

NEW JERSEY IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

1. Since the author mentions events that occurred in the spring of 1776 and in a subsequent letter to Mrs. La Grange dated July 28 pointedly refers to American independence, it seems likely that this document was written sometime in June 1776.

2. The Quebec Act of May 1774 which permitted the French inhabitants of Quebec to practice their Catholic faith.

3. The reference is to the border warfare that accompanied the American assaults on Montreal and Quebec (September 1775-May 1776); the Canadians and the Iroquois Indians sided with the British.

4. The reference is to the proclamation issued by the governor of Virginia, John Murray, the Earl of Dunmore, in November 1775, declaring that "all indentured servants, Negroes, or others" who took up arms to suppress the rebellion would become free citizens. By December the British had some 300 slaves in uniform in a unit officially termed "Lord Dunmore's Ethiopian Regiment." The freeing of slaves and servants was not a policy of the British government. For fears of a black uprising in New Jersey, see Sec. V, Doc. 3, note 4.

5. The first treaties for obtaining soldiers were negotiated in January 1776 with the German states of Hesse-Cassel, Hesse-Hanau, Brunswick, and Waldeck.

6. The Boston Tea Party of December 1773 and the Boston Port Act of March 1774.

7. An effigy of La Grange was burned in New Brunswick in June 1775.

8. The unidentified author was apparently well-known to the La Grange family; in his July 28, 1776, letter to Mrs. La Grange he signed the initials "K. L." and remarked "you remember me of old by my name."

4 The Reverend Jonathan Odell to the Reverend Thomas Bradbury Chandler

[Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, *Missionary Letters*, Ser. B. 24:5, New Jersey. Photocopies in the Alexander Library, Rutgers University.]

Anglicans—virtually all of the clergy and a majority of the communicants—were conspicuous in the Loyalist ranks in New Jersey. There, as elsewhere, the Anglican church was a primary symbol of royal government. As adherents of the established (i.e., tax-supported) Church of England, priests and parishioners alike assumed an integral relationship between ecclesiastical and civil authority since the monarch was theoretically the head of both church and state. Whigs, with reason, were especially suspicious of Anglican ministers because of their persuasive influence in the community. Consequently, outspoken clerics such

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as Thomas Bradbury Chandler were openly reviled by the rebels and driven from the province at an early date (see Doc. 2), and even those who attempted, like Jonathan Odell of St. Mary's Church in Burlington, to maintain a low profile were ultimately forced to flee. A native of Newark and a graduate of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University), Odell (1737-1818), was especially dangerous because of the influence in West Jersey that resulted from his activities as a missionary for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and as a practicing physician (he became a member of the New Jersey Medical Society in 1774). Despite his professions of political noninvolvement, Odell was an ardent royalist. Upon taking up exile in New York City in December 1776, he became a press censor as well as the author of satirical essays and poems that condemned the rebellion. He volunteered for the chaplaincy of the Pennsylvania Loyalists in January 1778 and moved on to the King's American Dragoons in 1782; he also served as assistant secretary to both the Board of Directors of Associated Loyalists (1781-1782) and British army commandant General Sir Guy Carleton (1783). After the war he emigrated to New Brunswick, Canada. In the following letter to his friend and fellow exile, Thomas Bradbury Chandler, Odell describes the circumstances that led to his flight from New Jersey as well as the general plight of Anglican clergymen caught in the throes of the Revolution.

New York Jan: 7th 1777

My Dear Sir,

You may, possibly, have heard that I attempted to send a letter to you above a twelve month since, and that my letter, being intercepted, embarrassed me not a little with Committees and Conventions, who were willing to find offense where none was intended. I told them then, and have had several occasions of telling them since, a very honest truth, that I did not mean to *dissemble* my Sentiments concerning the measures of Congress,¹ but that I had made it a rule to myself, from the beginning of our troubles, not to interfere directly or indirectly in Public Affairs, and, though I neither could nor would make *any* sacrifice of my principles or duty, either as a loyal Subject or a Minister of the Church of England, yet my political conduct should be inoffensive, if they would allow a passive conduct to be so, and, in short, that I presumed it reasonable in one to expect I should be indulged in the unmolested enjoyment of my private sentiments, so long as I did not attempt to influence the Sentiments or conduct of other Men, and that *private* Sentiments ought not to be made [a] matter of public Notice, much less of public Censure. I concluded such a tenor of Conduct *in our Situation* was not only *necessary*, but, at the same time, becoming the Characters of Clergymen & especially of Missionaries, and therefore would be approved of by the Society. But this pacific system did not screen me, in particular, from much jealousy & misrepresentation. A Parole was demanded of me, limiting me to within eight Miles from Burlington, & binding me to forbear all political correspondence on the Subject of the Public Dispute, not to furnish any provisions nor to give any Intelligence to the King's Troops.² After giving this parole, I remained unmolested at home till about the Middle of last Month, when a Body of Hessians, under the Command of Count Donop, came to Burlington

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intending to take Post with us for the winter.³ Some of my Neighbours thought it advisable to meet the Commandant on his approach to the Town, and to request him to spare the Inhabitants from Insult and their Property from Pillage. They requested me to go with them & assist in this charitable address, as an Interpreter. I did so, and had the pleasure to find that I had a good prospect of being of real Service to my peaceable Neighbours.⁴ But five gondolas, lying in the River, began to cannonade the Town, in order to prevent the Troops taking Quarters with us. Many houses were damaged, but no Body hurt. The Hessian Commandant, however, having with him no heavy Cannon, thought proper to retire that night to Bordentown, intending to return with Artillery sufficient to make good his Quarters. In the meantime, though I believe every candid man will wonder why we should be punished for having been left defenceless, and for having solicited safety from the King's Troops in our defenceless condition, even supposing us to have assented to those measures which had brought the Troops into the Country and even to our Doors; true here it is, that, as soon as it was known on board of the Gondolas that the Troops had left us, the Town was cruelly insulted and from day to day kept in Alarm by those River Tyrants. Mr. Lawrence,⁵ young Mr. Hewlings⁶ and myself were, in particular, pursued by two Captains and a number of armed men. We made our Escape, and were under the necessity of taking refuge among the King's Troops, & as the Design of taking Post at Burlington was soon after given up, I have been obliged to leave my wife and three Children (the youngest not five weeks old) and to ramble as a Refugee, God knows when to return. In this Situation, I take the liberty to request that you will communicate the contents of this letter to the Society; perhaps I ought rather to have written to the Secretary, but my little narrative seemed to require a Stile of more minute freedom than one can well use, unless to an intimate Acquaintance, and I hope the Society will admit of this apology. I suppose it was hardly be necessary to tell you, what I presume you will take for granted, that I, among most of my Brethren, thought it my duty to shut up my Church and discontinue my attendance on the Public worship, from the fatal day of the Declaration of Independency.⁷

Public news I need not give you, as you will receive better intelligence from others. I shall only mention that if the King's Troops, on their arrival at Trenton, had cross'd the River Delaware (which, notwithstanding the want of Boats, was most undoubtedly practicable) they would certainly have taken possession of Philadelphia without any opposition.⁸

You will oblige one by informing the Society that I lost almost all the Fence round the Point Lot last winter, by the Soldiers quartered in the Barracks at Burlington, who made fuel of the rails, and it has cost one 36£ to renew the fence, which after all, will probably be again destroy'd this winter. Two years Rent of the Glebe Land⁹ near Princetown, amounting to 60£ I expect to loose, and indeed there is no prospect of my getting any Rent from that quarter, nor any Salary from any Parishioners in future, until this unnatural war is happily terminated, and when that will be God only knows, though I hope it may be nearer than many are apt to imagine.

Mr. Cook¹⁰ informs one that the Society have been pleased to order me 40£ Sterling out of the just Dividend of charitable contributions for the relief of the suffering Clergy in America, and that he doubts not but I shall again be considered in another Dividend. I find that I am on this occasion obliged to Mr. Cook and yourself, for recommending me to the Society—for which I sincerely thank you and beg

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you to give my thanks also to the Society. In my present situation, indeed, absent from my family, unable to draw any supplies from the practice of Physic, my whole income must be what the Society allow me. I would, therefore, hope that they may condescend to withdraw, for the present, their resolution of reserving 10£ per Annum out of Salary, on Account of their Lots in Burlington, which are as yet deeply in my Debt, and from which it has been for the year past, and must be for I know not how long to come, utterly impossible for one to derive the least Benefit.

Wishing most heartily to see you once more happy here, and our Country restored to the blessings of peace and good Government, I am, my Dear Sir,

Affectionately yours
JONA. ODELL

1. The Continental Congress.

2. On July 20, 1776, Odell signed the following parole: "I the Subscriber do on my parole of Honour and on the faith of a Gentleman promise the Convention of the State of New Jersey That I will Repair to the City of Burlington and there or within A Circle of Eight Miles thereof, Remain and not depart therefrom Unless with leave of the Convention aforesaid or of the future Legislature of said State, that I will not carry on any political Correspondence Whatever on the Subject of the Dispute Between Great Britain and the United States of North America, Neither will I furnish any Provision or give Any Inteligence to the Enemies of the State." AM 9211, Firestone Library, Princeton University.

3. For an account of the following incident, see Sec. IX, Doc. 1.

4. That is, to the sizable Quaker population of Burlington that attempted to remain neutral during the war.

5. John Lawrence, judge of the county court and former assemblyman (1761-1768), who abandoned his pretensions of neutrality and fled to New York in December 1776.

6. Thomas Hewlings.

7. Most Anglican clerics suspended services after the Declaration of Independence because to continue offering prayers for the king and the royal family, as required by the liturgy, would have been treasonable in the new states.

8. The failure of the British to pursue Washington into Pennsylvania set the stage for the famous battle of Trenton (see Sec. IX, Doc. 2).

9. Glebe: land belonging to or yielding revenue to a church or religious organization.

10. The Reverend Samuel Cooke, Anglican missionary in Monmouth County from 1760 to 1775.