now called the Reformed Church) follows Calvinist theology.

⁸⁴ Brydon, “The Clergy of the Established Church in Virginia,” 130.

⁸⁵ Meade, *Old Churches*, 2:50.

⁸⁶ Charles Clay, “Jer. 31:19,” Clay Family Papers, Section 2, 1745-1820, Virginia Museum of History and Culture, Richmond, VA, 35.

⁸⁷ Historic Courthouse Square Marker, Charlottesville, VA.

serve as the U.S. ambassador to France, and two other primary supporters moved away at the same time.⁸⁸

Jefferson and Charles Clay became such close friends that they discussed religious matters often. Clay also provided advice regarding religion to Jefferson from time to time. One crucial instance of Clay's advice occurred in 1814 when he counseled Jefferson against publishing his "Harmony of the Gospels," which is better known as "Jefferson's Bible" today.⁸⁹ Mainly worried that Jefferson's critics would use the published work against Jefferson, Clay had good reason for concern. Daniel Driesbach pointed out that "His [Jefferson's] Federalist opponents vilified him as an unreformed Jacobin, libertine, and atheist" before and during his presidency.⁹⁰ It seems Clay was simply trying to protect Jefferson's legacy.

In a letter assuring Clay that he had no intention of publishing his "Harmony of the Gospels," Jefferson wrote that "I not only write nothing on religion but rarely permit myself to speak on it, and never but in a reasonable society. I have probably said more to you [Clay] than to any other person, because we have had more hours of conversation in duetto in our meetings at the Forest."⁹¹ This is a profound statement coming from a man who sometimes displayed a strong "animosity to the clergy."⁹² Somehow, through their initial meeting via Clay's ministry at

⁸⁸ Edward L. Bond, *Spreading the Gospel in Colonial Virginia: Sermons and Devotional Writings* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2004), 235.

⁸⁹ Beliles, "Rev. Charles Clay," 6.

⁹⁰ Daniel L. Dreisbach, *Reading the Bible with the Founding Fathers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 54.

⁹¹ "Thomas Jefferson to Charles Clay, 29 January 1815," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-08-02-0181>.

⁹² Peter S. Onuf, "Jefferson's Religion: Priestcraft, Enlightenment, and the Republican Revolution," in *The Mind of Thomas Jefferson* (University of Virginia Press, 2007), 142.

St. Anne's and Clay's patriotic fervor, Jefferson felt comfortable enough around Clay to discuss matters that he usually kept private.

Although Jarratt and McRobert were Anglicans, they both faced scorn from fellow Anglican ministers. Jarratt noticed that they had disliked him from the beginning of his ministry, so he rarely spoke to other Anglican ministers.⁹³ When he did attend an Anglican convention in 1774, Jarratt wrote that he was “causelessly insulted, and treated in such an ungentle, not to say unchristian, manner, as, till that time, I had been a stranger to—and, what was still worse, I was distressed to hear some of the most sacred doctrines of Christianity treated with ridicule and profane burlesque.”⁹⁴

Jarratt had escaped ridicule by avoiding other Anglicans and winning over his congregations, but McRobert faced derision within his own parish. After arriving in the colonies in 1761 and beginning his ministry at Dale parish, McRobert initially enjoyed eleven years of relative peace in Chesterfield County. However, in 1772, he faced trial at the hands of his Anglican parishioners.⁹⁵ He was brought to trial for using hymns other than the Psalms (only the Psalms were in accordance with ecclesiastical law in Virginia). Fortunately, the trial was never completed. Why, after eleven years, McRobert's parishioners decided to pursue such drastic action, is unknown. No specific names were provided as to who brought the suit. Instead, the

⁹³ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 131-132; Jarratt avoided conflict whenever possible – often going to extremes to do so. When Anglican ministers initially disapproved of his ministry, he simply stopped talking to them. If people did something against his wishes, Jarratt would decline invitations to other conventions or cease communication. Finding that “such a shyness and coldness still prevailed among the clergy toward” him at the first meeting of the newly-formed Protestant Episcopal Church, Jarratt left as quickly as he could and “returned no more for five or six years.”

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ "Trial of Rev. Archibald McRoberts, Minister of Dale Parish, Chesterfield," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 11, no. 4 (1904): 414.

case was initiated by his parishioners. Perhaps, the intensified influence of Baptists in the area made parishioners leery of revivalist preaching or the construction of the new Sappony Church (likely named after Sapony Church in Dinwiddie County where Jarratt preached) concerned congregations because of its ties to Jarratt and revivalism.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, this mistreatment might have spurred McRobert to relocate to Prince Edward County in 1777, where his Evangelical preaching was more readily accepted.⁹⁷

Virginia's geography corresponds to the people's receptivity to Evangelicalism. For example, Clay faced less Anglican prejudice in Albemarle County than Jarratt and McRobert. Along the Tidewater region, persecution was higher than in the more inland counties. Sensibly, Evangelical dissenters thrived where there was less intimidation. For ministers with an Evangelical message, inland counties provided more freedom to openly preach. As Mark Beliles points out, "Only between three and eight percent of the Anglican clergy in Virginia were Evangelical, but in the Virginia Piedmont region it was the norm."⁹⁸ Clay's ready acceptance as the minister for St. Anne's Parish in Albemarle County is a perfect example. This parish accepted Clay without a gubernatorial recommendation despite his close connection to Devereux Jarratt. By the time Clay began his ministry, Jarratt had preached in and around Albemarle

⁹⁶ George Carrington Mason, "The Colonial Churches of Henrico and Chesterfield Counties, Virginia: Part II." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 55, no. 2 (1947): 154-155; because Jarratt was a well-known revivalist, the link between him and the new church's name might have been cause for serious concern for parishioners desiring to slow Evangelical influences. This church was constructed in 1772.

⁹⁷ McRobert would become a Presbyterian two years later. While his decision to join the Hanover Presbytery may have been impacted by his move to Prince Edward County, McRobert indicates that the combination of his failing independent church and his shifting theological beliefs ultimately pushed him toward Presbyterianism.

⁹⁸ Gunderson, *The Anglican Ministry in Virginia*, 194; Mark A. Beliles, "The Christian Communities, Religious Revivals, and Political Culture of the Central Virginia Piedmont, 1737-1813," in *Religion and Political Culture in Jefferson's Virginia*, 3-40, ed. Garrett Ward Sheldon and Daniel Dreisbach (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 9.

County extensively and was well known for his revivalist leanings. The parishioners at St. Anne's surely knew that Clay was an Evangelical also.⁹⁹ The openness to Evangelicalism in the more western regions of Virginia protected Clay from persecution and afforded him better access into social and political circles to share the gospel.

During their ministries, Jarratt, McRobert, and Clay not only practiced tolerance to Evangelical dissenters, but they also helped them take root and thrive in Virginia. In addition, Clay carried Evangelicalism into elite circles of Anglicans – one of the hardest to reach people groups in eighteenth-century Virginia. Methodists benefitted from Jarratt's support, both Methodists and Presbyterians received assistance from McRobert, and Clay used his sphere of influence to reach the gentry. In the struggle to stand against the established church, having the backing of several Anglicans proved invaluable to two major Evangelical denominations. While these denominations could have made inroads into Virginia on their own, Jarratt and McRobert's assistance increased the speed of their growth and the effectiveness of their message. Clay took a different route and chose to sow seeds of Evangelical theology amongst the higher tiers of society. Thus, all three men furthered their goal of spreading the gospel.

⁹⁹ Beliles, "The Christian Communities," 9.

Chapter Three: Beyond Revolutionary – Proponents of Liberty

The American Revolution was a challenging time for everyone in the colonies because there was no middle ground. Most people needed to choose a side – patriot or loyalist. Choosing a side was made difficult for ministers of all denominations because of concerns such as whether the Bible justified rebellion to the mother country. However, Anglican ministers “truly found themselves in dire straits.”¹ As part of the ordination ceremony, Anglican ministers “pledged allegiance to the king... [and] they swore an oath to... maintain the church’s liturgy unaltered” which included “prayers for the king and royal family.”² These oaths put Anglican clergymen in a difficult position. They could either choose the patriot side and break their oaths or become a loyalist and face the wrath of patriots.³ Jarratt, McRobert, and Clay never hesitated – they all championed the patriot cause.⁴

Amidst the growing political turmoil leading to the American Revolution, new ideas about freedom circulated throughout the colonies. Enlightenment concepts such as the social contract and the natural rights of man combined with the ever-increasing numbers of Evangelicals led to questions such as, “If the people have the right to choose their nation’s leaders, should they also have a choice about what church to attend?” In Virginia, this question

¹ Nancy L. Rhoden, *Revolutionary Anglicanism: The Colonial Church of England Clergy during the American Revolution* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 1.

² Ibid.

³ Although there is a belief that the majority of Evangelicals supported the patriot cause, this has been proven untrue. In fact, research by historians such as Mark Noll has proven that Evangelicals fell fairly evenly on both sides of the conflict. See Mark A. Noll, *Christians in the American Revolution* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1977), 51-52.

⁴ All three men are listed on Dunn’s list. This record, compiled by Joseph B. Dunn and published around 1907, contains a well-researched list of clergy who supported the Patriot cause. Since Dunn did not provide sources, his research is not used to verify the patriotism of Jarratt, McRobert, and Clay – their actions speak for them. See Brydon, "The Clergy of the Established Church in Virginia," 18.

brought far-reaching implications, namely disestablishment. Using their unique platforms, all three of our Anglican revivalists would indirectly help further the cause of religious liberty.

Out of these three men, Devereux Jarratt showed his patriotism in more subtle ways. When the Revolution began, Jarratt was in the middle of a fresh wave of revivals that began in 1775 and 1776. These revivals retained his primary focus and eased concerns about an impending war. Jarratt wrote that “The unhappy disputes between England and her Colonies, which just before had ingrossed all our conversion, seemed now in most companies to be forgot, while things of greater importance lay so near the heart.”⁵ In his introduction to Jarratt’s autobiography, John Coleman, a friend and former student, said “Mr. Jarratt meddled very little with politics. He had enough to do to attend to the duties of his profession.”⁶ Nevertheless, Jarratt impacted his parishioners and students to fight for the patriot cause, as evidenced by the large number that volunteered to guard Virginia port towns after the war broke out.⁷ He could not keep himself busy enough to ignore the conflict forever.

Although Jarratt kept his ministry focused on religious activities, he still helped his local community defend itself. Weapons during the American Revolution were at a premium – especially when trade across the Atlantic became tedious. In the Journals of the Committee of Public Safety in Virginia, Jarratt received nine pounds in payment for two guns he provided to the Amelia minutemen in June 1776.⁸ Amelia County, located northwest of Dinwiddie, would likely be struck first if the British invaded from the North. So, helping arm the Amelia

⁵ Jarratt and Rankin, *A Brief Narrative*, 11.

⁶ John Coleman, in *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, ii.

⁷ *Ibid.*; Coleman explains that he volunteered to guard Virginia’s ports and saw many other friends, parishioners, and students of Jarratt’s doing the same.

⁸ McIlwaine, H. R. ed., *Journals of the Council of the State of Virginia*, ed. H. R. McIlwaine (Richmond: Division of Purchase and Printing, 1931), 1:26.

minutemen meant installing a wall of protection for Dinwiddie County. Whether Jarratt provided guns for this purpose is unknown. This action does seem to suggest that he cared about the spiritual and physical needs of the people in his community. A threat to their safety incited action on his part, even though he had initially ignored the war in lieu of his ministerial efforts.

Jarratt displayed an evident love for the Anglican Church. To a friend, he wrote “I dearly love the church. I love her on many accounts... These three particulars, a regular clergy, sound doctrine, and a decent, comprehensive worship, contain the essentials, I think, of a Christian church.”⁹ Though Jarratt was a patriot and supported the Methodists, he also remained loyal to the Anglican/Episcopal church his entire life. Watching the church crumble after disestablishment pained him.¹⁰

Despite his loyalty to the Anglican Church, Jarratt ultimately supported religious liberty through his desire to share the gospel. To Jarratt, the gospel transcended denominations. As long as loving God and sharing the gospel were at the center of a ministry, Jarratt was willing to offer friendship and support. Jarratt was also willing to preach anywhere, even outdoors if necessary – wherever the gospel needed to be heard. Additionally, his printed sermons extended his Evangelical theology to all.¹¹ How people chose to worship or where they attended church came second to the state of their souls.¹² Ultimately, converting sinners was Jarratt’s life goal – not conforming them to his church of choice.

⁹ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 158.

¹⁰ Although he felt other denominations contributed to disunity among the Anglican Church, he blamed the fall of Anglicanism in America on a combination of disestablishment and poor church decisions like ordaining obviously unqualified ministers. See Meade, *Old Churches*, 1:474.

¹¹ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 215.

¹² George Whitefield shared these same thoughts. He too believed the gospel was far more important than denominations.

Unlike Jarratt, Archibald McRobert could not practice a quiet patriotism, in part because of his standing in the community. After serving as the minister of Dale Parish in Chesterfield County for years, McRobert was tried in Chesterfield County for using hymns other than the psalms during church services.¹³ The trial commenced in March of 1774, but the verdict was inconclusive. Although “the case was continued” it “apparently never came to trial again.”¹⁴ Although there is no evidence to indicate why the trial was never completed, it might have been because the political affairs of the country became a higher priority. Because the king is listed as the plaintiff of the trial, the start of the Revolution may have rendered the case null and void.¹⁵ In July of 1774, he was called on as “one of the first citizens of the County of Chesterfield and at that early date a staunch supporter of the rights of the American Colonies” to participate in the meeting to determine the Chesterfield County Resolutions.¹⁶ Many Virginia counties had meetings where freeholders came together to determine the county response (resolutions) to the British Coercive Acts (also known as the Intolerable Acts) passed in early 1774. At the Chesterfield meeting, McRobert was “unanimously chosen Moderator.”¹⁷ He presided over the meeting where the following resolutions were formed:

¹³ "Trial of Rev. Archibald McRoberts, Minister of Dale Parish, Chesterfield," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 11, no. 4 (1904): 414.

¹⁴ Eggleston, *Prince Edward County, Virginia, Archibald McRobert, Patriot Scholar, Man of God*, 6.

¹⁵ "Trial of Rev. Archibald McRoberts, Minister of Dale Parish, Chesterfield," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 11, no. 4 (1904): 415; during English rule, “the king” vs. the defendant was the British equivalent of “the People of the State of Virginia” vs. the defendant.

¹⁶ Eggleston, *Prince Edward County, Virginia, Archibald McRobert, Patriot Scholar, Man of God*, 6.

¹⁷ “Chesterfield County (Virginia) Resolutions,” in *American Archives: Containing a Documentary History of the English Colonies in North America, from the King's Message to Parliament of March 7, 1774, to the Declaration of Independence by the United States* (Washington: M. St. Clair Clarke and Peter Force, 1837), 537; McRobert was still serving as an Anglican minister at this time (he was an Anglican minister from 1761-1787).

At a Meeting of the Freeholders and others, Inhabitants of the County of Chesterfield, at the Court House of the said County, on Thursday, the 14th of July, 1774, to take into consideration the present very alarming situation of this Colony...

Resolved, That the sole right of making laws for the Government of this his Majesty's ancient Colony and Dominion of Virginia, and for the raising and levying taxes on the inhabitants thereof, ought to be, and is vested in the General Assembly of the said Colony, and cannot be executed by any other power without danger to our liberties...

Resolved, that this Colony ought not to hold any commercial intercourse with any of the Colonies in North America that shall refuse to adopt proper measures for procuring a redress of our grievances.

Resolved, That the town of Boston is now suffering in the cause of American liberty; that her safety and protection is, and ought to be, the common cause of the other Colonies; and that their relief ought to be attempted by all the proper and constitutional ways and means in our power.¹⁸

These are just a few resolutions that came from the freeholder's gathering. Clearly, McRobert was both respected and patriotic enough for the people to elect him moderator of such an important occasion – even after his parishioners had brought him to trial for a breach of ecclesiastic law only three months earlier.

McRobert also experienced the violence of the Revolutionary war firsthand. Because Jarratt, McRobert, and Clay all lived and ministered in the Piedmont region, they were mostly protected from the fighting. Yet, in 1780, after McRobert had moved to Prince Edward County, British officer Banastre Tarleton brought his men through the area.¹⁹ Many men were away fighting, so the county was left defenseless. Tarleton and his men

visited sundry houses in Prince Edward, attempted to frighten women and children, destroyed much furniture, and otherwise did wanton mischief. A detachment was also sent to the glebe, and Mr. McRoberts had hardly time to escape. They ripped open

¹⁸ "Chesterfield County (Virginia) Resolutions," in *American Archives*, 537-538.

¹⁹ At the time of this raid, Banastre Tarleton was a lieutenant-colonel in the British Army. He commanded the calvary portion of a combined calvary/light infantry regiment called a "Legion." He fought numerous battles against the Americans during the Revolution, received injuries during the Battle of Guilford Court House, but was "across the river at Gloucester" during the battle of Yorktown. He was forced to surrender with the rest of the British troops afterward. His troops raided the countryside as they moved from battle to battle. See W. Y. Carmen, "Banastre Tarleton and the British Legion," *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 62, no. 251 (1984): 127-129.

feather-beds, broke mirrors, &c, and went off, having set fire to the house. It burned slowly at first, but the building would have been consumed had not a shower of rain come up suddenly and extinguished the flames. Mr. McRoberts, who regarded this as a special interposition of Providence, called the place Providence, - a name it has borne to this day.²⁰

Until Thomas Jefferson's Statute for Religious Freedom was passed by the Virginia General Assembly in 1786, "Political and religious power rested firmly in the grip of members of the established Church of England" – including the education of Virginia's citizens.²¹ Schools in the early eighteenth-century usually started as training grounds for ministers. For example, William and Mary, the oldest college in Virginia, began as an Anglican theological school designed to prepare young men for ministry. Established in 1775, eleven years before Jefferson's statute, Hampden-Sydney College broke the mold. Instead of being established with ministerial training in mind, this college was founded as a liberal arts school and not affiliated with any specific denomination. However, the school would take another revolutionary step toward religious liberty with the help of Archibald McRobert.

While serving on the board of trustees at Hampden-Sydney College, McRobert was appointed to a committee whose sole purpose was to write up rules and regulations for the school. Unfortunately, this committee "failed through the nonattendance of some members."²² So, in an effort to finally have some written governance, McRobert and one other board member penned their own rules apart from the designated committee. This "Code of Laws and Regulations" was approved by the board exactly as McRobert and his fellow board member

²⁰ Meade, *Old Churches*, 1:449-450; the glebe was the land provided to a minister to live on.

²¹ Debra R. Neill, "The Disestablishment of Religion in Virginia: Dissenters, Individual Rights, and the Separation of Church and State," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 127, no. 1 (2019): 3; "Citizens" here refers to men, as women were not educated outside of the home at this time.

²² Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Hampden-Sydney College, 1776-1786, 23.

wrote it.²³ The second law under the heading “Of Religion and Morality” stated that “All the students shall be required to attend publick worship on the Lord’s day whenever it shall be convenient, that is whenever it shall be within three miles of the college.”²⁴ There is no mention in this law that students had to attend any specific kind of church (Episcopal, Presbyterian, etc.), only that they attend church. Considering the standard at other schools, this was a subtle and groundbreaking nod to religious liberty within education.

McRobert also supported religious liberty through his separation with the Anglican Church and his continued support of Hampden-Sydney College. Of the three men in this study, he is the only one who ultimately chose to leave the Anglican Communion for good. Yet, instead of cutting ties altogether, McRobert acted as a liaison between the Episcopal church and Hampden-Sydney College. When the college needed another building, the board sent a committee made up of McRobert, Charles Allen, and William B. Smith to speak with the Episcopal church about moving French’s Church to the school’s property.²⁵ This church was one of three (The Chapel/Watkins’s Church and Sandy River Church being the other two) that formed St. Patrick’s Parish in Prince Edward County. By July of 1784, the committee had struck a deal with the vestry and planned to meet the following Wednesday to plan the move of the building.²⁶ Then, in September of the same year, the board approved the committee’s arrangements for the relocation of the church structure.²⁷ This deal went through quickly, which

²³ Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Hampden-Sydney College, 1776-1786, 41.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 42; French’s Church has a unique history of its own. As tradition states, “a detachment of Rochambeau’s army wintered here after the Battle of Yorktown, and seventy French soldiers were buried in the church yard.” See French’s Church Historic Marker, near Farmville in Prince Edward County, Virginia.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

indicates that either the Episcopal church leadership in the area had no trouble giving up a church building or the committee was very convincing of their need for the structure. Interestingly, McRobert had been in charge of French's church during his ministry in St. Patrick's Parish from 1777-1778.²⁸

Finally, Archibald McRobert's attempt to start an independent church showed, among other things, his leaning toward religious liberty. Rather than remain in the Anglican Church after he determined that "the English church is a mere human constitution, that owes all its authority to an act of the legislature, and not to the word of God," McRobert decided to leave.²⁹ Yet, he did not join another denomination right away. Instead, McRobert and the congregants of Watkins's Church broke away from Anglicanism to form a new, independent church.³⁰ McRobert's congregation evolved over time toward Presbyterianism. He told Jarratt that "they constantly attend my poor ministry."³¹ Even after he officially dissented, McRobert sought to assist the newly formed Episcopal church in establishing congregations within the old parish. This included the authoring of "a set of articles including the essential parts of natural and revealed religion, together with the constitution and discipline of the Christian church."³²

More than Jarratt and McRobert, Charles Clay took a powerful pro-Revolution stance in his preaching. As mentioned earlier, his 1774 fast day sermon might have inspired the county's

²⁸ Meade, *Old Churches*, 2:24.

²⁹ "McRobert to Jarratt [Providence, July 13, 1780]," in *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 147.

³⁰ Meade, *Old Churches*, 2:25.

³¹ "McRobert to Jarratt [Providence, July 13, 1780]," in *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 148.

³² *Ibid.*

residents to take a firm stance in light of the British actions following the Boston Tea Party.³³ Jefferson remarked about this fast day in his autobiography stating, “The people met generally, with anxiety and alarm in their countenances, and the effect of the day thro’ the whole colony was like a shock of electricity, arousing every man & placing him erect & solidly on his centre.”³⁴ Clay preached another politically-charged sermon on a public fast day at the Albemarle courthouse in 1777. To make the occasion even more patriotic, the majority of the audience were Charlottesville minute men.³⁵ Clay concentrated this sermon on Jeremiah 48:10 which says, “cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood.” Throughout this sermon, Clay emphasized that the “cause of liberty was the cause of God” and he encouraged his listeners to “plead the cause of their country before the Lord with their blood.”³⁶ These were profoundly patriotic words to share with a key audience.

Although they knew each other before these fast day sermons, Charles Clay and Thomas Jefferson became friends through their shared political views. Clay’s patriotism led Jefferson to pen the following testimonial:

In the earliest stage of the present contest with Great Britain, while the clergy of the established church in general took the adverse side, or kept aloof from the cause of their country, he [Clay] took a decided and active part with his countrymen, and has continued to prove his whiggism unequivocal, and his attachment to the American cause to be sincere and zealous.³⁷

³³ Beliles, “Rev. Charles Clay,” 2; Historic Courthouse Square Marker, Charlottesville, VA.

³⁴ Thomas Jefferson, *The Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson, 1743-1790*, ed. by Ford Paul Leicester, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1914), 13.

³⁵ Virginia Writers' Project, *Jefferson's Albemarle, a Guide to Albemarle County and the City of Charlottesville, Virginia* (New York: AMS Press, 1978), 44.

³⁶ Meade, *Old Churches*, 49; Smith, *The Clay Family*, 85.

³⁷ Thomas Jefferson, *Draft of Subscription to Support Charles Clay as Minister in Charlottesville, Virginia*; Religious Freedom. February, 1777. Manuscript/Mixed Material. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mtjbib000237/>; “Testimonial for Charles Clay, [15 August

Clay's patriotic fervor made him a prime candidate when Jefferson sought to start an independent church. Throughout this time, Clay continued to preach Evangelical and politically charged sermons.

With Clay's fiery political preaching, some historians such as Hugh Blair Grigsby have made a connection between Clay and Samuel Davies. The first Presbyterian minister to be officially licensed to preach by the governor of Virginia, Davies was an Evangelical who ardently preached in support of the French and Indian War.³⁸ Because Clay and Davies had similar preaching styles, Hugh Blair Grigsby compared them in his *The History of the Virginia Federal Convention of 1788*.³⁹ Because Samuel Davies ministered in Hanover County which is north of Chesterfield County where Clay was born, Grigsby suggests that Clay "may have heard Samuel Davies" when he was young and modeled his own political messages after Davies'.⁴⁰ This is a possibility, considering that members of the gentry would often travel to hear preachers such as Davies or Whitefield. Regardless, Grigsby does state that Davies "found a counterpart in the animated and daring appeals of Clay. Nor is the merit of Clay less, if it be not greater, than that of Davies."⁴¹

Clay also furthered political liberty through public service. First, he served as a County Court Justice for Albemarle County from 1771-1783 and as a Justice of the Peace in Bedford

1779]," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-03-02-0076>.

³⁸ Kidd, *The Great Awakening*, 237.

³⁹ Much of Grigsby's information comes from John Henry, the youngest son of Patrick Henry who was told many of the happenings of the convention by his father as well as other attendees (including Charles Clay). Grigsby also says he has some information "On the authority of the Rev. Mr. Clay, of Bedford, who was a member of the convention." See Grigsby, *The History of the Virginia Federal Convention of 1788*, 4, 151, 255-256.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 256-257.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 255.

County in 1782 (these two positions overlapped).⁴² Then, he was chosen to represent Bedford County as a delegate to the Virginian Constitutional Ratification Convention (one of only three clergymen present).⁴³ During the convention, Clay brought up several key concerns about Congress' power to tax citizens and call up militias as well as the lack of a Bill of Rights.⁴⁴ His main concern, what he saw as "the greatest of all rights," was the "right of taxation."⁴⁵ These concerns were echoed by Jefferson in a letter to James Madison in 1787 where he wrote, "Let me add that a bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth, general or particular, and what no just government should refuse, or rest on inference."⁴⁶

Clay attempted to run for Congress in both 1790 and 1792 but was not elected at either time. During the 1790 election, Jefferson was supportive of Clay, but offered only encouraging words. At the end of a letter dated January 27, 1790 from Monticello, Jefferson wrote "Wishing you every prosperity in this & all your other undertakings (for I am sure, from my knowledge of you they will always be just)."⁴⁷ Then, at the start of the 1792 election, Jefferson provided a

⁴² Beliles, "Rev. Charles Clay," 6.

⁴³ Virginia, Convention, John James Beckley, Augustine Davis, Constitutional Convention Broadside Collection, and Printed Ephemera Collection. *Richmond, state of Virginia. In convention, Wednesday, the 25th of June: The convention, according to the order of the day, resolved itself into a committee of the whole convention, to take into farther consideration, the proposed Constitution of government for the United States* (Richmond: Printed by Aug. Davis, 1788), Online Text, <https://www.loc.gov/item/90898136/>; Grigsby, *The History of the Virginia Federal Convention of 1788*, 257.

⁴⁴ Beliles, "Rev. Charles Clay," 6; Brydon, "The Clergy of the Established Church in Virginia," 130; Grigsby, *The History of the Virginia Federal Convention of 1788*, 256.

⁴⁵ Grigsby, *The History of the Virginia Federal Convention of 1788*, 256.

⁴⁶ "From Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 20 December 1787," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-12-02-0454>.

⁴⁷ Mark Beliles, ed., *The Selected Religious Letters and Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Thomas Jefferson, "To Revd. Charles Clay, Episcopal/Independent in Bedford County [Monticello, January 27, 1790]" (Charlottesville: America Publication, 2013), 55-56.

letter of recommendation which helped Clay win the “upper counties.”⁴⁸ So, Clay’s connection to Jefferson had its perks.

Although having Jefferson as a friend was beneficial, it also meant gaining opponents. In the 1792 election, Clay had endorsements from both Patrick Henry and Thomas Jefferson. However, according to Clay, “Mr. P. Henry (if I am rightly informed) who was favourably disposed towards me previous to his knowledge of that letter, but as soon as he understood that you was a friend of mine veered about and openly espoused the Cause of Mr. Venable [the other candidate for senator].”⁴⁹ When Clay asked Jefferson to appeal to several key men who might turn the tide, he politely declined.⁵⁰ Despite this somewhat awkward political tension, Clay and Jefferson remained close friends until Clay’s death in 1820.

As mentioned above, Clay was ministering at the Calvinistical Reformed Church where Jefferson was a member in 1779. That same year, Jefferson was elected governor of Virginia. With the separation from England, Virginia’s laws needed revision to make them autonomous from the colonial laws. Jefferson oversaw all of these revisions and was the “chief architect” of the five religious laws.⁵¹ These bills reflect a particular interest in protecting ministers. One bill states that “no officer, for any civil cause, shall arrest any minister of the gospel, licensed

⁴⁸ Charles Clay, “From Revd. Charles Clay, Episcopal/Independent in Bedford County [Bedford, August 8, 1792],” Beliles, ed., *The Selected Religious Letters and Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 59.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Thomas Jefferson, “To Revd. Charles Clay, Episcopal/Independent in Bedford County [Monticello, September 11, 1792],” Beliles, ed., *The Selected Religious Letters and Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 60.

⁵¹ Daniel Dreisbach, *Thomas Jefferson and the Wall of Separation of Church and State* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 59.

according to the rules of his sect.”⁵² The famous “Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom” says “forcing him [a man] to support this or that teacher of his own religious persuasion, is depriving him of the comfortable liberty of giving his contributions to the particular pastor whose morals he would make his pattern, and whose powers he feels most persuasive to righteousness.”⁵³

Considering that Jefferson was supporting and sitting under Clay’s preaching, did any of Clay’s words influence Jefferson when he wrote these bills? The same bill explains “that the opinions of men are not the object of civil government, nor under its jurisdiction,” and “truth is great and will prevail if left to herself.”⁵⁴ Similar to Jefferson, Clay stressed in his sermons that God is the ultimate judge in religious matters and everyone is equal before Him.⁵⁵ Though there is no direct proof of Clay’s influence on these bills, one must wonder if any of Jefferson and Clay’s conversations about religion or Clay’s sermons had an impact on their penning.

While slavery is an unthinkable act now, in eighteenth-century Virginia, slaveholding was a part of life. Today, slavery is clearly contradictory to the concept of political liberty. People were becoming more aware of this contradiction in the eighteenth-century, but most Virginians still owned slaves, including Jarratt, McRobert, and Clay. These three, with large

⁵² “84. A Bill for Punishing Disturbers of Religious Worship and Sabbath Breakers, 18 June 1779,” Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-02-02-0132-0004-0084>.

⁵³ “82. A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom, 18 June 1779,” Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-02-02-0132-0004-0082>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ See Charles Clay, “Youth Reminded of a Judgement to Come,” Clay Family Papers, Section 2, 1745-1820, Virginia Museum of History and Culture, Richmond, VA, 34-35; Clay never titled any of his sermons. For some reason, this sermon had the phrase (“Youth Reminded of a Judgement to Come”) scrawled across the top of the first page. It is the only one of his sermons the author has seen with anything other than a Scripture at the beginning.

farms, owned quite a few.⁵⁶ These men chose to include their slaves in their wills instead of freeing them upon their deaths. At the time, passing slaves onto relatives was common practice. During the eighteenth-century, more Evangelicals were beginning to question the ethics of slaveholding. However, the ethical dilemma of slavery became more pronounced after the American Revolution around the time Jarratt, McRobert, and Clay's ministries were coming to a close. Some Evangelicals decided to free their slaves shortly after conversion or upon their death, but this was an emerging practice in Virginia. So, while these three men were forward thinking in areas of their lives like preaching and politics, they remained stoically Virginian in their approach to slaveholding.

Overall, the three men in this study were all direct patriots and indirect supporters of religious liberty. Devereux Jarratt's patriotism was initially hidden by his ministry focus, but it emerged when he felt the need to defend his community. While Jarratt accidentally stoked the fires of religious liberty by helping the Methodists, he struggled to watch the downfall of the established church. Archibald McRobert's patriotism made him a pillar in a community that tried to convict him of breaking ecclesiastical law. McRobert displayed a greater sense of religious freedom by authoring a set of regulations for Hampden-Sydney College that provided freedom of religion to every student. Charles Clay's unabashed devotion to the patriot cause connected him with Jefferson. Through his friendship with Jefferson, he may have subtly influenced one of the most famous documents written in eighteenth-century America. Even though they varied in the ways they showed their patriotism and support for religious liberty, each man made an impact in his corner of the world.

⁵⁶ Jarratt, for example, owned 24 to farm his 640-acre plantation. See Thomas Kidd, "Jarratt, Devereux (1733–1801)," in *Encyclopedia Virginia: Virginia Humanities*, 2020.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Devereux Jarratt, Archibald McRobert, and Charles Clay diverge from other Anglican ministers in eighteenth-century Virginia because of their revivalist qualities, tolerance toward other Evangelical denominations, and support of political and religious freedom. Each of their ministries began during the First Great Awakening but stopped just short of the Second.¹ The first revivals associated with the Second Great Awakening occurred in the 1790s, while these men were still alive. However, the three make no mention of these revivals in any later correspondence. Though there is no evidence they directly participated in the Second Great Awakening, the ministries of these men would have melded perfectly with the Evangelical fervor of the new revivals. Jarratt also shows continued concern toward the state of religion in America, stating in a 1794 letter, “The divisions and animosities now subsisting are greater... and yet all these may be but the beginnings of sorrow.”² As he grew older, Jarratt found himself “more and more dead to the world,” which might have been how McRobert and Clay felt as well.³ In the end, though they may not have seen the fruits of their labors, Devereux Jarratt, Archibald McRobert, and Charles Clay left behind legacies that impacted religious life in Virginia and laid the groundwork for the rise of the Second Great Awakening.

Toward the end of his life, Jarratt fretted over the state of religion in Virginia. From friends in other denominations, he learned that Methodists and Presbyterians were experiencing a decline in numbers. He heard from a “pious Presbyterian minister” that “religion is at a low ebb

¹ According to Thomas Kidd’s Theory, the First Great Awakening might have continued until the start of the Second Great Awakening. See Kidd, *The Great Awakening*, xix.

² Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 78.

³ *Ibid.*, 80.

among them” and found that the “Methodists are splitting and falling to pieces.”⁴ Because he had actively avoided Baptists, he could only guess at their condition, since he had no friends among them. Though he remained concerned about all denominations, his greatest worries centered on the Episcopal church. He observed “the low and still declining state of the Church, but also the little regard the people have for the public worship of their Maker and Preserver, and for the salvation of their own souls.”⁵ In addition, Jarratt worried about the Episcopal clergy. He wrote that “most of the clergy, as far as I can learn, have preached, for a long time, what is little better than deism.”⁶ These concerns motivated Jarratt to continue his own Evangelical ministry.

While he actively monitored the ebb and flow of religious groups in Virginia, by the turn of the century, Jarratt’s health was declining. Despite his increased years, he continued ministering around the Piedmont region. He claimed to have “travelled more than one hundred miles,” officiated a wedding in Sussex, preached in Amelia, and again at Butterwood Church in his own parish, all in a single week!⁷ Jarratt also kept writing and publishing sermons, letters, and hymns. Amid his continued activity, a tumor appeared on his cheek that caused him no pain but began to impair his eyesight after a few months.⁸ Regardless of this impediment, Jarratt hoped “God willing, to attend my churches and preach the gospel as long as I can crawl up into a pulpit... I wish to discharge my commission and die in the field of battle.”⁹ By continuing to serve his parish until a few months before his death, Jarratt fulfilled his desire. In January 1801,

⁴ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 180.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 196; Deism emerged during the enlightenment-era. It is the belief that God existed and that he created everything, but like a divine watchmaker, had wound the world to run on its own and stepped away. This left man to sort through the world with reason and science.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 161-162.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 164.

Jarratt succumbed to the cancerous tumor, and at the funeral, Francis Asbury confirmed that Jarratt had been “faithful to his ministerial character.”¹⁰

Like Jarratt, Archibald McRobert ministered until he was no longer physically able, and he remained on the board of Hampden-Sydney College until he resigned in 1795.¹¹ He also continued to preach at various churches within the Hanover Presbytery for as long as possible. In September of 1803, McRobert was still preaching at Old Concord and Hat Creek.¹² By April of 1804, at the last recorded meeting of the Hanover Presbytery, McRobert served as the moderator.¹³ According to his obituary, the illness that led to McRobert’s death left him in considerable and near constant pain for “several months.”¹⁴ Consequently, he might have been preaching up until this ailment crippled him.

Before his passing in 1807, McRobert penned some words about mortality. This note, “found on his writing desk, a short time after his death,” provides insight into his mental state during his final days.¹⁵

The soul is apt to shrink upon itself, and to recoil with fear, when upon the brink of making the tremendous experiment... to part with the dearest connexions, to see an end of all our enjoyments, and to leave nothing before us but the prospect, of an untried, endless, unchangeable hereafter: all these things, rushing in upon it, is enough to discompose the mind. But, the believer, the real Christian, has a support equal to all this... He is privileged to behold death, the king of terrors, as the officer commissioned by him in whom he has believed, to unlock his prison, and set his longing souls at large: he believes the word, that assures him of his gracious presence and omnipotent aid, and that through him he shall be more than conqueror.¹⁶

¹⁰ Francis Asbury, *Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury* (London: Epworth Press, 1958), 3:21.

¹¹ Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Hampden-Sydney College, 1776-1786, vol 1, 152.

¹² Hanover Presbytery Minutes in Manuscript, vol. 3, 1796-1804, Digital Collections, 117.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁴ *Virginia Argus*, 16 Oct. 1807, 342.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

McRobert's mind remained sharp, and he retained his faith until the end. He was buried according to his wishes at French's Church, which was a part of St. Patrick's parish where he had been an Anglican minister. Although he had been active in the Presbyterian church just three years before his death, he requested interment in an Episcopalian cemetery. Eventually, the French's church building was torn down after it fell into disrepair. McRobert's body was later moved to Hampden-Sydney College in 1928.¹⁷

Contrary to Jarratt and McRobert, Charles Clay elected to withdraw from church ministry and live a farmer's life in Bedford County in 1785. He is the only one of our three men to formally retire from a ministerial position, although he did occasionally preach at churches in the area. Instead of full-time clerical work, he pursued political roles at the federal, state, and local level. As he grew older, he lessened his political activity and stayed closer to home. Because he lived roughly six miles from Poplar Forest, Thomas Jefferson's summer home, the two frequently met for dinner and offered neighborly assistance.¹⁸ In 1810, Charles Clay sent Jefferson "Som Seed of the late invented Hay Rye" because "it will thrive very well on any good Clover Soil."¹⁹ Clay and Jefferson remained friends and exchanged letters until late 1819.

¹⁷ Eggleston, *Prince Edward County, Virginia, Archibald McRobert, Patriot Scholar, Man of God*, 6.

¹⁸ Using today's transportation, it is a thirty-minute bike ride or a twelve-minute drive from the previous site of Clay's farm in Ivy Hill to Poplar Forest. Jefferson's dinner invitations were often subtle, such an 1812 letter where he writes, "to beg some Asparagus, and if you have no better project for the day, to come and partake of it, weather permitting." See "Thomas Jefferson to Charles Clay, 10 May 1812," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-05-02-9001>.

¹⁹ "Charles Clay to Thomas Jefferson, 5 September 1810," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-03-02-0036>; Jefferson later wrote Clay back explaining that his sheep had eaten all the rye and asking if Clay would send more seed.

In early 1820, Clay passed away.²⁰ Meade claims that a Reverend Ravenscroft preached the funeral.²¹ This is most likely John Stark Ravenscroft – an Evangelical Episcopalian who became the first bishop of North Carolina in 1823. Clay was buried on his property with an enormous pile of rocks in lieu of a tombstone. The purpose behind this burial method is unknown. One old legend suggests that Clay asked his sons to place a stone on his grave every time they sinned, but there is no evidence to support this story. Another possibility is that the rocks were designed to look like an Indian Mound.²² However, the most popular theory is that Clay wanted to ensure no road would be built over his grave.²³ Regardless of the reasoning behind his unique resting place, Clay guaranteed that even his grave would be different from other Anglican ministers.

Each of these men lived with peace in the face of death, something Clay mentioned in a 1770 sermon.

Let us live as in the sight of his [Jesus'] eyes, & walk in the ways of his heart, by this means we may sincerely rejoice in our youth, & our heart may cheer us in our riper years; & when old in age, & grey hairs shall shed themselves upon us, we may long for the time when God shall bring us into judgement, & then receive our doom with comfort & pleasure.²⁴

Devereux Jarratt, Archibald McRobert, and Charles Clay served to the best of their abilities within their respective spheres of influence. According to their writings before death and family

²⁰ Zachariah Frederick Smith, *The Clay Family* (Louisville: John P. Morton and Company, 1899), 85; Meade, *Old Churches*, 2:49; the scholarly consensus is that he died in 1820.

²¹ Meade, *Old Churches*, 2:49.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ If this is truly the reason for Clay's unusual grave marker, it was an effective plan. No road goes across his grave, but his burial site is now located in the middle of Ivy Hill Golf Club. One of his slave cabins has also survived the years, though it is in disrepair.

²⁴ Charles Clay, "Youth Reminded of a Judgement to Come," 35.

testimonies, they died believing they had fulfilled the work they had been sent to do. All three men left legacies that would continue to further Evangelicalism in Virginia.

Jarratt's legacy is directly linked to the assistance he provided to the Methodists and his fondness for the Episcopal church. Without him, Methodism might have taken far longer to circulate in Virginia. The Episcopal church also became predominantly Evangelical moving into the nineteenth century. In 1792, Jarratt had the pleasure of preaching a sermon to the Episcopal convention where he challenged them:

You must have discovered, by this time, what your present condition is; and whether you belong to the class of Saints, or sinners. If to the former, then rejoice in your happy lot: let your mouths be full of the praises of God, and ever abound in the works of faith, and the labours of love. — But if to the latter, then for God's sake, and your own souls sake, rest not in such an awfully dangerous condition. Be up and doing. Seek the Lord with your whole heart. Break off every sin, without delay. Quit the company of the vain, the giddy, and the profligate; and cease not to watch, and pray, and seek and strive, till you have experienced, in your own souls, what it is to be born of the Spirit: and have obtained pardon of sin and peace with God, by faith in Jesus Christ.²⁵

This “sermon was approved by the convention, and a vote passed for its publication.”

Evangelicalism had finally permeated one place it had struggled so long to reach.²⁶

McRobert's legacy is bound up with Hampden-Sydney College and the Hanover Presbytery. Through his efforts, McRobert provided the fledgling school with more land, he wrote the first rules and regulations, and he helped raise funds to support it. The school stands and remains a prestigious university to the present day. In addition, the school became the birthplace for a Presbyterian seminary in the mid-nineteenth century. Like the school, some of the churches that were part of the Hanover Presbytery (namely Hat Creek) continue to hold services. In these institutions, McRobert lives on.

²⁵ Devereux Jarratt, *A sermon preached before the convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, at Richmond, in Virginia, May 3, 1792* (Bristol: Dearth & Sterry, 1808), 29.

²⁶ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 134.

Clay's legacy remains in the fifty handwritten, blatantly Evangelical sermons he left behind as well as through his son, Paul Clay, and his relationship with Thomas Jefferson. Among the three men discussed here and any other Evangelical Anglicans of the age, Clay has the most extensive collection of sermons. These sermons provide crucial insight into the mind of an Anglican revivalist. One of Clay's sons, Paul, followed in his father's footsteps, became an Episcopal minister, and served Manchester parish in Chesterfield County. However, Clay's greatest historical contribution is his intimate friendship with Jefferson, especially since concerns about the faiths of the founding fathers have become a major point of interest in America today.²⁷

In 1794, Jarratt wrote "The state of religion, at this time, is gloomy and distressing, and the church of Christ seems to be sunk very low. But this will not always be the case. I believe she will yet arise, and shake herself from the dust, and become a praise in this western world."²⁸ Even if Jarratt was aware of the new wave of revivals that began the Second Great Awakening, he had no idea how widespread and influential they would be on American history. Ultimately, Jarratt's prediction was correct – the church did recover. Jarratt, McRobert, and Clay had a hand in its recovery because they laid the groundwork for Evangelicalism to continue spreading in Virginia.

Devereux Jarratt, Archibald McRobert, and Charles Clay rubbed against the grain of "normal" behavior for Anglican ministers. These men carried revivalism into the years between the supposed First and Second Great Awakenings and lived their lives according to their theological beliefs. Their ministries opened doors for Evangelicalism to continue growing, and

²⁷ Beliles, "The Christian Communities," 27.

²⁸ Jarratt, *The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt*, 129.

they were willing to lend a hand to other denominations as long as the gospel message was furthered. They also stood for the patriot cause despite their oaths of allegiance to the King of England, and their support for patriotism and liberty revealed a love of country and people. The actions and ministries of these men impacted hundreds of people during their lifetimes. Despite their contribution to eighteenth-century religious history, these men have been largely overlooked by scholars. Ignoring them has led to a gap in understanding that Anglicans could be Evangelical, tolerant, and patriotic. Many historians see only a nominal Anglicanism and a slight patriotism among the King's clergy in Virginia. These three are solid proof to the contrary. Truly, these three men served as Evangelical forerunners and surpassed the Evangelistic spirit, tolerance, and patriotism of other Anglican ministers of their era.

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