Throughout the Fall of 1765, Stephen Johnson, the pastor of the church in Lyme, Connecticut, excoriated Britain’s Parliament for the Stamp Act and recent trade regulations. Such “evils” imposed on “two millions of free people,” he warned in a series of newspaper editorials, threatened to “destroy the good affections and confidence” between Parliament, King, and America. In December, he preached a fast-day sermon (an occasion called by the colony for corporate lamentation) that elucidated the meaning of disrupted “affections.” The “present crisis,” he admitted, was “perplexing and exercising” because it compelled American colonists to make a choice between loyalty to Britain and their “great, provincial, continental, or national purposes.” He put it boldly: “if there be left to the colonies but this single, this dreadful alternative,--slavery or independency,--they will not want time to deliberate which to choose.”

Johnson reiterated the need for moral deliberation. As he argued in his newspaper pieces, the “liberty of free inquiry is one of the first and most fundamental [liberties] of a free people.” New Englanders ought to be prepared to determine their political allegiances. Johnson repeated his provocation as a simple question: “what shall we do?”

This question implied more than the possibility of resistance to parliamentary regulation. It hinted at independence from the British empire. Johnson asked his parishioners, the people of Connecticut, and all Americans to imagine a complete transformation of political loyalties, a renunciation of their status as subjects of the English monarchy. He contended that they had the moral capacity to change their allegiances. He urged them to reconsider their social identities and inherited status, often established by hundreds of years of family history. He maintained that
they had a responsibility to examine their political affiliations, determine the boundaries between servile patriotism and liberty, and choose accordingly, for the sake of their happiness.

In his sermon, Johnson admitted that making such choices was an ordeal. It was difficult to fathom being “unmade” as an English subject and “made up again” as somebody else. He labored, then, to legitimate such decisions by recurring to an experience that the religious revivals of the 1740s had made familiar to the people of eastern Connecticut. Many of those people, including one of Lyme’s most powerful magistrates, Matthew Griswold, had undergone religious conversion, and the language of conversion drove Johnson’s sermon.

His commentary reflected common understandings among Anglo-American Protestants, according to which conversion could be described as follows. Before their spiritual rebirth, unbelievers had, in the parlance of Protestant and evangelical preaching, been misled into complacency—a false confidence—by their standing as church members or children of church members. The message of the Bible and use of moral reason led them to realize that they lived under the bondage of sin, in the thrall of moral corruption, and in danger of perpetual misery. Brought to extreme discomfort, they broke with their past. They chose to embrace Christ and committed themselves to a new version of religious community, defined by the gospel. They then experienced newfound freedom and joy, along with a spirit of self-sacrifice and obedience, in anticipation of their salvation and liberation from sin.

Johnson relied on this pattern of conversion to suggest that his audiences had at least a precedent—a rationale, or logic, if you will—for self-conscious decisions to dissociate themselves from Britain and form an independent nation. Johnson alerted them to the dangers of political complacency by referring to the sensations of someone who, despite their presumed Christian identity, discovered things “abhorrent” to their “hearts” within, who recognized their
“bondage,” felt “afflicted,” and had “an affectionate remembrance of those important things of their peace” as a long-lost liberty. The sense of sin, in other words, translated politically into a perception of the danger of trusting in their status as subjects of the Crown and heirs to English liberties.⁵

In his sermon and his editorials, Johnson also used the idioms of awakening and religious decision to suggest at least the possibility of a rejection of British political identity and embrace of a new one. Americans felt “the weighty concern” of the crisis—a phrase often used to describe spiritual awakening. In such a moment, they could apprehend that Christ offered them “mercy and salvation” and promised to deliver them “from the jaws of destruction” through “his great grace” if they would pursue “repentance,” a transformation of mind and heart. Johnson spoke here of a change in American political fortunes, all the while using a vocabulary of spiritual regeneration. A decision for a new political existence—to “associate” as they wished, as he put it—resembled the choice to forsake one’s old spiritual position for new life in Christ.⁶

Johnson likewise articulated the political effects of such a decision in terms that resonated with the spiritual outcomes of the new birth: “the favor and salvation of our God,” known by “a happy sense of peace in your own breasts.” Dedication to the new community, Johnson pleaded, would follow such a transformation. He wanted his audience to “determine, with an immovable stability,” to “sacrifice their lives” for America as they had for the gospel and the church that proclaimed it. Johnson called Americans to a political conversion by drawing on the tropes of religious conversion.⁷

Johnson’s words struck home. The Lyme town meeting renounced implementation of the Stamp Act and demanded the removal of Connecticut’s stamp distributor. The New London Gazette and Connecticut Courant printed Lyme’s resolves, which contained paraphrases of and
quoted from Johnson’s sermon. Judge Griswold, a member of Johnson’s church, vocally supported revolution during the early 1770s, led the local Council of Safety, and was forced into hiding by British soldiers. Patriot sentiments flourished in eastern Connecticut and across the border into Newport, Rhode Island, where Johnson’s sermon was printed.\(^8\)

The Newport schoolteacher Sarah Osborn may well have known of Johnson’s writings. She at least encountered similar ideas through her pastors—David Rowland and Samuel Hopkins—who shared Johnson’s theological perspective on conversion and politics. A friend of Osborn’s, Hopkins spoke forcefully for American independence and introduced his parishioners to a new type of spinning wheel in order to encourage the non-importation movement, an act of resistance to trade with England. In his sermon on the repeal of the Stamp Act, delivered and published in Providence in 1766, Rowland rehearsed a favorite text of revolutionary preachers, Galatians 5:1: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” He mused on the conversion-like experience of political liberation: the “deliberate and serious reflection” that led to dramatic decisions, the ecstatic “joy” of newfound freedom, and the mandate “to improve” the “enjoyment” of salvation for the common good.\(^9\)

Osborn conveyed her religious and political transformations in comparable terms. She underwent religious conversion, by her account, in 1737, at the age of twenty-three. Just as she recalled exercising her “will” to “choose Christ” after years of misplaced associations, the local Anglican church and sites of amusement in Newport included, she renounced loyalty to her home country, England, and became a fervent patriot. On the tenth anniversary of the repeal of the Stamp Act, she pondered the same text used by Rowland, Galatians 5:1, and readily applied the tropes of “bondage” and “liberty” to “Church and State,” as she put it. She imbibed local
newspaper tirades against the Intolerable Acts and other parliamentary misdeeds, joined
Hopkins’s cadre of non-importing Newport spinners, and defiantly refused to leave the town
during British bombardment and occupation. She also predicted a national salvation, America’s
“redemption” from imperial “captivity.”

Reading Johnson and Osborn in this way suggests that experiences of and ideas about
religious conversion formed an important part of political consciousness in revolutionary
America. Conversion inflected the meanings of crucial idioms in civic discourse: choice, moral
freedom, and liberty. Many historians of eighteenth-century America have parsed the meaning
of liberty or freedom in strictly political terms: freedom from laws that violated a group’s
prerogatives, from claims of political sovereignty over constitutional or natural rights, or from
acts of government that represented neither the will nor the welfare of its subjects. Rooted in the
English Civil War and developed in the Glorious Revolution, various iterations of republicanism
and democracy informed the language of liberty.

Laypeople such as Osborn and patriot preachers such as Johnson, however, also considered
something more fundamental than legal protections and absence of political oppression. In
drawing from the lexicon of religious conversion, they invoked the power of individuals to make
moral decisions apart from external coercion or interference, decisions that concerned
fundamental social allegiances—indeed, all allegiances, including loyalty to religious traditions
as well as political institutions. They addressed a matter that lurked in the background of
political choices, whether revolutionary, moderate, or loyalist: the basis for claiming that
individuals had the mandate and ability to make such decisions in the first place.

Much of the literature about religion and politics in the eighteenth century has overlooked
this popularized version of philosophical liberty, according to which all humans had moral
freedom to choose their communities according to perceptions of right and wrong, benefit or harm. Concerted attention to liberty and its relation to conversion reintroduces the importance of religion to the history of the American Revolution.\textsuperscript{12} It calls into question common, sometimes facile, assumptions that religious language provided merely a rhetorical façade to secular agendas.\textsuperscript{13} It also, perhaps, shifts our attention away from issues of national covenant and American exceptionalism, as it does from how different varieties of Anglo-American Protestantism sustained any particular political tradition—Whig or Real Whig, republican or liberal, radical or moderate.\textsuperscript{14} It compels us instead to investigate how people thought of social affiliation as the very assumption beneath political loyalties. It suggests interplay and mutual influence between religious and political life. It furthermore allows us to appreciate how Americans from a variety of religious perspectives came together in support of independence. They differed in many theological and ecclesiastical convictions but they shared a common language of conversion and its political import.

American Protestants described the dynamics of conversion in different ways, but the texts examined in the following account help us to identify what stood as conventional assumptions by the time of the Revolution. They may be parsed into four inter-related topics. Many religious leaders, first, assumed that conversion rested on moral freedom and competence. They often put this in formal terms as the use of reason or liberty of conscience. Second, they referred to people’s sense of dissatisfaction or unease with their inherited social identities, especially their religious status. They often used a vocabulary of a sense of sin, bondage, or humiliation. Third, they identified the importance of a choice to separate from one’s old community and make new social alliances. They often elucidated this notion of choice in Christian terms, such as trusting Christ, accepting his offers of mercy, and coming to love God and God’s people. Fourth, they
anticipated some form of happiness or redemption as the outcome. They used a theological language of salvation and liberation from sin.

I. Liberty of Choice

Samuel Langdon’s 1775 sermon on the occasion of the election of Massachusetts representatives to the provincial congress clearly drew on the fourfold sequence of religious conversion to prompt a change in political loyalties. Graduated from Harvard in 1740, Langdon served as a schoolteacher, chaplain to a New Hampshire militia regiment that joined the 1745 campaign against the French at Louisbourg, and pastor in Portsmouth. He was instrumental in the founding of Dartmouth College, the mission of which centered on the conversion of Native peoples. As the Secretary of the Sons of Liberty in Portsmouth after 1764, he wrote in behalf of resistance to the taxation policies of Parliament, Courts of Admiralty, proposals for the appointment of an Anglican bishop in America, and decrees of toleration for the Catholic Church in Quebec (the Quebec Act). He lobbied New Hampshire representatives to oppose the Townshend Acts. Appointed President of Harvard in 1774, he served as chaplain to the Continental Army in Cambridge at the request of the Committee of Safety.

In his 1775 sermon Langdon urged delegates from Massachusetts to confirm that they had changed their loyalties from British king to American Congress. He grounded his appeal on what we have described above as the first quality of a religious conversion: it presumed the moral freedom and ability of individuals to make such choices. Just as religious converts were enlightened by reason and the Bible to select the best means to their eternal happiness, so too the representatives had the “invaluable privilege of chusing” that “form of government which to them may appear most conducive to their common welfare.” They were to consider “the public
good,” that is, the government in which “all the people are happy.” They were “able,” Langdon insisted, to determine their allegiances according to their collective reason, apart from previous attachments. Threats of British military intervention, legal stricture, or economic sanction to coerce or repress those decisions violated natural and divine law and merely enhanced the case for independence.17

Langdon drew on multiple meanings of moral freedom or liberty, concepts that had been contested and popularized over the course of the eighteenth century. Debates about freedom and liberty encompassed philosophical questions such as the nature of volition, theological matters such as the relation between divine grace and obedience to divine law in conversion, and long-standing concerns about moral conscience and religious establishment.18 In explicitly political discourse, Anglo-American commentators defined liberty and freedom, in different contexts, as the prosperity and security of Britain as an empire, adherence to constitutional principles such as representation in legislative and executive decisions, protection of property rights, enforcement of contracts, fair or equitable judicial decisions and legal proceedings, and defense of long-acknowledged privileges of certain social classes, commercial organizations, and municipal governments.19

A robust philosophical and theological debate from the 1720s through the 1750s expanded and sharpened the political connotations of liberty, especially in New England. Its lexicon included the Calvinist reading of divine election or predestination, codified in the decrees of the Synod of Dort and the Westminster Confession, and what contemporaries called Arminianism, or the interpretation of religious faith as in some sense a free, willful choice in response to divine grace. Anglicans, liberal congregationalists, and critics of the revivals of the 1740s often accused conservative or evangelical Calvinists of being irrational bigots whose fixation on
predestination obscured the commonsense mandate to uphold the moral reasonableness of moral liberty. Calvinists in return charged their detractors with holding Arminian ideas that implied an abandonment of the most salient aspects of Christian belief, including the saving work of Christ. Newspaper stories of ecclesiastical trials and controversies, satirical accounts of religious disputes, and frequent publication of theological pamphlets and sermons circulated the terms Arminianism and predestination. Religious controversy had made the nature of religious choice a contested and popular issue.

Many of the most heated arguments surrounding the revivals of the 1740s—about itinerant preaching, for example, or ecstatic behavior—masked a widespread commitment to religious conversion and with it a robust idea of moral liberty in some form. To be sure, admirers of latitudinarian (rationalist and proto-liberal) ideas such as Boston’s Jonathan Mayhew, evangelical Calvinists such as Jonathan Edwards and Hopkins, Anglicans, and radical revivalists often accused each other of theological errors, including either an over-emphasis or under-emphasis on the role of human moral effort in the spiritual life. Yet all parties, including liberals and Anglicans, thought that conversion was the most pressing issue of the day. The rise of missionary societies and efforts, evangelistic preaching, and publications devoted to an apology for the reasonableness of Christianity all pointed to this common concern. Whatever their stance on the revivals, American Protestants wanted people to choose Christ, and they described that choice in various ways: the conversion of the younger generation to piety, skeptics and atheists to faith, Roman Catholics to true doctrine, un-evangelized Native peoples to the gospel, self-deluded enthusiasts to genuine religion, Muslims to Christianity, and lifeless, materialistic, or otherwise distracted Protestants to spiritual rebirth.
Furthermore, they parsed the meaning of conversion as a free choice in one sense or another, whether or it depended ultimately on God’s intervention or any other preceding cause, such as ancestry or upbringing. As Mayhew put it, the “choice of our religion,” be it “Trinitarian,” “Unitarian,” “Papist,” “Protestant,” “Mahometan” or “Heathen,” was a matter of personal and individual responsibility. Reason “obliged” every person—it was a “duty,” he reiterated—to “think and judge” for themselves about the “truth and falsehood,” and the prospect for “happiness,” offered by different religious communities. Like his contemporaries, Mayhew used a jumble of verbs to convey the willfulness of these choices, such as “embrace,” “assent,” and “yield.”

All of this required the inheritors of Puritanism to transpose of the traditional language of divine sovereignty and depravity of will. In order to promote the conversions so needed in New England, Mayhew contended in 1755, “the perplexing question concerning human liberty” had to be answered “by those, who can fully reconcile our freedom” with “God’s fore-knowledge, and eternal counsels.” It was no longer possible to “answer the difficulty, by denying human freedom” on one side, or “providence” on the other. A consensus among most Protestants emerged by the late 1750s: the validity of religious, social, and political association, including conversion, depended on an affirmation of moral freedom.

Mayhew spoke not only for Boston liberals but other Protestants. Even self-styled Calvinists began to fashion what they maintained was a reasonable form of Reformed teaching: true to New England’s Puritan origins and the Westminster Confession yet reconciled with current philosophical notions of moral freedom and accountability. In his 1753 treatise on Freedom of the Will, Jonathan Edwards conceded that the issue of the day did not involve a choice between moral freedom and supernatural grace but, rather, the proper way to configure
these two tenets of Protestantism. His protégé and close associate of Samuel Hopkins, the New Divinity minister Joseph Bellamy, of northwest Connecticut, taught dozens of ministerial students to ponder the very meaning of being a “Moral Agent,” avoid any implication of moral coercion, and reconcile or make “consistent” the axioms that good moral philosophy and sound theology required: moral freedom and responsibility, rewards and punishments, predestination, and “Liberty and Moral Government.” Speaking for much of New England’s religious establishment, Ezra Stiles, a Newport pastor and later President of Yale, told a clerical convention in 1760 that old disputes between “calvinism and arminianism” were but a dying echo. All good New England ministers, he hoped, had agreed to affirm both divine grace and “the moral liberty and free agency of man” as essentials.25

Protestant consensus on liberty ranged beyond New England. The Savannah, Georgia Presbyterian John Joachim Zubly argued that deists and other proponents of “natural religion” failed to appreciate how much Reformed Protestants upheld the ideas of “liberty” and “freedom” as foundational principles. Even William Livingston, an outsider to the conversation among Reformed divines, claimed in 1753 that all American Protestants, whatever their theological affiliations, agreed on moral liberty. A New Jersey lawyer and future Governor who had lived with an Anglican missionary to the Iroquois and seen firsthand what conversion meant, Livingston reminded Anglicans, Dutch Calvinists, English Presbyterians, Quakers, Moravians, Lutherans, and Baptists that each, in their own ways, had come to embrace freedom of conscience, natural liberty, and moral choice.26

Samuel West, the pastor in Dartmouth, Massachusetts, most fully illustrated the political implications of this consensus among Protestant preachers and political commentators. West, like Jonathan Mayhew the son of a missionary to Native American tribes in New England,
promoted the idea of religious conversion and, with it, the philosophical assumption of free will. He also joined the ranks of patriot preachers, became an army chaplain, gave millennial forecasts of an American victory, incurred harassment by the British, and joined the Massachusetts constitutional convention in 1779.27

West grounded his case for independence on contemporary philosophies of moral choice. Preaching on the occasion of the election of the Massachusetts Council in May, 1776, he invoked definitions also used by many of his theological opponents, including Edwards and his New Divinity followers such as Hopkins in Newport, Baptists such as Isaac Backus, and Anglicans to the south. He argued at length that Americans were morally free—despite the threat of British force—to form “themselves into a body politic, and assume the powers of legislation” as their moral consciences determined. In making that argument, he asserted that all people were competent to make to such choices. Using the language of the Scottish moral philosopher Francis Hutcheson, West maintained that every person had “moral powers and faculties, by which we are enabled to discern the difference between right and wrong.” In particular, people had “tender and social affections, with generous and benevolent principles.” This meant that common people had social sensibilities and therefore a right to determine which form of government or which leaders best promoted the commonweal.28

To be sure, Protestant assumptions of moral freedom did not conform to the formulations of any one philosopher—Locke, say, on the power of self-determination or Hutcheson on the Moral Sense. We can recall here the ways in which Real Whig agitators against absolutism in England rather imprecisely blended the ideas of Hutcheson with republican theory, religious dissent, and constitutional argument in order to promote liberty.29 Yet writers such as Hutcheson
gave West a language to express the legitimacy of moral choice in contexts that demanded profoundly unsettling decisions about social loyalties.

West proceeded to link the moral freedom of people—the “perfect freedom to order all their actions . . . as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature, without asking leave or depending on the will of any man”—to political matters. He defined “right judgment,” reasonableness, true discernment, proper affections, and the “fitness” of things as regard for the common good and protection of the “natural rights” of others. To be sure, West maintained, people often judged wrongly and made selfish or irrational moral choices. They were, in theological terms, sinners. That in part explained the need for law and government in the first place. Yet they still had the capacity to know, sense, and select the good. Listening to preachers or reading moral philosophy enhanced their judgments. With repeated reference to Locke, West then made quick work of contending that submission to Britain amounted to bad judgment, a concession to tyranny. A choice for independence amounted to good judgment. Americans were free to choose, but the choice was virtuous only if it secured the liberties of people.\(^\text{30}\)

In conflating religious choice, moral volition, and political self-determination, West and his contemporaries affirmed what had become by the 1760s a common and not always precise mélange of philosophical, religious, and political meanings of freedom and liberty. Spiritual and civil critique overlapped explicitly in frequent protests by non-Anglican ministers against Anglican missionary societies and proposals for a bishopric in America. The admixture of religious and political authority claimed by bishops, critics charged, threatened the liberty of conscience that was essential for conversion. Religious establishments of the sort enjoyed by the Church of England, so the argument went, furthermore menaced the freedom necessary to a republican commonwealth.\(^\text{31}\)
The political implications of moral freedom, however, ranged beyond matters of religious establishment. Mayhew so eloquently linked philosophical, theological, and political definitions of liberty that one of his sermons on the Stamp Act reputedly provoked a riot and incited a mob to demolish the town house of the lieutenant governor Thomas Hutchinson. When he protested attempts by Georgia governors to void the 1771 and 1772 re-election of a critic to the office of speaker of the Commons House, Zubly invoked the foundational principles of free choice. “To talk of free choice, which yet may be controuled and annulled by another, seems inconsistent with the very nature of choice” and therefore violated the “liberty” of the House, he instructed. Parsing a favorite text of patriots, Galatians 5:1, in Connecticut’s 1776 election sermon, the Calvinist pastor Judah Champion of Litchfield fired rebellion by linking “civil and sacred liberty” into “the grand whole” of moral freedom. The New Jersey Presbyterian John Witherspoon compared the “bondage” of the “conscience” by sin to the loss of “liberty” by imperial misrule. Witherspoon pointed in contrast to the Second Continental Congress. It properly had given every representative the moral freedom to “speak his mind freely and fully of the necessity or expediency of resisting the authority of Great Britain,” which legitimated the decision for independence in 1776. The nearly continual refrain of liberty and freedom, posed against bondage and slavery, conveyed the political import of new theological and philosophical conceptions of the will.32

Protestant laymen announced the same message about moral liberty. In his fulminations against the 1764 Sugar Act, the Rhode Island lawyer, sometimes governor, chief justice, and signer of the Declaration Stephen Hopkins insisted that the contest with Parliament demanded a right philosophy of the will, an affirmation that “liberty solely consists in an independency upon the will of another.” Protestant preachers and lay observers recognized that the choice for one’s
religion, which implied submission to divine law, was not exactly the same as the choice for one’s government or nation, which implied obligations to promote social order. They nonetheless drew corollaries between liberty in these different realms, using the same reasoning about social choice. The language of freedom resonated from religious to political decisions.  

II. Evangelical Humiliation

As religious conversion legitimated the very idea of choice for Americans during the crisis with Britain, so too it suggested the necessity of an awakening to the deceits and corruptions of colonial rule. This reflects the second facet of a Protestant paradigm for conversion, what eighteenth-century spiritual writers called evangelical humiliation. They counseled self-scrutiny—the observation, in the moral language of the day, of one’s own mind, inclinations, and affections—and a recognition of one’s sinful and endangered state. This resulted in profound dissatisfaction with the status quo and desire for change. We can return to Samuel Langdon’s 1775 sermon to illustrate.

Langdon shaped his sermon into an argument that Americans ought to renounce their current status as subjects of the Crown. He implored delegates to Congress to refuse further negotiation with London or concede to British demands to hand over arms, under the misapprehension that it was in their best interest to remain loyal. He attempted to demonstrate how unbearable was the American position. Taxation policies, trade restrictions, blockades, confiscation of American arms, admiralty courts, and the occupation of Boston all amounted to an assault on the “Liberty” that Langdon had parsed at the beginning of his sermon. Imperial rule had become corrupt and tyrannical.
Langdon summoned the sensation of sin that initiated religious awakening: the realization of one’s bondage to evil, depraved affections, and self-delusions. Just as converts came to know that they had falsely trusted in their status as churchgoers and dutiful children of saints for their salvation, so Americans had come to see that that had been “deluded with a meer phantom of liberty” under “the British nation.” Their government in England had “degenerated,” with “vast public treasuries continually lavished in corruption” and “an absolute monarch” who disdained the rights of his people and subjected them to “shameful abuse.” To “defend America from slavery,” they had to disown their current status. This included a confession of Americans’ own “corruptions”: the “bribery” and “artifaces” that elevated some colonists into positions of “honor and profit” in their governments. Moreover, British rule “should be discarded.” Langdon recalled that religious conversion involved a renunciation of idols, which misled and enslaved, like the gods of Babylon. Americans similarly could now detect the true colors of Britain: “the enemy” that “made a mock” of genuine religion, their “mouths . . . full of horrid blasphemies,” and “malice and barbarity.” The sense of sin led to a profound unease. It provoked a revulsion against one’s own spiritual state and one’s political condition.³⁵

Jacob Duché, an Anglican priest from Philadelphia and unofficial chaplain to the Continental Congress (he eventually demurred from revolution) linked spiritual scrutiny to political critique in a 1775 sermon attended by George Washington. As he put it, in yet another preacher’s exposition of Galatians 5:1, the religious convert came “to feel the bondage of the infernal usurper” and “no sooner is he convinced, that such an obedience [to evil] must terminate in ever-lasting slavery and wretchedness, than he awakens from his sleep of security, and turns to and avails himself of that light” which leads to true “LIBERTY,” a “release from the arbitrary power of sin” and “surrender of the will and affections” to God. As a result of “being once
justified, and adopted into the family of God.” The believer “received the seal of his heavenly citizenship.” The words here conveyed the standard Protestant pattern of conversion and carried political meaning as well: bondage as captivity to sin and imperial coercion, usurper as the devil who led people into false worship and as illegitimate pretenders to the throne, liberty as release from sin and as freedom from arbitrary government, citizenship as the inheritance of heaven and as membership in a civil society.36

Duché explained that he used common religious idioms to clarify Anglo-American politics. “Thus far I have travelled in a most well known path, and spoken in a language familiar to most of you, and which you have long been accustomed to hear from the Pulpit,” that is, the language of conversion. “I am now to strike into another path,” he continued, which led not to heaven but to another sort of “happiness,” one crucial to “their present temporal state of existence in this world.”37 Such happiness depended on a severe, sometimes distressing, diagnosis of political corruption, as it did of spiritual degeneracy. Duché rehearsed the transgressions of the British government and American colonial rule alike, from illegal acts of Parliament and violent assaults on colonists to Americans’ reliance on the slave trade. He claimed to have good precedent—none other than John Locke—for drawing correlations between spiritual and political disorder. The misery of the pre-conversion life and the “melancholy” of imperial-colonial relations mirrored each other.38

Other preachers attacked counter-arguments—coming from London and some American circles—that, however oppressive were British policies, colonists ought to remain loyal because of their identities as English subjects of a King and ruling class who inherited their authority. The pattern of conversion, beginning with the recognition of depravity even among those who identified as church members, informed criticism of such excuses. Mayhew asserted that
assertions of inherited privilege and traditional status often masked religious hypocrisy, as it did political fraudulence. The two cases were “exactly parallel,” as he put it, and it was his job to expose the “fabulous and chimerical” nature of the Crown’s appeal to divine right, as it was for all preachers to provoke people into a sense of their sin whatever their religious background.39

These judgments appeared time and again in revolutionary tracts through the early 1770s. John Cleaveland, the separatist evangelical from Ipswich, argued in 1771 newspaper editorials that one’s political loyalties were no more fixed by geographical and familial origins than one’s religious faith. “Our civil Subjection to his Britannic Majesty and State is voluntary” and does not “arise,” as he put it, from “Residence in a State” or “Birth.” John Allen, preacher for a Baptist congregation in Boston, seared King, Admiralty, and Ministry for sending armed schooners to seize American sloops accused of smuggling off of Rhode Island in 1772. Neither King nor Parliament could hide the hypocrisy behind their assertions of “hereditary right” and customary privilege. Americans had “liberty” to “judge” by moral standards that transcended ancestral status and privilege. Charles Turner--another Boston-area preacher chased out of town by British soldiers--argued in a 1773 election sermon that hesitant patriots overestimated the importance of their English ancestry. Although Jonathan Edwards, Jr., the Calvinist pastor in New Haven, doubted Turner’s theological acumen, he reasoned in the same fashion about the priority of moral facts over received identities. “We are no longer Englishmen,” he announced two years before the Declaration. The very name obscured the truth: Americans were “as slaves as the inhabitants of Turkey or the subjects of the Great Mogul,” “threatened” with “poverty” and “desolation” by the “arbitrary will of our masters.” Moral scrutiny led to the abandonment of any pretense based on notions of ancestry or social privilege.40
As commentators drew on the paradigm of conversion, they overlaid specifically political observations—abrogation of natural rights, violation of constitutional principles, nullification of charter precedents—with what we might think of as personal denunciation of British officials. Accusations of corrupt minds and malicious intentions served as the political corollary to the awful realization of depravity of soul that preceded conversion. Even the otherwise temperate Zubly, who did not countenance outright revolution against Britain, parsed the Intolerable Acts and the bombardment of New York as symptoms of profound wickedness, a “wantonness of cruelty,” “despotism,” and “barbarity” that would shame even “Moroccan” slave-traders. Bad rule, West complained in his moral-philosophical diction, stemmed from the same “corruption” of disposition as did the unconverted life, and it was to be equally exposed as such. Like evangelists who convicted their hearers to the point of spiritual desperation, patriot commentators exposed King and Parliament as hopelessly vile and depraved.\

The moral scrutiny implied in conversion partly explains how the rhetoric of the 1770s became so charged. Eighteenth-century critics attributed the colonial policies of King and Parliament to bad dispositions and vicious affections. This led to allegations that rulers in London were not merely incompetent or financially strapped, but malevolent. Even decisions that on the face of it deserved a good riot at most and shrug of the shoulders at least—such as a tax on tea, arrest of smugglers, quartering of soldiers, or consideration of a Church of England bishop—provoked indictments of perfidy, enmity, and evil. The language of sin informed the critique that presaged independence.

III. Commitment to the New Community
Conversion furthermore gave Americans a pattern for separation from their old way of life and attachment to a new community. In evangelical terms, the believer who repudiated self-reliant religiosity also disclaimed a church that opposed the gospel. As they embraced Christ, they joined a congregation that promoted salvation. In missionary parlance, the convert rejected non-Christian religions and associated with the godly. As a corollary, patriots rejected their status as subjects of the Crown and committed themselves to the government assembled under the name of the Continental Congress. The dislocation of loyalties from Britain, as arduous as spiritual rebirth, led to liberation.

Langdon made this, the third facet of conversion, the centerpiece of his Government Corrupted by Vice, and Recovered by Righteousness. The depth of parliamentary malfeasance, he argued, ought to compel Americans not merely to rebuff current colonial policy but to alter their political and national commitments. They faced a choice between “submission to the despotic power” of Parliament and fidelity to the Congress. The American body clearly had the better case: it had begun to put “into execution the spirited resolutions of a people too sensible” or morally reasonable “to deliver themselves up to oppression and slavery.” It was “rational and necessary,” then, for Americans to confide in Congress. The newly formed body, like a congregation favored by a convert, merited such trust: it had the “wisdom, religion, and public spirit” to “determine what may be done” to establish a “government” of “law and justice.” Something like a creed, even scripture, guided it: “the collected wisdom” of the delegates. Congress in fact had become as “authentic” as “a long established parliament” and had “gained all the confidence of the people.”

Other preachers made the decision for independence sound like joining a new church, the public and corporate mark of conversion. Elisha William’s reflections on revival-era disputes
provided them with a precedent. The son of a minister, Williams underwent an intense conversion after graduation from Harvard and a stint preaching to fishermen in Nova Scotia. He became a pastor in Wethersfield, Connecticut, rector of Yale in 1725, friend of prominent English divines such as Isaac Watts and Philip Doddridge, and acquaintance of evangelical leaders in England such as George Whitefield and the Countess of Huntington. He eagerly supported the evangelization of Native Americans and the revivals of the early 1740s. After his retirement from Yale, he was elected to the Connecticut Assembly and appointed to the Supreme Court of the colony. He became a full-time military officer, colonel and commander of Connecticut forces raised for a campaign against Quebec in 1746, and, after election as a deputy and the Speaker of the House, sat with the 1754 Albany Congress.44

Quick on the heels of the revival controversies and burst of missions in the mid-1740s, Williams asserted close parallels between conversion and political affiliation. He did so most clearly in a lengthy polemic against a 1742 Connecticut anti-revival statute that prohibited outsiders from preaching anywhere in a parish without the permission of the local minister. He contended that the colony of Connecticut, as a civil government, had no business—neither interest nor right—in passing such laws. The statute violated the moral freedom for all people to choose their religion.45

In making his case Williams repeatedly drew analogies from the convert’s membership in the church to the citizen’s membership in civil society. Christian believers, he maintained, voluntarily submitted themselves to Christ and to a proper “worshipping assembly” with its pastors, according to their conscience. They “set aside and renounce all other authority” as they did so. This was the disaffiliation and affiliation of conversion. It “holds equally true with respect to religious or civil societies,” he argued, that “the power of directing and governing the
consciences of men” rests with the leaders whom one has chosen to obey. Using Locke’s conception of social contract, Williams explained that someone born in England voluntarily submitted to “the legislature” of the realm through tacit consent—the social compact. More to Williams’s point, if someone immigrated from France to England and became “an Englishman,” he subjected himself “to the crown and laws of England” and “disowns and renounces all obedience” to France. Just as they “transfer” their allegiance to a new “community” in religious choice, they do the same in political choices.46

Williams invoked the similarity between religious affiliation and political submission to target the anti-itineracy act. Congregations and their pastors, to be sure, had the authority to bar itinerants from their meetinghouse if their members so voted. No one, however, had given the legislature such authority. It was a confusion of powers to make it illegal—and impose civil penalties accordingly—for itinerants to preach elsewhere within the parish boundaries, including a separate church, in people’s homes, or public spaces. By Williams’s reasoning, then, the voluntary nature of religious adherence suggested the nature of political association. In each case, an individual made a moral determination to join themselves to a particular community, even to leave one community and submit themselves to another. Williams’ Essential Rights and Liberties of Protestants legitimated what would become a potent political contention: national affiliations were as self-conscious, voluntary, and changeable as were the convictions of someone undergoing religious conversion.

Conversion also suggested a new identity defined by the history of the community and its collective wisdom or instruction. For Protestants, this entailed assent to the Bible as interpreted by the community: a rule for behavior, subject for meditation, and guide to salvation. Political commentators drew the corollary accordingly. Membership in the movement for American
independence implied credence in the narrative of liberty—its history from the Protestant Reformation, through the trials of the Stuart monarchy, its rebirth in the Glorious Revolution, betrayal by George III, and recovery in America. Observers often maintained that an authoritative—one might use the term sacred in this sense—text bound Americans together. As new believers ought to identify with the biblical narrative of creation, sin, wandering in the wilderness, suffering, repentance, and salvation, so Americans ought to read themselves into English political history from the Reformation all the way to the Stamp Act.

West claimed along these lines that Americans were like the Gentiles that Paul described in Romans 2, who did not have the Mosaic law but still had divine law. They had “become a law unto themselves” and were “regulated by the law of God written in their hearts.” Americans had undergone a parallel experience. Disinherited from the constitutional privileges of English law, they came together under the law of nature and reason. He then rehearsed the script of that law—its moral mandates and its history in the community—in biblical cadences. He invoked Israel’s great lawgiver, Moses, to provide a text for America: “our fathers fled from the rage of prelatical tyranny” and “came into this land”—clear echoes of the exodus from Egypt—in order to “enjoy” God and “find a harbor or place of refuge.” Charles Turner did the same. In a 1774 thanksgiving sermon, he recounted the Puritan history at Plymouth as testimony to saintly behavior—the “piety, charity, and liberty”—that ought to guide an America severed from its English origins.47

Joseph Emerson, the patriot pastor in Pepperrell, Massachusetts, sketched the history of Anglo-America in light of the repeal of the Stamp Act. The defeat of the Spanish Armada, the failure of the Popish Plot, and the Glorious Revolution were “three great salvations,” interspersed with “many sufferings” that the godly “endured.” Emerson brought the story to
New England. He included the wonders of the 1689 uprising in Boston and ouster of William Andros as Governor of the Dominion of New England. He ended with the glories of “1765,” when “the friends of liberty exerted themselves” and “combined together, with fixed resolutions not to give up their liberty.” “They did these things,” Emerson observed, “under the influence of that God who made them free.” Emerson prompted his hearers to commit themselves to the American cause as a type of conversion, with obligations to a new history included.48

Those obligations included families. As English spiritual writers counseled believers to “train up a child” in the way of the Lord (Proverbs 22:6), Emerson urged colonists to “train up our children in the noble and generous principles of civil and religious liberty” contained in England’s and New England’s saga. “Acquaint yourselves,” he urged people, “with the history of our nation and land, and rehearse the wondrous things you meet with, in the ears of your children.” “Tell” your children this history, he pleaded, twice repeating the exhortation. John Dickinson, a Pennsylvania lawyer and delegate to Congress, used the very same logic. He moved from an appeal for Americans to dissociate themselves from Britain, to an exhortation to bind themselves to each other under a common history, and then teach their children the same. “Let us consider ourselves,” he wrote in his much-reprinted essays, “separated from the rest of the world, and firmly bound together by the same rights, interests, and dangers.” Quoting Deuteronomy 6:7, he implored patriots accordingly to “’teach them diligently unto your children.’”49

The post-conversion practices of Christians suggested other obligations to the American political community. In the theological parlance of sanctification, believers were called to exercise their faith by conforming themselves, at least bit by bit, to the righteousness and holiness that would one day fully characterize them. Champion exhorted patriots to bind
themselves to the new nation in the same way that believers pursued sanctification: to become—again, in the peculiar grammar of conversion--what God already had declared them to be. Preaching in 1776 about independence, he invoked the end of history, resurrection of believers, and love and unity of the Church in heaven to call Americans to fulfill their political duties: “the time is short—eternity near, and your work great to prepare therefor,” so “for Heaven’s sake and for our own, let us arouse, my countrymen, and act up to the dignity of our character as free-born Americans.” The charge to become what one already was sounded familiar to people who knew the language of conversion, so Champion returned to the favorite text of patriot preachers, Paul’s admonition for the faithful to “stand fast in the liberty” with which they already had been “made free.”

Champion conflated sacred-evangelical and political-revolutionary tropes with abandon. The title of the sermon itself—Christian and Civil Liberty—suggested this, as did quotations from Jesus and Algernon Sidney on the title page. He urged Americans to set aside regional or colonial differences, loyalties to Britain and second-thoughts about independence, and commit themselves to each other under the new governments of Congress and Connecticut. He did so with reference to the salvation of sinners through conversion, the suffering of obedience, the liberty of the saints, and mutual affection. Other preachers followed suit. They implored Americans to unite with patriots from other colonies, pay taxes to the new government, provide provisions to Continental forces, and support local militia. Loyalty to America required the same charity as did dedication to the church. Preachers attuned to conversion admonished Americans, that is, in the idioms of sanctification: to persevere, stand fast, contend for the prize, and love each other.
IV. Anticipation of Salvation

Patriot preachers and commentators articulated the outcome of independence in no less theological terms than salvation itself—the forth aspect of conversion. There were other vocabularies to express political expectations: the “separate and equal station,” “power,” “rights,” and freedom of “commerce” or prosperity in the Declaration of Independence. Yet the gravity of the choice for independence—the severance of ancestral bonds, renunciation of time-honored loyalties, dislocation of sentiments and associations, and almost unfathomable transformation of America from dependent to enemy of the British empire—demanded an effect more enduring and gratifying than political terms alone could convey. As Langdon put it, Americans faced “a final separation of the Colonies from Great-Britain,” and nothing less than “the salvation of the commonwealth” could justify the break. Langdon in fact slipped quite easily into using the term for liberty itself. According to his formulations, God “can work salvation for us, as he did” for Protestants who escaped “Popish machinations” in England and Americans who resisted Catholic assaults from Canada.52

When patriots used the idiom of salvation they made a moral claim about their choices. According to Protestant teaching, conversion to the gospel would result in the vindication, freedom from sin, and eternal happiness of believers. As a secular analog, the transformation of American political loyalties—independence—would result in the vindication of the new nation, freedom from imperial oppression, and the nation’s well-being. The language of salvation flowed across sacred and secular lines. It sometimes conveyed a sense of special calling and divine favor for America. More commonly, however, it conveyed the urgency for right decisions, the importance of breaking from past loyalties, in terms of the outcomes enjoyed in one case by individual souls and in the other by bodies politic.
Joseph Perry went to lengths to explain this parallel. A graduate of Harvard who had replaced Timothy Edwards, the father of Jonathan Edwards, in the East Windsor, Connecticut, pulpit, Perry was known as an outspoken critic of British policy, especially the Quebec Act. Many of his parishioners enlisted in the militia or Washington’s army, just as Perry joined Connecticut forces at Boston and New York as a chaplain. In his 1775 election sermon for Connecticut, he made the case that independence bore a remarkable resemblance to conversion. Rehearsing standard Calvinist teaching on grace, he claimed that it was foolish to trust in human efforts rather than in God and divine providence for one’s conversion. “Yet it is true,” he reasoned, that God used secondary “means or instruments” to effect saving faith, among which were willful decisions to practice piety and seek salvation. Only in the exercise of such choices, especially through the struggles of humiliation and mortification, could one “rationally expect his interposition,” because “when he designs salvation, he excites a proper spirit, directs and influences to suitable measures.”

It was the same, Perry continued, with politics. “Religious and civil” societies operated according to the same principles, even though they constituted different realms. “Has he not,” he asked, “remarkably appeared in our case”—that is, in the crisis with Britain? God had given “tokens of good,” just as he did to those who sought salvation, in order to “raise our hopes, and inspire the most unshaken resolution” despite “our very distress.” He redrew the parallel. “The Christian institution” could claim to be the “last, and best exhibition of the covenant of grace“ and, in no uncertain terms, “the best religion in the world.” It was “free from ecclesiastical tyranny and persecution.” Its virtues beckoned the unbeliever. So too, an independent America offered itself as the best political option, as morally compelling in the civil realm as Christianity was in the religious. “We also have a civil constitution” that was “best calculated to secure our
civil liberties” and allow us “to choose our own rulers.” Americans ought to resolve, to choose, to dedicate themselves to independence in the hope of political salvation, as they had chosen Christ as the means to spiritual salvation.55

Emerson used the lexicon of conversion to interpret a shift in American political loyalties even before the outbreak of military conflict during the 1770s. The repeal of the Stamp Act amounted to a “temporal deliverance” comparable to “the spiritual salvation which Jesus Christ has wrought out.” Americans had been delivered from constitutional “slavery” and granted “civil privileges.” They ought to comprehend their fortunes in the same terms that they understood their transformation from hell-bound sinners to liberated saints. “Every unconverted person is a slave,” and those who came to Christ experienced true freedom as they “cast away these chains,” left their “sins,” and bound themselves to be Christ’s “servants for ever.” Emerson summoned them to forsake Britain and bind themselves to America in like manner: to assert their liberties as heirs of salvation.56

Other preachers were not quite as explicit in their formulations as were Perry and Emerson but they nonetheless deployed the tropes of salvation to explain colonial-imperial relations. John Allen made a flat-out equivalence in 1773: “Liberty, is it any thing less than salvation?” Duché urged his hearers in 1775 to pursue the “CIVIL LIBERTY” that secured their “well-being” on earth with zeal equal to their quest for the “SPIRITUAL LIBERTY” that led to “a glorious HEREAFTER.” West concluded his 1776 sermon otherwise dedicated to precise moral argument with a rush of scriptural allusions to the hope of salvation. “While we are fighting for liberty and striving against tyranny,” he preached, “let us remember to fight the good fight of faith, and earnestly seek to be delivered from that bondage of corruption,” in the confidence that “we may be made partakers of the glorious liberty of the sons and children of God.” West, like
his contemporaries, erased the boundaries between religious and civil deliverance. The image of salvation, the outcome of conversion, shaped his revolutionary sentiments.57

Conclusion

The story of conversion and its relationship to politics ranges far beyond the limited set of voices (admittedly New England voices for the most part) used in this chapter, but they provide at least a starting point—a suggestion of how some of the proponents of American independence entangled understandings of religious choice, moral freedom, and independence. In particularly vibrant expressions, conversion concerned the choice of religious community and means of salvation. Yet formulations of conversion as a free choice, often as a rejection of inherited geographical, political, or familial identities and attachment to a new set of loyalties and obligations, shaped people’s assumptions about varieties of social allegiances. They conveyed a sense of freedom to detach oneself from one nation and form a new nation, just as one joined or formed a new church. Exceeding constitutional claims and arguments for the justice of separation from Britain, they offered a potent version of liberty. They legitimated what to many eighteenth-century Americans was an otherwise unimaginable break from their past.

To think of the relationship between conversion and politics in this way, however, is to prompt questions about the history of conversion itself. How did the proponents of any religious tradition that claimed conversion to be a supernaturally given transformation, a matter of divine grace, come to regard it as an effect of an individual’s moral volition and willful abandonment—sometimes—of one’s received identity? How was it that English Protestants in particular, and Reformed Protestants or self-proclaimed Calvinists especially, validated free choice as integral to conversion? Such questions lead us to the history of conversion and transformations in the ways
that it was regarded from the early seventeenth century to the late eighteenth century. To understand religion and the American Revolution, we must consider changes in the meaning of conversion in the early history of Anglo-American Protestantism. We must turn, first, to seventeenth-century precedents in order to grasp the enormous transformations in the practice of and teaching about religious choice that shaped eighteenth-century nation-making.
Notes


3 Johnson, *Some Important Observations*, 38.


5 Johnson, *Some Important Observations*, 38, 9, 39.

6 Johnson, *Some Important Observations*, 40, 45.


Osborn’s conversion and its relation to ideas of moral choice will be examined in more detail later in this work.

11 Other moral and theological ideas also informed political revolution, and many arguments for independence, including those of Thomas Paine’s Common Sense (Philadelphia, 1775), never addressed the philosophical issue of moral freedom. As James Smylie argued, Presbyterian clergy from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York thought that drawing attention to the limits of human moral competence best sustained religious and political liberties. A robust notion of divine dominion or sovereignty, they claimed from their Calvinist vantages, provided a hedge against any claims to sovereignty by king and parliament. James H. Smylie, “Presbyterian Clergy and the Problems of ‘Dominion’ in the Revolutionary Generation,” Journal of Presbyterian History 48 (1970): 161-175.


13 E.g. Bailyn, “Religion and Revolution.” For a compelling critique of the temptation to reduce cultural expressions to mere political forces—made all the greater by a narrow focus on the years of the War for Independence when political issues dominated public discourse—see John F. Wilson, “Religion and Revolution in American History,” Journal of Interdisciplinary History 23 (1993): 597-613.


15 Samuel Langdon, Government Corrupted by Vice, and Recovered by Righteousness (Watertown, Massachusetts, 1775).

17 Langdon, Government Corrupted, 5, 12.


19 In his 1755 dictionary, for example, Samuel Johnson nearly equated liberty and freedom, quoted John Locke to provide the philosophical definition of liberty as “the power in any agent to do” or act as they had “preference,” and then focused on political privileges and immunities: Samuel Johnson, A Dictionary of the English Language, 2 vols. (London, 1755), reprint on one volume (New York: Arno Press, 1979), entries on “liberty” and “freedom.” William Blackstone, the author of the authoritative legal dictionary from the period, a copy of which was available in Stephen Johnson’s Lyme, similarly included descriptions of moral competency along with specific political liberties: William Blackstone, An Analysis of the Laws of England (Oxford, 1756), 7, 105. The town of Lyme owned a copy of Blackstone, which presumably fell into Stephen Johnson’s hands at some point: Minor Myers, Jr., “Letters, Learning, and Politics in Lyme, 1760-1800,” in Willauer, Lyme Miscellany: 48-95, p. 50.

20 Oakes, Conservative Revolutionaries, 10-11, 26, 29, 37-81.

21 Many histories of the period posit a fourfold division in American Protestantism during the eighteenth century: New Lights or evangelical Calvinists, radical evangelicals or separatists such as Baptists, Old Lights or moderate Calvinists who rejected the revivals but maintained much of Calvinist teaching, and religious liberals or rationalists. Although this is a helpful typology of theological differences vis a vis the revivals, it does little to explain religious developments after 1750. See Brooks Holifield, Theology in America, 127-128.

22 For examples from non-evangelicals who made conversion a central issue, see Charles Chauncy, Twelve Sermons (Boston 1765), 338-339; and Oakes, Conservative Revolutionaries, esp. 21-22, 173-183.

23 Jonathan Mayhew, Seven Sermons (Boston; rep. London, 1750), 20, 43-45, 51; see 18, 48-49 for comments on geography and family.

24 Jonathan Mayhew, “Sermon IX” in Sermons Upon the Following Subjects (Boston, 1755): 256-307, quote from 291-292. Many passages out of Mayhew on the nature of moral choice—that, for example, we must admit that God caused all that is, including our wills, but that people still had the power to do as they willed—sound very much like the evangelical Edwards. Or, to put it more precisely, they made the same philosophical assumptions about conscience and volition as did Edwards, assumptions taken from Lockean epistemology and the moral philosophy of Francis Hutcheson and his so-called Moral Sense school. See Jonathan Mayhew, sermon “On Hearing the Word,” in Sermons upon the Following Subjects, 296-303. For the currency of Lockean epistemology and the transformation of it into the Moral Sense school, see


30 West, *Sermon before the Council*, 270.

31 For arguments against an Anglican bishop and missionary societies, see Oakes, 130-140, 146-148, 160-161.


34 Langdon, *Government*, 6; 22-24 on negotiations; passim for British policies.


Joseph Emerson, *A Thanksgiving-Sermon Preach’d at Pepperrell, July 24, 1766* (Boston, 1766), 19, 30.


51 These terms are scattered throughout Revolutionary-era sermons and pamphlets. For two examples, see Duché, Duty of Standing Fast, 24; Chamption, Christian and Civil Liberty, 31; and Edwards, Jr., sermon on Ecclesiastes 7:14.

52 Langdon, Government, 18, 28.


54 Joseph Perry, A Sermon Preached Before the General Assembly (Hartford, 1775), 10.

55 Perry, Sermon Before the General Assembly, 18.

56 Emerson, Thanksgiving Sermon, 33, 36.

57 John Allen, Oration on Liberty, 64; Duché, Duty of Standing Fast, 9; West, Sermon before the Council, 321-322, quotes from I Timothy 6:12 and Romans 8:21.