



Revolutionary Anglicanism: The Colonial Church of England Clergy during the American Revolution

Nancy L. Rhoden

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Decisions of loyalism or patriotism were rarely easy during the American Revolution. The colonial Anglican clergy, all of whom had taken oaths to the King and his church, faced a particularly difficult dilemma. Revolutionary governments demanded that they repudiate their oaths, end prayers for the King, and alter the liturgy.

Revolutionary Anglicanism examines the plight of these colonial clergymen, tracking down every one of the over 300 Anglican ministers in the thirteen colonies to assess their diverse political opinions and collective strategies for personal and institutional survival.

While the Revolution transformed and politicized the civilian population, Rhoden finds that most Anglican clergy experienced a process of depoliticization as they attempted to negotiate a volatile political climate in which they were viewed with grave suspicion by their revolutionary neighbors. This non-political foundation facilitated the creation of the American Episcopal Church, which began to embrace the new religious paradigms of the American republic.

By emphasizing the Revolution as a rejection not only of the English monarch but of his church, **Revolutionary Anglicanism** implicitly challenges the longstanding tradition which has placed Puritanism or evangelical religion at the center of the early American religious experience.

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