ABSTRACT

American Christianity in the Maritime World:
Challenges to Faith in the Early National Period

Thomas Allen DeShong, M.A.

Thesis Advisor: Thomas S. Kidd, Ph.D.

The stereotypical eighteenth-century sailor was a superstitious man with little concern for Christianity. While it is true that most mariners at this time practiced a syncretic faith, historians have minimized the influence Christianity had. This thesis analyzes various ideological and spiritual challenges unique to American Christians who lived in the maritime world during the early national period (1775-1815). The first chapter examines the relationship between American Christianity and Islam. The focus then shifts to American providentialism, the effort by American Christians to interpret what God's will was in human affairs. The final chapter explores the roles of naval chaplains and the struggles they faced in fulfilling their spiritual responsibilities. This thesis is an attempt to re-examine sea-faring life through a religious lens. While Christianity certainly survived in this setting, it did not thrive. In many cases, the principles of Christianity were challenged or undermined by maritime culture.

American Christianity in the Maritime World:
Challenges to Faith in the Early National Period

by

Thomas Allen DeShong, B.A.

A Thesis

Approved by the Department of History

_____
Jeffrey S. Hamilton, Ph.D., Chairperson

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts

Approved by the Thesis Committee

_____
Thomas S. Kidd, Ph.D., Chairperson

_____
T. Michael Parrish, Ph.D.

_____
A. Christian van Gorder, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Graduate School
May 2012

_____
J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

Page bearing signatures is kept on file in the Graduate School.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the many individuals who have aided me during this stage of my life's journey. Dr. Thomas S. Kidd, my academic advisor, has inspired me to hold myself to higher standards of scholarship. Not only has he provided me with valuable opportunities as his teaching assistant, but he has also served as a model of what it means to be a Christian scholar. Dr. T. Michael Parrish challenged me to rethink some of my beliefs concerning war and religion and guided me through the initial draft of the chapter concerning Islam. Dr. A. Christian van Gorder graciously agreed to serve as my third reader and has lent his valuable expertise throughout this project.

I am also thankful to Baylor University and to those who made my education possible through seminars, internship opportunities, and financial aid packages. Dr. Barry Hankins has constantly given of his time to ensure that I was on the right track. I greatly appreciate the Guittard family and The Texas Collection for the stipends that made my educational goal a reality. The staff at The Texas Collection has been particularly influential in shaping my understandings of professionalism and vocation.

The professors of the history department at Messiah College, located in Grantham, Pennsylvania, were stoutly supportive of my decision to apply to Baylor University. Dr. James LaGrand, my former undergraduate advisor, helped me to view academia as a ministry opportunity. Dr. John Fea, more than anyone else, encouraged me to broaden my horizons and helped nourish my passion for American religious history.

Outside the world of academia, my friends have helped me to weather the storms of graduate life by keeping perspective on what is most important. Rachel Carson has been one of my greatest supporters and knows not how important her friendship has been to me. My church family at Community Fellowship Church of the Nazarene has blessed me with spiritual nourishment and acceptance. I especially want to thank the Orwigs, the Carmonas, and the Tamburellos for the game nights, meals, and prayers that they have shared with me. You have truly made Waco, Texas, my home away from home. I would also like to thank my fellow graduate students: Lauren Davis, Robert DeBoard, Sarah Gross, Lucas Miller, Laura Oliver, and Amy Wolfgang. We have survived the research, the late nights, and the deadlines. I owe a special thanks to Benjamin Wetzel who has been a model of humility, a mentor throughout the thesis process, and a great friend. May God bless you in all your future endeavors.

Finally, but certainly not in the least, I thank my family and friends back home in Fulton County, Pennsylvania, for their love, their patience, and their continued support. My church family, especially the Wrights and the Porterfields, have constantly remembered me in their prayers throughout my academic pursuits. My grandparents, Cloyd and Ruth Swope, have shown me the meaning of generosity, godliness, and love. My father, Anthony, has exhibited a work ethic that I have grown to respect. My brother Russell and my sister Lisa have been great companions to grow up alongside. Above all, I wish to honor my mother, Deborah, for all of the tears and stress she has endured for me. Her strength has sustained me when mine was waning, and I thank her for it. Without these individuals, this thesis would never have been completed.

EPIGRAPH

Others went out on the sea in ships;
they were merchants on the mighty waters.
They saw the works of the LORD,
his wonderful deeds in the deep.
For he spoke and stirred up a tempest
that lifted high the waves.
They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths;
in their peril their courage melted away.
They reeled and staggered like drunken men;
they were at their wits' end.
Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,
and he brought them out of their distress.
He stilled the storm to a whisper;
the waves of the sea were hushed.
They were glad when it grew calm,
and he guided them to their desired haven.

-- Psalm 107:23-30 (NIV)

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: A Spiritual Bond

Introduction

As the passage of scripture from the epigraph suggests, the sea can be both an awe-inspiring and tumultuous place. According to the beliefs of Judaism and Christianity, at the mere mentioning of a word, the Lord of the Sea could raise up the deadliest of storms. What courage sailors possess could potentially evaporate in an instant, but supplication and faith in the midst of dire hopelessness could ultimately lead to safe havens. Since the earliest voyages upon which sailors set sail to explore the distant horizons, mortal men have beseeched the divine for security and comfort in a world filled with uncertainty and peril.

Prior to the age of steam and ironclad ships, an expedition out to sea bore no guarantee of survival. The raw power yielded by hurricanes, tidal waves, and violent squalls was devastating. Malnutrition and starvation posed serious threats to the physical well-being of crews sailing thousands of miles from the nearest friendly port. Cramped living quarters proved to be excellent breeding grounds for contagious diseases and vicious mutinies. Battleships from warring nations or individually-funded privateers scoured the trade routes of the world's waterways in search of heavily-laden prizes. Underneath the waves, it was rumored that beasts of epic proportions inhabited the deep places of the sea, dragging unwary ships to the blackness of the abyss. To say that sailors who left the security of dry land submitted themselves to the mercies of the unknown would be an understatement. Personal faith in God could help to combat these fears and

despairs by simply reinforcing the idea that the eternal destination of one's soul was assured.

Judaism/Christianity and the Sea

Like many of the world's oldest religions, Judaism and Christianity have preserved stories that attribute significant spiritual meanings to life on the sea. Clifford M. Drury, a former chaplain of the United States Navy and one of the first writers to publish a monograph chronicling the history of the Navy's Chaplain Corps, affirmed a rather "close kinship between Christianity and the sea."[1] In fact, both testaments of the Christian scriptures reflect such an affinity between religion and the maritime world.

The Old Testament is full of accounts that reveal a symbiotic, although at times chaotic, relationship between personal religious devotion and the sea. As a matter of fact, on multiple occasions, divine judgment and salvation go hand-in-hand in these biblical narratives. According to Genesis, God grew increasingly weary of the sins of humanity and, as a result, orchestrated a global flood to destroy the world's civilizations. Yet, in simultaneity with this austere act of judgment, God saved the future of humanity through a righteous man named Noah due to the latter's willingness to construct a gigantic ark based solely on faith.[2]

In the book of Exodus, the God of the Israelites once again utilized his dominion over the waters of the earth to dole out punishment on the one hand while saving thousands of lives on the other. Following a disastrous sequence of events in which God performed the ten infamous plagues against the Egyptian taskmasters, the pharaoh finally

[1] Clifford M. Drury, *The History of the Chaplain Corps, United States Navy*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps, 1984), 2.

[2] For more information concerning the account of Noah's flood, see Genesis chapters 6-9.

permitted the Israelites to leave their place of bondage. After they had departed, however, the Egyptian leader changed his mind and deployed his fastest charioteers to re-capture the refugees. God, through the agency of Moses, parted the waters of the Red Sea so that the Israelites could walk across the seabed to safety. As the last Israelite passed onto the opposing shore, the walls of the sea collapsed, destroying the entire Egyptian army.[3]

Perhaps the most well-known and beloved Old Testament narrative involving the sea is the story of Jonah. This prophet attempted to flee God's command to minister to Israel's enemies in Assyria by sailing to the farthest extremities of the known world. The ship never reached its intended destination, because along the way, God created a turbulent storm which threatened to sink Jonah's vessel and claim all souls onboard. It was only after Jonah offered to throw himself overboard that the seas were calmed and God's wrath was satisfied. When Jonah finally came to his senses and repented of his disobedience, God caused the great fish that had swallowed Jonah to transport him and spew him back onto dry land to continue the personal mission marked out for him.[4]

These exotic manifestations of God's power found in the pages of the Old Testament had equally powerful parallels in the accounts of the New Testament. Jesus Christ and his closest followers shared significant ties to the sea. A majority of the original twelve disciples were fishermen by trade and relied upon the bounty of Israel's waterways to earn their daily wages. Throughout his preaching ministry, Jesus chose the Sea of Galilee as a teaching platform where he demonstrated his dominion over the winds

[3] For the complete exposition of this story, see Exodus 13:17-14:31.

[4] For more, see the book of Jonah, chapters 1-4. Note that when the storm arose, each member of the crew turned to their own gods. This is a prime example of how maritime culture could influence religion, even in a monotheistic society like the ancient Israelites had.

and waves by foretelling miraculous catches of fish, calming violent storms, and even walking on the surface of the water.[5]

Elsewhere, in the book that recounts the missionary activities of the early church, the apostle Paul experienced his own miraculous salvation while sailing across the Mediterranean Sea. Accompanied by an armed Roman escort, Paul was being transported to the Imperial City when a storm arose. Although the sailors were convinced that the ship was doomed, Paul's faith remained unshakeable. Remarkably, not a single life was lost as the crewmen and passengers were able to swim to the nearby shores of Malta.[6]

American Christianity in the Maritime World

As this list of biblical references suggests, the bond between Christianity and the maritime world has historically been strong. The sea has often signified the power and beauty of the divine, fostering opportunities for faith in some type of intelligent creator. This does not mean, however, that religious morality among sea-dwelling peoples is a guarantee or that faith cannot be challenged or compromised in one's experiences at sea. This concept was reinforced by the experiences of American Christians in the broader Atlantic world.

Like most European societies at the time, the British North American colonies and eventually the United States of America were comprised of populations in which the majority of society professed to be Christian. Thus, it comes as no surprise that the lives of America's sailors during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries often

[5] See John 21:1-14, Matthew 8:23-27 and Mark 6:45-56 respectively.

[6] See Acts 27:27-44.

reflected a spirit of deference, if not adherence, towards Christianity in some generic form. Various maritime historians have debated whether or not spiritual practices at sea have ever truly measured up to the lofty ideals of Christianity. Such an issue is disputable and worthy of discussion. Yet, regardless of how one responds to this debate, it is apparent that during the early national period of the United States, an interval defined by the benchmarks of the American Revolution and the War of 1812, American Christians whose lives were significantly involved in the operations of the Atlantic world experienced significant challenges to their faith because of the inherent nature of sea-faring life and the unique opportunities that such an existence entailed.

To delve in-depth into the discussion of all the serious trials and temptations that existed in the lives of America's mariners in the early republic would require much more research and writing than this current project allows, but it is, nevertheless, worthwhile to cite a few of the issues that plagued American Christians in the Atlantic world. Many seamen belonging to "Christian" nations became consumed by the greed of mercantilism, engaging in deceitful trade, privateering, or even piracy in some extreme circumstances. The general morality of maritime culture, which featured a spirit of "aloofness" as a result of ships sailing from port to port, suffered from a lack of personal accountability towards traditional society as well as the church. Actions that had traditionally been considered sinful by the church, including anti-authoritarianism, anti-clericalism, swearing, murder, drunkenness, prostitution, gambling, superstition, and paganism, were rampant among eighteenth-century sailors. Chapter four pertaining to the United States Navy Chaplain Corps alludes to some of these sins and provides a few interesting anecdotes concerning the experiences of women at sea, dueling, and drunkenness.

Perhaps the greatest issue that this thesis has failed to grapple with is that of African chattel slavery and the religious and ideological wars that were waged over its legitimacy. Christians struggled to find biblical support for their respective views concerning either abolitionism or the justification of the institution. Although much of the human trafficking, particularly the "Middle Passage" across the Atlantic Ocean, took place on the world's waterways, slavery was not an issue confined solely to the maritime world. Because slavery's experiences did not influence American Christians in and outside of the maritime world in starkly different manners, this thesis does not attempt to address the topic. Instead, this project will focus on the development of religious beliefs and on various individuals whose faiths were affected by their unique experiences at sea.

Relevant Historiography

Despite popular stereotypes that portray eighteenth-century sailors as godless heathens with no respect for religion or civility, historiography concerning American Christianity in the Atlantic maritime world is surprisingly limited. Renowned maritime historian Marcus Rediker has provided overwhelming amounts of evidence to substantiate many of these pre-existing notions in the context of the broader Atlantic world.[7] Unfortunately, Rediker attempts to compress all eighteenth-century sailors, regardless of their nationalities, into a one-size-fits-all mold. He seeks to emphasize a sharp divide between the irreligious commoners on the one hand and the Christian bourgeois on the other. Through his efforts to maintain his integrity towards his Marxist understanding of history and class struggle, Rediker fails to capture important nuances that existed in the past.

[7] Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 153.

Scholarship concerning the religious convictions and attitudes of these men, particularly American sailors, is severely lacking. While each of the following chapters has its own historiographical debate that it engages, there is not a definitive work that describes the overall state of American Christianity at sea during the early national period. Much work is needed to piece together a satisfactory understanding of the state of Christianity in an early American, maritime context, but this thesis serves as one contribution to the discussion by examining the relationship between faith and the sea during the early national period of the United States.

Overview of the Thesis

This thesis begins with the assumption that most American sailors had at least some knowledge of the rudimentary beliefs of the Christian faith. That being the case, the historian must avoid over-arching generalizations concerning mariners in the early national period. This thesis tries to highlight some of the potential problems that existed for those espousing Christianity and the various ways in which such historical characters responded. The primary sources included in the following chapters were produced by individuals who made some type of overtly theological statement.

The American Revolution, the event which marks the beginning of this paper's chronology, is a fluctuating concept in the realm of historiography. Historians often extend the "Revolution" beyond the military conflict with Great Britain to include the radical shifts in Americans' ideologies concerning representative government, the relationship between church and state, the makeup of society, and the definition of basic human rights. The United States, in idealistic terms, represented the creation of a "new world order." For some of the Revolution's most acclaimed historians, including Bernard

Bailyn and Gordon Wood, the power of ideas to bring about substantial change cannot be overemphasized.[8]

Bailyn and Wood, whose respective works "revolutionized" the study of the American Revolution, understood that the introduction of new ideas could compel an individual to alter or even abandon an entire worldview. One of the primary goals of this thesis is to analyze some of the ideological and philosophical conflicts that existed for American Christians who sought to make their livelihood on the high seas during the early national period. What types of ideas did these men confront? How was faith changed when conflicting worldviews collided?

The first chapter of this thesis analyzes the encounters that American Christians had with the Islamic world, particularly with the North African regencies known in the eighteenth century as the Barbary States.[9] Most land-bound Americans had little interaction with Islam and its adherents, despite the presence of a minute Muslim population among the African slaves in the American South. For most Americans, Islam was a foreign religion characterized by despotism, a caricature that was strongly reinforced by popular novels, sermons, and a literary genre known as the captivity narrative. Captivity narratives were published stories that recounted an American's term of forced servitude in the Islamic world and often portrayed Muslims as oppressive.

While a significant portion of the American population believed this stereotype, American Christians in the maritime world had more complex reactions to the Islamic

[8] See Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967); Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991).

[9] The Barbary States included Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli. These four entities were regencies of the Ottoman Empire, but they were relatively autonomous at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Each had the power to make respective peace and commercial treaties with the United States.

world. There were, in fact, Americans who believed that Islam was inherently evil and that its followers were fanatics bent on religious and military conquest. Some Americans considered Muslims to be servants of Antichrist; albeit reluctant servants who inwardly longed for America's ideals of liberty and equality. Some Americans used Islam as a rhetorical tool to denote the type of nation that the United States needed to avoid becoming; "a lesson for Americans in what not to do."[10]

That being said, not all reactions to Islam were so negative. Many high-ranking officials, including President John Adams, attempted to portray the United States as a spiritually neutral nation with tolerance for all faiths. For Adams, doctrinal differences were not legitimate reasons for a rift between Islamic nations and the United States. Others, especially American diplomats like William Eaton, tended to practice a mild form of religious relativism to achieve economic and political ends for a nation firmly situated on the periphery of the Atlantic world and struggling to maintain its sovereignty.[11]

There were even instances in which Americans responded quite favorably to Islam. The most jarring, perhaps even scandalous, reaction to Islam was the occasional conversion that European and American Christians underwent. For various reasons, both practical and spiritual, Islam was embraced as a better alternative than Christianity was in these cases. The first chapter ends with an examination of a few of the more prominent captivity narratives written at the turn of the century and attempts to compare and contrast the experiences that different Americans had based on their rank within the military, their professional abilities, and their views of Islam.

---

[10] Robert Allison, *The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World, 1776-1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), xvii.

[11] Frank Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005).

The second chapter of this work will focus on the uses and abuses of providentialism, the belief that God is intimately involved in the affairs of this world. To interpret the activities and intentions of the divine has been a popular tradition throughout the history of Judaism and Christianity. Some American sailors actually exhibited fairly traditional beliefs concerning God and his Divine Providence. Particular attention has been paid to sources written by American diplomats and naval officers; the "bourgeois" of American society. By doing so, this thesis attempts to extend Rediker's concept of a syncretic faith to all American sailors regardless of their rank on the ship or in society.

Providentialism supported some of the most foundational tenets of Christianity including the sovereignty of God over the created world, the mercifulness of God, and the idea of a national covenant in which God would bless those who were obedient to him and judge those who disobeyed his commandments. That being said, it is impossible to overlook the significant ways in which providentialism, as practiced by American Christians in the maritime world, extended beyond the acceptable boundaries of traditional Christianity to formulate a syncretic faith. In addition to Christian beliefs concerning Providence, sailors often relied on magic, superstition, and paganism in their attempts to secure good fortune and safe passage on the seas. In this regard, historian Marcus Rediker's analysis of the average eighteenth-century sailor was correct. However, Rediker overlooks the powerful Christian overtones present in many American sailors' understandings of Providence.

The third chapter examines the lives of the naval chaplains who served the United States from the Revolutionary War to the War of 1812. Although it is tempting for the twenty-first century American to assume that citizens were up in arms about the

constitutionality of a federally-sponsored naval chaplaincy, actual circumstances were quite the opposite. While many Americans in government were adamant about the dis-establishment of a national denomination, virtually all Americans expected Christian chaplains to accompany the nation's army and navy. These chaplains would help to secure God's blessing for the nation by fostering virtue and discipline within the armed forces. Outspoken opposition to a naval chaplaincy was nearly non-existent.

Despite the relatively popular support for such chaplaincies, the men who were chosen for these positions faced adversity in a number of different ways. While many were able to achieve their spiritual duties such as combatting sin, evangelism, corporate prayer, worship, and homilies, government officials and naval officers often called for chaplains to go above and beyond such duties and fulfill additional, more practical roles. One might be called upon to man a cannon during battle, to fill in as an assistant surgeon, or to write letters of correspondence for the captain. The position of chaplain was subject to favoritism and corruption in certain circumstances as individual captains often viewed potential personal secretaries as more advantageous than a priest. Various government laws attempted to force chaplains into an educational role that allowed for the nautical training of young midshipmen. Once again, the practicalities of a situation outweighed the ideal and often resulted in spiritual compromises.

Sources

To provide evidence for these developments concerning Christian-Muslim relations, American providentialism, and the expectations surrounding a naval chaplaincy, it is necessary to incorporate a wide variety of primary and secondary sources. Although there is not much secondary literature dealing solely with American

Christianity in the maritime world, there are many books and articles concerning these three distinct issues. Historians such as Robert Allison, Frank Lambert, and Paul Baepler have set the groundwork for the United States' broader involvements with the Barbary States. Allison's analysis was exceptionally keen to the religious interactions between Christians and Muslims during this period. Although the chapter on providentialism challenges some of Marcus Rediker's arguments and methodology, his work was essential in directing the research for the sections pertaining to non-Christian influences. In the final chapter, Clifford Drury's history of the Navy Chaplain Corps was exceedingly helpful in providing the names of individual chaplains as well a plethora of primary source materials.

Most of the works cited in this study are primary sources that originated from the hands of Americans who had significant interactions with the maritime world. This included naval officers, ordinary crewmen, and merchantmen. Naturally, it was somewhat difficult to obtain sources due to the harshness of sea life and the inability of average sailors to put into writing their thoughts and perspectives. While a few personal journals have survived, most primary source documents concerning maritime life stemmed from the nation's major military engagements and the meticulous standards of record-keeping practiced by the United States Navy. For this reason, many of the sources used in this thesis are printed in multi-volume collections such as *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France,* and *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*. The following chapters also incorporate the writings of diplomats, executive leaders, and Muslims in order to provide alternative viewpoints when relevant.

Conclusion

This study is not designed to be an apologetic for Christianity, nor is it intended to draw spiritual lessons from the past. Although this work is written from a Christian perspective, there are as many criticisms of Christians' actions as there are compliments. This project is an analysis of how American sailors and officials who professed to be Christians lived up to the ideals of their faith. It is also an examination of some of the major obstacles that American Christians had to face in the maritime world. Above all, it is an attempt to capture a forgotten past and to understand men whose circumstances were radically different from those of the modern world. How is faith influenced by one's surroundings? How do ideas change in a world where differing cultures clash? To answer these questions, one must look to the historical past and take heed to the voices that issue from it.

CHAPTER TWO

Encounters with the Islamic World

Introduction

During the first four decades of its struggle for survival and national sovereignty, the United States was buffeted with severe challenges: a fragile economy, rampant inflation, ineffective foreign diplomacy, internal and external warfare, and divisive politics just to name a few. The United States' interactions with nations in the Atlantic world were directly affected by much of this turmoil. Those Americans who sought to make their fortunes sailing on the high seas during the early national period accepted risks that are simply unfathomable to most modern-day travelers. In addition to low pay, infectious diseases, cramped living quarters, and the constant threat of impressment by British and French vessels, American mariners had to cope with the ever-present reality of piracy, particularly corsairs employed by the Islamic regencies of North Africa. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, these countries were commonly referred to as the Barbary States.[1]

It is tempting to assume that mainland Americans who lived during the colonial and early national periods had little personal interaction with adherents of the Islamic

[1] There is significant speculation as to how the Barbary States earned such a nickname, although it typically reflects a negative connotation regardless of its origins. Historian Glenn Tucker claims that the Barbary States were named after the Berbers, a group of North African nomads who had converted to Islam. See Glenn Tucker, *Dawn Like Thunder: The Barbary Wars and the Birth of the U.S. Navy* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1963), 44. Most historians, including Paul Baepler, assert that the term "Barbary" was used to denote uncivilized populations during the Greco-Roman eras. It was particularly popular in reference to Africans who refused to engage in external trade or communication. See Paul Baepler, "White Slaves, African Masters," *Annals of the American Academy of Political & Social Science*, vol. 588 (July 2003): 91.

faith. The United States was, after all, a predominantly Protestant nation that was largely shielded from the religious diversity of Europe and Africa by the sheer vastness of the Atlantic Ocean. Although the average American may not have had face-to-face encounters with practicing Muslims, many Americans were not entirely ignorant of Islam's history or its theology. On the contrary, American Christians were in frequent conversation with one another concerning the nature of Muslims and the role that Islam would play in God's redemptive plan for the world. Because most Christians consciously linked the religions of Islam and Catholicism to the abominable Antichrist described in the New Testament, a distorted and condescending view of Islam developed which Americans propagated in order to advance their own religious and political principles.

In a practical sense, Americans in the maritime world experienced Islam in a way that the average land-bound American did not. Through diplomacy, trade, warfare, and even slavery, some American mariners came face-to-face with Muslims. Those Americans who openly professed the Christian faith met significant challenges in their encounters with adherents of the youngest of the Abrahamic religions.[2] While some Americans spoke of Islam rhetorically, as mentioned above, a few openly embraced this religion as either an acceptable complement to Christianity or even the superior option for salvation. The most controversial and heated discussions involving Islam, however, stemmed directly from the military conflicts between the United States and the Barbary States of Morocco, Tunis, Algiers, and Tripoli. The 1790s and early 1800s witnessed a

[2] According to all three of the world's largest monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), the God of creation chose to bless the world through the patriarch Abraham and his offspring. Judaism and Christianity assert that God chose Abraham's younger son Isaac as the true heir whereas Islam traces its origins through Abraham's oldest son Ishmael. Because of Abraham's significance to these religions, they are often referred to as Abrahamic faiths. This conscious effort to group these three religions together is a relatively modern phenomenon, but some American Christians such as diplomat William Eaton were focusing on commonalities rather than differences as early as the 1790s.

steady rise in the popularity of the captivity narrative, a genre of literature in which American Christians, typically merchantmen and naval officers, wrote about their experiences as political prisoners and bonded slaves in North Africa. The interactions that existed between early American Christianity and Islam were complex, but by analyzing the various ways in which Americans attempted to make sense of Islam, one can begin to understand one of the most significant religious challenges that American Christians faced in the maritime world.

This chapter, in addition to addressing the general state of Christian-Muslim relations, deals with some of the broader concerns of the overall thesis as well. Firstly, as an alternative worldview to Christianity, Islam presented some unique challenges to the Christian faith and forced American Christians to respond accordingly. It is within these reactions that it becomes evident that Christians in the maritime world, while sharing many of the principal convictions of the larger American society, encountered new ideas and experiences that were completely foreign to those of the average American. Christianity, while it survived its encounters with Islam, fell short of its lofty ideals.

While it is constructive to draw general conclusions about the state of American Christianity as a result of its confrontations with Islam, much emphasis will be placed upon the stories of specific individuals to show how Christians' responses to Islam were represented by a wide spectrum of possibilities. Through the use of new primary source materials and a fresh look at some of the spiritual tensions that existed between the United States and the Barbary States, this chapter aims to contribute to the historical understanding of this issue.

History of Islamic Slavery

Since the advent of the prophet Muhammad and the Arabian empire of the seventh century, the Christian powers of Europe and the Byzantine Empire had been at constant odds with the Islamic world. The lands bordering the Mediterranean Sea constituted a particular hotbed of violence and conflict. Even as Christopher Columbus and his contingent of Spanish conquistadores set sail for the Indies in 1492, Christians in Spain were aggressively fighting to oust Muslims from the Iberian Peninsula.

While the successes of European imperial ambitions in the New World greatly enhanced the resources and wealth of Christian nations such as Spain, Portugal, England, and France, Muslim raiders remained a source of terror for unwary travelers. Pirates endorsed by various North African governments harassed European commerce, venturing as far north as the English Channel. Those sailors whom the Barbary pirates captured were often enslaved. While historian Robert C. Davis asserts that Mediterranean slavery was not nearly as prolific as its North American equivalent, it was hardly insignificant. In this Barbarian form of slavery defined primarily on the basis of religion, as many as 35,000 Christians were subjugated during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Using slave registers as his major source of evidence, Davis approximates that roughly 1-1.5 million Christians were imprisoned by the Barbary powers from 1530 to 1780.[3]

Prior to and throughout the American Revolution, the threat of foreign attacks on American shipping was much less prominent than it proved to be during the early

[3] Robert C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 15-23. Davis is much more sympathetic towards Christian captives than other modern historians, although he is quite adamant in his refusal to condone either the Mediterranean or North American institution of slavery. "Slaves were still slaves, whether they were black or white, labored in a plantation or sweated on a galley." Ibid., 193. For a well-written work concerning the history of North African slavery, see Giles Milton, *White Gold: The Extraordinary Story of Thomas Pellow and Islam's One Million White Slaves* (New York: Picador, 2004).

national period. As subjects of the British crown, American merchants in the Atlantic world enjoyed a sense of protection that no other nation in the world could offer: the unquestionable supremacy of the British Royal Navy. Such security evaporated following the Treaty of Paris of 1783 in which the British recognized the independence of the United States. During the Revolutionary War, the French, who also possessed one of the world's most formidable battle fleets, had ensured the safety of American shipping in the Atlantic. Yet immediately following the attainment of political recognition, the United States' sovereignty came under severe and constant attack.[4]

As soon as the United States had secured its victory over Great Britain, the American legislature functioning under the Articles of Confederation disbanded the remnants of the Continental Navy due to massive war debts and the legislative body's inability to levy taxes. Consequently, corsairs from the Barbary States pounced upon vulnerable American shipping. In 1785, a mere two years after the Treaty of Paris had been ratified, Algerian pirates seized two American merchant vessels off the coast of Spain. Later dealings with the Barbary States produced similar outcomes that prompted one inescapable conclusion: the United States' inability to protect its traders on the high seas would result in either a military initiative or submission to extortion.[5]

The administrations of Presidents George Washington and John Adams chose the latter option, not wanting to commit the young nation to a distant war that it could never

---

[4] Frank Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 5. For an exploration of the history of British interactions with the Barbary States, see Nabil Matar's works. Nabil Matar, *Islam in Britain, 1558-1675* (Cambridge: Columbia University Press, 1998); Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Nabil Matar, *Britain and Barbary, 1589-1689* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005); and Nabil Matar, *Europe through Arab Eyes, 1578-1727* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

[5] Clifford M. Drury, *The History of the Chaplain Corps, United States Navy*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps, 1984), 6.

hope to finance. With no permanent navy to defend its interests abroad, the United States government paid millions of dollars for both the ransom of American prisoners and in annual tribute to the four governments which comprised the Barbary States. During the 1790s, the sums of money given to Morocco, Tunis, Tripoli, and Algiers amounted to approximately $1.25 million per year, roughly twenty percent of the United States' national budget.[6]

As the years wore on and the United States government was forced into one embarrassing concession after another, the nation's chief executives became much less willing to pay tribute to pirates operating thousands of miles away. Following the undeclared naval war with France in the late 1790s and the successes that the newly established Department of the Navy enjoyed during that conflict, American officials no longer shied away from using force to solve its international problems. In 1801, when the Bashaw of Tripoli discovered that he was receiving far less annual tribute than his Moroccan and Tunisian counterparts, he ordered his men to cut down the American flag at the U.S. embassy, declaring war to gain more American tribute. President Thomas Jefferson, rather than increase American payments, ordered a squadron of four American warships to patrol the Mediterranean Sea. The subsequent fighting that broke out between Tripoli and the American forces lasted four years and ended in a convincing American victory.[7] The Algerine War in 1815 produced similar results. By that time, the

[6] Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 88-93.

[7] Drury, *The History of the Chaplain Corps*, 15.

United States had successfully defended its sovereignty against Great Britain, France, and the Barbary States, securing its position as a rising "junior power" in the Atlantic world.[8]

While there have been a number of books written to recount the events of the Barbary Wars, this chapter focuses on the tensions created by the opposing religious worldviews of Islam and Christianity. Historians of these conflicts, including Frank Lambert, have often focused on the political, economic, and military developments of these struggles in an effort to assert that these were not holy wars waged between Christians and Muslims. Such an argument is evident in the primary sources, but to avoid analyzing the religious beliefs held by the majority of the respective nations involved ignores a key dynamic of the interactions between the United States and the Barbary States.

This chapter, in addition to the goals already mentioned, attempts to include this focus on religious matters by engaging with the writings of various Americans during the early national period. One such polarizing tradition that stirred harsh animosity towards Islam was the rhetorical use of that faith in public debates concerning religion. This custom was particularly common in colonial America and lasted well into early years of the newly formed United States. Serving as a bridge between the realms of politics and religious eschatology, this rhetoric employed Islam as a device to belittle one's rivals.

Rhetorical Uses of Islam

Colonial and revolutionary Americans, who were largely descendants of the British Protestant tradition, had always reserved an ignominious role for Islam in

[8] Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 201. Lambert asserts that prior to the Barbary Wars, the United States was situated on the fringe of the Atlantic world. Throughout his work, he emphasizes the relative weakness of America's national government. Only after defeating its enemies in the Tripolitan War (1801-1805) and the Algerine War (1815-1816) was the United States able to enforce the sovereignty it had won in 1783.

Christian eschatology (the study of the end times). Reverend Jonathan Edwards, one of colonial America's most prolific theologians, insisted that Islam was as evil and anti-Christian as Roman Catholicism. Edwards predicted that by the year 2000, the remnants of the Catholic Church would unite with Islam and other forces of "heathenism" to combat the armies of Christ in what is widely known in Christian cultures today as the Battle of Armageddon.[9] Although the forces mustered against Christ would be the largest that the world had ever witnessed, Edwards was confident that his savior would triumph over this coalition of foes. In an exposition on 1 Corinthians, Edwards sought to encourage his readers when he wrote, "Those great enemies of Christ—Antichrist, and Mahometanism, and heathenism—shall be overcome and subdued under Christ's feet."[10] For Edwards, Islam was not a religion to be respected but a necessary evil to tolerate until the appointed time of God's judgment.

Such a critical treatment of Islam existed well before and after the life of Jonathan Edwards, but while there would always be some sense of religious objection involving Christians' discussions of Islam, there were also blatantly political implications that were to be drawn. Thomas S. Kidd chronicles the progression of English and American tendencies to employ Islam as a rhetorical tool when those involved cited "the similarities between an opponent's views and the 'beliefs' of Islam as a means to discredit one's adversaries."[11] Islamic beliefs were often exaggerated beyond the point of recognition in

[9] Jonathan Edwards, "Sermon 26," in *A History of the Work of Redemption*, ed. John F. Wilson, vol. 9 of *Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 463.

[10] Jonathan Edwards, "1 Corinthians," in *The Blank Bible*, ed. Stephen J. Stein, vol. 24 of *Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 1061-1062.

[11] Thomas S. Kidd, *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 1.

order for individuals to disparage their rivals in the public sphere. While few Americans had ever personally encountered a Muslim, despite the presence of a few Muslim slaves in the plantations of the Southern colonies, the highly churched American population was generally aware of the basic tenets of Islam through sermons, the tales of merchantmen, and published literature such as captivity narratives and sailors' personal journals.

Robert Allison reaffirms the presence of this manufactured stereotype of Islam, what he refers to as the haunting "specter of Islam," in his book *The Crescent Obscured*. During the period of the European Enlightenment, Islam, embodied most clearly by Muhammad's Arabian Empire and the Ottoman Empire, came to be equated with religious and political tyranny among most Christians. In 1697, Humphrey Prideaux, an English clergyman, wrote an influential biography of Muhammad entitled *The True Nature of Imposture, Fully Displayed in the Life of Mahomet*. For his premise, Prideaux argued that religious indifference always led directly to religious bondage. Muhammad, whom Prideaux described as an ambitious but false prophet, had taken advantage of Christians' carelessness in order to conquer most of modern-day Saudi Arabia. While Prideaux constructed his narrative of Islam primarily to awaken the English people to the serious dangers of a lackadaisical stance towards seventeenth-century Deism, surface-level interpretations still found fertile soil in the minds of his readers. This particular work withstood the tests of time and was republished in 1796 in Philadelphia.[12]

As a result of this polemical style of writing, any government that endorsed the Islamic religion automatically became the antithesis of the nation that Americans hoped to create in the 1780s and beyond. Such a generalized rejection of Islamic society

[12] Robert J. Allison, *The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World, 1776-1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 35-39.

occurred in virtually every sphere imaginable. Allison describes this phenomenon quite potently when he writes, "The Muslim world was a lesson for Americans in what not to do, in how not to construct a state, encourage commerce, or form families. Power had to be controlled, liberty had to be secured, for men and women to prosper and for societies to progress."[13] Islam had become the face of tyranny because of its harsh treatment of women, its authoritarian political structures, its support of piracy, and its enslavement of Christian prisoners.

Religious Indifference and Relativism

Many prominent historians of the Barbary Wars, including Frank Lambert, admit that religion had some role to play in the tensions between the United States and Muslim nations, but they are typically careful to point out that religion was not the primary cause of such conflict. Economics, and to a lesser degree politics, lay at the root of these wars. Americans, who viewed themselves as citizens of a tolerant and free republic, often avoided the more divisive aspects of religious language that would alienate potential trade partners. The religious teachings of Islam, while more prone to using "holy war" language, were also "tempered by market realities."[14]

Captain Richard O'Brien affirmed the belief that money held significant influence over the Barbary pirates. O'Brien was the American commander of the *Dolphin* when it was captured by Algerians on July 30, 1785. The entire crew of twenty-one sailors was taken prisoner and enslaved, yet against all odds, they still hoped that the United States

[13] Ibid., xvii. While there might be some elements of truth in these oversimplified caricatures of Islam, it is important to remember that historical accuracy was not the end goal in the use of rhetoric. Persuasion through monolithic exaggeration was much more expedient.

[14] Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 117.

government would intervene on their behalf. From the confines of an Algerian prison, O'Brien penned a letter to Thomas Jefferson, who in 1786 was serving as the American minister to France. O'Brien pleaded with Jefferson to persuade his superiors to pay the ransom and to forsake all sense of pride and indignation, recognizing that most Christian powers in the Mediterranean world were forced to submit to this kind of extortion. Only through payment would the desires of the Algerians be appeased. "Money is the God of Algiers & Mahomet their prophet," O'Brien asserted.[15]

The United States, for its part, was much less concerned about religion on a corporate level than its Muslim counterparts, whose chief executives often filled their letters of correspondence with overtly religious exhortations and benedictions. Congress during the Adams administration dealt a serious blow to anyone who espoused the belief that the United States would be a self-defined Christian nation in the world of politics and economics. In an oft-quoted treaty with Tripoli ratified by the Senate on June 10, 1797, the United States affirmed that it was a religiously neutral entity, explicitly denying any Christian origins for the sake of making peace with the predominantly Muslim regency:

> As the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion, as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion or tranquility of Musselmen, and as the said States never have entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mehomitan nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries.[16]

---

[15] Richard O'Brien to Thomas Jefferson, June 8, 1786, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944), 1:3.

[16] "Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the United States of America and the Bey and Subjects of Tripoli of Barbary," in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 1:178. This block quote constitutes Article 11 of the peace treaty signed between Tripoli and the United States. "Musselmen" is an historic term used for Muslims and "Mehomitan" (or spellings close to this) can be translated as Islamic.

Even when Americans were willing to talk about religion in the public sphere, particularly during the Tripolitan War, there was a conscious effort to be politically sensitive to the point of ignoring the obvious religious differences between Islam and Christianity. William Eaton provides a unique case study of some of the challenges and potential failures of American Christians in this regard. Eaton enjoyed an illustrious career as an Army officer and an international diplomat. As the conclusion of the Tripolitan War drew near, Eaton's influence only increased.

One of the major reasons Eaton was able to ascend to such a powerful position was his ability to accommodate Muslims. In December 1804, Eaton described an encounter he had with a Turkish sovereign. Through this conversation, Eaton attempted to convince both the Muslims and the Christians who were present that they served the same God. He claimed that there was an "affinity of principle" between Islam and Christianity in the fact that both religions were monotheistic in nature and recognized "the existence and supremacy of *one* God." When Eaton acknowledged this powerful similarity, he sought to appease his Christian readers and their objections to such a theological assertion. For Eaton, the bond between Islam and Christianity was simply too strong to overlook. "Both enjoined the universal exercise of humanity: and both forbade unnecessary bloodshed[.]"[17] To achieve his diplomatic purposes, Eaton was willing to gloss over some of the major distinctions that Christians and Muslims had concerning their beliefs about the divine, particularly the character of Jesus Christ.

[17] William Eaton to Robert Smith, December 13, 1804, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 5:188. Eaton was aware that Christians, particularly Trinitarians, would balk at his statement that there was but one god and that the god of the Christians was the same as that of the Muslims. "Let not *triune* christans startle at the emphasis placed on this numeral adjective it is not meant to employ *that unity* may not be composed of congregated members to suit any faith!"

This tendency towards what some might refer to as a mild strain of religious relativism continued as the war drew to a close. It was particularly evident in a speech that William Eaton delivered to the people of Tripoli on March 29, 1805. Eaton, who at that time was leading a heterogeneous army of American Marines, Arab horsemen, and Christian mercenaries against the port city of Derne, attempted to win over the natives by emphasizing the commonalities between Christianity and Islam. He addressed his listeners as "Brothers; Sons of Abraham; true believers of the true messengers of the truth."[18] Being careful to couch all of his religious language in the Old Testament narratives cherished by both Christians and Muslims, Eaton assured the Tripolitans that the United States was not waging a holy war against their government or against Islam in general. Rather, it was through the unjust usurpation of Tripoli's throne by a political rogue that war had broken out between the two nations. Eaton called upon both sides to reconcile as quickly as possible so that peace and prosperity might reign once more. Eaton was so concerned with his goal of winning the Tripolitans' trust that he rejected any sort of theological distinction between the God of Christianity and Allah. "Come on Moors, Arabs, Americans, brothers, come along from every corner of Barbary where the truth of the prophet has been received. Be assured that the God of the Americans and of the Mahometans is the same; the one true and omnipotent God."[19]

Even in Eaton's own private writings, in which one would assume that the façade of toleration would fade away if his actions were simply a pretense, he sought to

[18] William Eaton, "Proclamation of William Eaton to the Inhabitants of Tripoli," March 29, 1805, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 5:467.

[19] Ibid., 5:470. For more information concerning William Eaton's life and religious beliefs, see *The Life of the Late General William Eaton: Principally Collected from his Correspondence and Other Manuscripts*, ed. Charles Prentiss (Brookfield: E. Merriam and Company, 1813), 159-160.

downplay any theological divisions between Christianity and Islam. In his journal entry for March 30, 1805, Eaton was uncharacteristically critical of the Arabs traveling in his company. He doubted their patriotism and their sense of honor, calling them "enthusiasts" and thieves "adroit in stealing." Despite these negative assessments, Eaton was quite shocked when his Muslim peers suggested that their god was different from Eaton's. In fact, these Muslims simply could not understand the reasons behind blessings of wealth that Americans such as Eaton enjoyed. He noted that they were genuinely "astonished *that God should permit people to possess such riches who followed the religion of the devil!*"[20] To Eaton and his peers in the diplomatic community, it was of the utmost importance to emphasize to their Muslim counterparts that the religion observed in America was compatible with Islam. Through his interpreter, Eaton informed his fellow travelers that Americans "believed in God and respected all his revelations; that we made no distinction in our respect to people of different creeds; all were free with us to worship God as their consciences dictated; and that all honest men were equally respected in America."[21]

Even Muslim leaders, for their part, attempted to be diplomatic in their use of religious language. On October 1, 1803, Emperor Soliman Ben Mohamet of Morocco composed a letter to President Thomas Jefferson, using inclusive language in which Americans and Moroccans alike could find solace and truth. "In the name of the clement, and most Merciful God, In him we have put our trust, and he is our best protector[.]

[20] William Eaton, "Extract from Journal of William Eaton, Saturday, March 30, 1805," in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 5:472.

[21] Ibid.

There is no power or strength, but in the Great God. From the servant of God. Prince of Believers. He who has put his trust in the Lord of all the Creation…"[22]

Religious Intolerance

While Americans like William Eaton overlooked some of the most fundamental theological distinctions between Islam and Christianity, at the other end of the spectrum, some American Christians were openly hostile towards their Muslim counterparts. William Eaton, who ironically had been one of the strongest proponents of religious relativism during the Barbary Wars, was privately critical of Islamic enthusiasts. In a letter written to the Secretary of State Timothy Pickering, Eaton, the United States Consul to Tunis, sought to explicate the reasons why he believed Muslim pirates were so successful in boarding American vessels. Eaton ultimately concluded that radical religion *and* economic incentives were both influencing these Barbarian raiders to acts of daring and ultimately reward. "Taught by revelation that war with the Christians will guarantee the salvation of their souls, and finding so great secular advantages in the observance of this religious duty their inducements to desparate fighting are very powerful."[23]

Elsewhere, in a conversation with Rufus King, the American minister to England, Eaton wrote with open resentment towards the government of Tunis. Upon delivering the American tribute to the Bey of Tunis, Eaton could not help but notice the greed inherent within the Barbary States. "In the uniform spirit of insolence which Christians tolerate in

[22] Emperor Soliman Ben Mohamet to Thomas Jefferson, October 11, 1803," in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 3:124.

[23] William Eaton to Timothy Pickering, June 15, 1799, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 1:327.

these Regencies, the Bey through his Minister, after receiving these valuable articles, revived a former demand for a corvette or brig of war, such as we had given Algiers."[24]

Even in the 1790s, when the United States had enjoyed relative peace in the Mediterranean, American officials were writing about their Muslim contemporaries with contempt. William Eaton and Richard O'Brien, the United States Consuls to Tunis and Algiers respectively, were fearful that the Muslims in their spheres of influence would convert to Roman Catholicism due to the ever-expanding influence of the French regime under Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. In a joint report presented to the Secretary of State, Eaton and O'Brien expressed their anxieties that Napoleon would proceed beyond his recent victories in Naples and Egypt to launch a full-scale invasion of the Barbary States.

While the Muslims of North Africa and the Catholics of Western Europe had engaged in violent warfare for centuries, these two American diplomats assumed that the Muslims of North America might potentially ally with Napoleon without loss of life. They hoped, rather disparagingly, that the Muslims "could dispense with their religious stupidity" and adopt the "accommodating religion" of Roman Catholicism. These Americans believed wholeheartedly that Muslims as a whole were discontent with the political circumstances of their societies. "They sigh for liberty with an ardor which they do not affect to disguise — They say they consider themselves only as *free slaves*."[25] Like most Americans, Eaton and O'Brien believed that Muslims, who followed a

[24] William Eaton to Rufus King, June 6, 1802, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox 2:166.

[25] William Eaton and Richard O'Brien to Timothy Pickering, February 22, 1799, in *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France*, ed. Dudley Knox (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1935-1938), 2:385.

totalitarian god of predestination, were prone to submission and tyrannical governments and were therefore unable to seize the benefits of democracy and freedom.

In fact, many of the diplomats who served the United States as consuls to the North African regencies of the Barbary States expressed sharp criticisms towards their former charges. James Cathcart, the ex-Consul to Tripoli, appeared to loathe every aspect of the position he once held in high esteem. Cathcart believed that a consul performed one of the most "humiliating" and "perilous" jobs available to Americans at the time. Separation from one's family was hard enough to bear, but this pain was compounded by other inconveniences. These men who sought to serve their country were "doom'd to breath an air contaminated by plague & slavery, subject even in our beds to the mortal stings of scorpions, exposed to every species of insolence and degradation that a fertile brain'd Mohammetan can invent to render the life of a christian superlatively miserable…"[26] Needless to say, Cathcart was relieved when his tenure as an American Consul had expired.

American prisoners-of-war, understandably, viewed their Muslim masters in an extremely negative light. In 1803, Captain William Bainbridge, commander of the *U.S.S. Philadelphia*, attempted to blockade the principal harbor of Tripoli. Unfortunately for the American crew, the heavily-armed frigate struck a reef. With Tripolitan gunboats moving in, Bainbridge surrendered both the ship and his crew of approximately three hundred men. Bainbridge, as a prisoner, was particularly critical of radical religious enthusiasm that he witnessed among the "Mussulmen." On November 22, 1804, Bainbridge informed the United States Chargé d'Affaires to Tunis, George Davis, that

[26] James L. Cathcart to James Madison, August 25, 1802, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 2:253.

"no people on earth are greater enthusiasts in their Religion, and would regard a Coalition (of Christians) as a religious war."[27]

Soon afterward, as the United States attempted to place the Bashaw's brother in charge of the regional government of Tripoli, Bainbridge expressed his personal doubts concerning the efficacy of such a coup to United States Consul General to Algiers, Tobias Lear. Bainbridge assumed that the citizenry of Tripoli would never support a leader who was openly backed by the American Christians. "No people on Earth I believe are more biggoted in their religion than Mahometans. — History shews us a most unparallel'd enthusiasm among them I can't conceive the most distant hope of any utility to be derived to the US from pecuniary or other aid given the poor effeminate fugitive Brother of the Bashaw of Tripoli."[28]

While some Christians were dismissive of all Muslims and their respective beliefs, others at least attempted to make distinctions between the genuine faithfulness of the masses in comparison to the questionable motives of high-ranking political and religious figures. Jonathan Cowdery was a surgeon serving under Captain William Bainbridge during the conflict with Tripoli. When the *U.S.S. Philadelphia* was captured, Cowdery was taken prisoner. Because of his valuable skillset, Cowdery experienced relative freedom at the hands of his captors. He took advantage of his limited autonomy, keeping a detailed journal of his observations as a prisoner-of-war. On August 9, 1804, Cowdery noted that the Tripolitans' strict prayer regime prior to battle was conducted

[27] William Bainbridge to George Davis, November 22, 1804, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 5:156. "Enthusiasts," in this context, served as a derogatory term synonymous with "fanatic" or "extremist."

[28] William Bainbridge to Tobias Lear, November 11, 1804, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 5:137.

with "as much regularity as the exercise in a well disciplined army."[29] The ensuing carnage of battle quickly wiped away any such remnants of order.

Yet beneath the details of the conflict itself, Cowdery offered a potent insight into the disparity between Tripoli's leaders and their followers. The Bashaw, the head of the Tripolitan government, immediately withdrew to a "bomb proof room in his castle" once the battle commenced. Likewise, the priest, also known as the Marabewt, was portrayed as both a fraud and a coward. The Turks who defended the city from American invasion often wore small pieces of paper on their heads as a sign of divine protection. Cowdery, however, was skeptical of the Marabewt's true intentions and assumed that economic gain was the motivating factor behind such talismans. "The *Marabewt* gets a sum of money for these blessings. If a Turk gets wounded or killed, it is supposed the blessed paper was too old, or not placed in a proper manner."[30] While the priest often yelled curses at the American warships to raise the morale of the Tripolitan defenders, he did so from a secure location.

Conversions

In addition to mild strains of relativism and unsubstantiated disparagement, one of the greatest challenges to Christians in their encounters with Muslims was religious conversion. Joseph Ingraham, the Chargé d'Affaires in Tripoli as of 1799, warned the Secretary of State that Muslims would never be completely accommodating of the United States' interests in the Mediterranean. These "Turks," as Ingraham referred to the

[29] Jonathan Cowdery, "Extracts from Journal of Surgeon Jonathan Cowdery, U.S. Navy," August 9, 1804, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 4:62.

[30] Ibid.

political leaders, were "unalterable enimis to all Christians wether at peace or war, not to be bound by Promises on writings, mony or the force arms must bring them to fear us, to Love us they never will."[31] But the "greatest Cruilitys," according to Ingraham, were the instances in which Christians were forced to "turn Turks," or convert to Islam. During his time in Tripoli, Ingraham had witnessed two Danes and nine Swedes who had agreed to renounce Christianity. Ingraham was greatly distressed by this turn of events and could only ask himself, "(W)hat will be the Consequence of our youth's in case we have 20 or 30 sail Capturd?"[32]

The controversy created by this issue of conversion also manifested itself in the captivity narrative of William Ray which he published in 1808. Thomas Prince, a seventeen-year old seaman from Rhode Island, had regrettably "metamorphosed from a Christian to a Turk."[33] In this instance, the commentary that Ray offered on Prince's circumstances was insignificant if not totally absent.

Yet Ray also encountered a Muslim Frenchman who could speak fairly fluent English. To this man, Ray devoted much more attention. Ray learned that the man had served under General Marquis de LaFayette in the American Revolution, participated in the French Revolution of the late 1780's, and marched under Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte to Egypt. He was wounded in battle and was subsequently abandoned at a local hospital. Only through the efforts of a hospitable Muslim man did the Frenchman survive. Despite this subtle rehashing of the "good Samaritan," however, Ray was still

---

[31] Joseph Ingraham to Timothy Pickering, September 26, 1799, in *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France*, ed. Dudley Knox, 4:232-233.

[32] Ibid., 233.

[33] William Ray, *The Horrors of Slavery, or The American Tars in Tripoli* (Troy, NY: Oliver Lyon, 1808) in *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives*, ed. Paul Baepler (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 201.

hesitant to admit that the Frenchman had converted to Islam of his own free will. Some other force had to be at work for a Christian abandon his faith. "While in a debilitated state both of body and mind, he was pursuaded by his benefactor, whose importunities it seemed ungrateful to resist, to embrace the religion of Mahomet." Although the Frenchman enjoyed wealth and a respectable position in society due to his recent conversion, Ray still believed wholeheartedly that he deeply lamented the decision. "He asked me a thousand questions concerning America, and seriously regretted his ever having left it, and of his transmutation of religion; but he still had hopes of making his escape."[34] Like many of his fellow Americans, Ray believed that conversion to Islam was lunacy and earnestly tried to explain such actions as shallow obligations or practical decisions.

Captivity Narratives: Historiography

Most Americans in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had little, if any, personal interaction with Muslims. As previously noted, most of what American Christians knew about the Islamic faith came from sermons and a popular literary genre known as the captivity narrative. The dominant theme throughout the modern historiography concerning these narratives and through many of the primary sources themselves is that the Islamic brand of slavery was not as harsh as Americans made it out to be, particularly in light of the parallel institution practiced in the American South.

Robert Allison, in describing the practice of slavery in the Barbary States, was careful to ensure that his readers never lost sight of the broader Atlantic context of the institution. Around 1800, there were approximately one million African-American slaves

[34] Ibid., 197-198.

in the United States compared to a mere total of seven hundred American captives in North Africa from 1785 to 1815. American slavery was noted for being brutal, racially-based, lifelong, and hereditary. Islamic slavery, on the other hand, was political and religious in nature. Enslavement was viewed as an effort to incorporate infidel strangers into Islamic society; it was "a way station between heathenism and fidelity."[35] In Allison's opinion, the captivity narratives published in the United States were constructed to inspire courage among Americans in the midst of non-existent, or at least highly exaggerated, trials. The captives viewed themselves as slaves and saw their imprisonment as a test of personal character, but the work required of them was generally not overbearing.[36]

Other historians, while agreeing with Allison's assessment of the genre, take his argument a step further by asserting that the captivity narrative was nothing more than American "propaganda for empire." Moulay Ali Bouânani cites two major ideological forces that compelled Americans to demonize Islam during the early national period: Puritanism and imperialism. The former, which the author refers to as the "breeding ground of racism," re-interpreted Christian scriptures in order to legitimize the conquest of Native Americans, Africans, and eventually the Barbary States.[37] Muslims, in contrast, are portrayed quite sympathetically in Bouânani's account. Upon being reduced to privateering after the Spanish Reconquista of the Iberian Peninsula, Muslims in North

[35] Allison, *The Crescent Obscured*, 109.

[36] Ibid., 107-109. Some Americans, abolitionists in particular, used comparisons between Islamic and American slavery to sway public opinion to their point-of-view. Muslims, who had been caricatured by Europeans for centuries, were rumored to have treated their slaves more humanely than plantation owners in the American South. Such a rhetorical style sought to shame Americans rather than praise the benevolence of Muslims.

[37] Moulay Ali Bouânani, "Propaganda for Empire: Barbary Captivity Literature in the US," in *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, vol. 7, no. 4 (December 2009): 399-400.

Africa were simply trying to survive. North African slavery was radically different from its American counterpart. The captivity narratives overly exaggerated the struggles of American prisoners to make the United States appear like an "empire of virtue." Ultimately, Bouânani argues that the "Orient was a necessary construct for a newly emergent nationhood."[38]

Paul Baepler, the author of a journal article entitled "White Slaves, African Masters," also views captivity narratives as imperialist propaganda. The popularity of these American accounts peaked in the early 1800s when most American captives were taken by the Barbary pirates. Unlike Bouânani, Baepler is willing to admit that white captivity was difficult at times; poor food, rodent infestations, unbearable heat, and harsh punishments were rampant. Yet Baepler is always careful to keep white captivity in proper perspective. For him, the truth of American experiences was often distorted to stir animosity towards the Muslims in North Africa. A growing curiosity towards empire-building, fueled by the "eventual subjugation of North Africa through narrative," caused captives to exaggerate the truth. Ironically, it had been the American prisoners, who were incapable of communicating with their captors, who became the unintelligible "barbarians."[39]

Even the primary source documents from this period often alluded to the fact that American captivity was perhaps not as brutal as one might expect. Returning once more to Captain William Bainbridge, readers find that shame was perhaps one of the most difficult tribulations that American sailors had to overcome after being captured. Captain Bainbridge sought solace through writing to his wife Susan back home in Perth Amboy,

[38] Ibid., 410.

[39] Baepler, "White Slaves, African Masters," 91-102.

New Jersey. William stated outright that his imprisonment was agreeable; "I could bear if ten times more severe." However, the prolonged absence from his wife coupled with the fact that he had failed his country by allowing his ship, the *U.S.S. Philadelphia*, to be captured caused William to suffer from severe mental and emotional unrest. "So maddened am I sometimes by the workings of my imagination, that I cannot refrain from exclaiming that it would have been a merciful dispensation of Providence if my head had been shot off by the enemy, while our vessel lay rolling on the rocks." Bainbridge would survive his captivity and was released at the end of the Tripolitan War. Again, William had found "generous friends" in prison to support him through such trials, but his loss of prestige far outweighed the tangible effects of imprisonment.[40]

James Leander Cathcart echoed similar sentiments in his letter to the Secretary of State James Madison. Instead of complaining about the physical conditions of captivity, Cathcart was gripped by pangs of personal shame and regret. After experiencing the first few months of imprisonment, Cathcart longed to have died in defense of the ship with all of the glory inherent in dying for one's country:

> How glorious it would have been to have perish'd with the Ship, but how apt are we all to prefer a precarious, nay an ignominious life of slavery to a glorious death which would transmit our names to posterity & have establish'd a national character which time could not efface; while humanity recoils at the idea of launching so many souls into eternity, every thing great glorious & patriotic dictates the measure, & our national honor & pride demanded the sacrifice.[41]

In reflecting on his past decisions, Cathcart had come to the conclusion that death was preferable to servitude, regardless of the spiritual consequences that action may have had.

---

[40] William Bainbridge to Sarah Bainbridge, November 1, 1803, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 3:178.

[41] James L. Cathcart to James Madison, December 15, 1803, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 3:272.

American officials, for their part, sought to ensure that their prisoners-of-war were treated humanely. Secretary of the Navy Robert Smith ordered his ships' commanders, including Captain Daniel McNeill of the *U.S.S. Boston*, to take care of their captives. While Muslims were to be treated fairly, Christian prisoners were given special consideration, especially if they had already served as slaves in North Africa. "You will be careful to select from them, such Christians as may be on board, whom you will treat kindly and land them when convenient on some Christian Shore, or if you should have occasion, you may accept their Services."[42]

In return for their kind treatment of Tripolitan captives, American naval commanders expected Tripoli's government to treat its American prisoners in a similar fashion. In an act of supreme humility completely uncharacteristic of his contemporaries, Captain Edward Preble conceded to the Prime Minister of Tripoli that God, the "almighty disposer of all sublunary events," had allowed the *U.S.S. Philadelphia* and its entire crew to be captured by the Islamic power. In this particular instance, God had not favored the Americans. Even with such an adverse interpretation of the workings of Providence, Preble warned the Tripolitan official that the American sailors under his supervision would never submit to any form of forced labor, seeing as such an act would be considered treasonous to the United States. Preble asked that the prisoners be treated as human beings, not slaves, in exchange for the benign treatment of the Muslim captives.[43]

---

[42] Robert Smith to Captain Daniel McNeill, October 1, 1801, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 1:588.

[43] Edward Preble to the Prime Minister of the Bashaw of Tripoli, January 4, 1804, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 3:312-313.

Captivity Narratives: Examples

While there were certainly instances in which American slavery was harsher than Islamic slavery or the nature of Islamic slavery was overly exaggerated for dramatic effect, there was legitimacy to claims that Muslims mistreated their captives. Jonathan Cowdery, a captured naval surgeon, described the horrors he witnessed as a captive in Tripoli. Fellow members of the *Philadelphia's* crew had been "chained to a cart loaded with stones which they were dragging through the town to repair the fortifications. They complain much of hunger, cold, hard labor, and the lash of the whip. I confess I never saw any thing that wounded my feelings equal to the sight of those poor fellows."[44]

As a skilled officer, Cowdery lived in much more comfortable conditions. Guarded by an armed Turkish escort, Cowdery was permitted to walk around the village. However, as Cowdery lived in relative comfort, his compatriots suffered. "Capt. Bainbridge's endeavors to relieve the wants of his crew are often countermanded by our new masters. Five of our countrymen have turned Turks, and five have paid their last debt to nature. Diarrhea and Dysentery have often appeared among our crew…"[45] The possibilities of disease, death, and religious conversion made Americans' experiences as prisoners-of-war times of great anxiety.

Captivity Narrative: John Foss

John Foss, another American sailor captured by the Barbary pirates, is another prime example of how harsh slavery in North Africa could be. On September 10, 1793, the brig *Polly* set sail for the Mediterranean, but it never reached its port of destination.

[44] Jonathan Cowdery to Dr. Mitchell, November 24, 1804, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 5:159.

[45] Ibid.

Algerian corsairs captured the ship nineteen days later. Of the nine crew members aboard the ship, only four survived Barbarian captivity, including John Foss. Four years after his capture, Foss was finally able to return home to Newburyport, Massachusetts, where he found a receptive audience for the journal which he penned during his captivity.[46]

Foss sought to legitimize his publishing endeavors by claiming that his journal was personal from the outset; the primary motivation according to Foss was "the writer's satisfaction." Strangely enough, the entire introduction to his journal served as a justification for his writing. At the foundation of his narrative lie two themes: the cruelties of Algerian Muslims and the innocence of American Christians.

> The tears of sympathy will flow from the humane and feeling, at the tale of the hardships and sufferings of their unfortunate fellow countrymen, who had the misfortune to fall into the hands of the Algerines – whose tenderest mercies towards the Christian captives, are the most extreme cruelties; and who are taught by the Religion of Mahomet (if that can be called a Religion which leads men to the commission of such horrid and bloody deeds) to persecute all its opposers.

Foss went on to belittle his captors as "piratical sea-rovers" who sought to inflict "many hellish tortures and punishments" on the captured Christians.[47]

In Foss' narrative, Muslims were frequently portrayed as brutal overlords lacking any sense of human compassion. One instance on which Foss placed substantial emphasis concerned the providential death of a taskmaster. Algerians often forced their slaves to dig along mountainsides for rocks used for building purposes. These boulders

---

[46] Paul Baepler, ed., *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 71-72. Notice that this book is different from the article already cited, although the titles of both works are similar.

[47] John Foss, *A Journal, Of the Captivity and Sufferings of John Foss; Several Years a Prisoner in Algiers: Together with Some Account of the Treatment of Christian Slaves when Sick: --And Observations on the Manners and Customs of the Algerines* (Newburyport, MA: A. March, 1798), in *White Slaves, African Masters*, ed. Paul Baepler, 73.

often weighed more than twenty tons apiece and were lugged for distances exceeding two miles. It is within this context that Foss introduced his readers to a taskmaster whom he dubbed the "most Tyrannical guardian." This man, a Muslim sherief, appeared to take great pleasure in punishing his Christian captives. In April 1795, the sherief had been beating some of the Christians when an exhausted American finally exclaimed, "God, grant you may die, the first time you offer to abuse another man." A few minutes later, as the taskmaster attempted to strike another slave, his swing missed its mark, and the sherief fell off the planks to his death. Foss unapologetically asserted the justice of the taskmaster's sudden demise. "Thus ended the days of a Godless wretch, apparently in a moment, swept away by the devout breath of a suffering Christian."[48]

This type of harsh treatment at the hands of the Muslim overlords was reinforced at great length throughout Foss' journal. Foss was particularly prone to recording the violent punishments inflicted on his fellow Christians. Missing the morning roll-calls could warrant savage beatings known as *bastinadoes*. Sleeping with a Muslim woman called for a beheading of the Christian slave and a forced drowning for the woman. If a slave was convicted of murdering a Muslim, he was thrown from the walls of the city while attached to iron hooks, resulting in an excruciatingly painful and slow death. Those who tried to escape their imprisonment were often nailed to the gallows until death. Minor crimes would result in the addition of a chain to the prisoner's leg and a large weight to be dragged around while performing one's daily routines. By comparison, the punishments for captured Muslims were considerably more lenient.[49]

[48] Ibid., 81.

[49] Ibid., 82-84. Foss describes the Bastinado as a painful punishment to endure. The culprit was laid facedown with his hands chained behind his back and legs bound with rope. Then, while soldiers held

Ultimately, this image of religious oppression contrasted with one of innocence and virtue when Foss discussed Christians from the United States. This spirit of American exceptionalism manifested itself in Foss' belief that the United States' government and citizenry served as idealistic templates for the rest of the world to emulate. "They (the 'merciless barbarians') viewed the caracter of Americans from this time in the most exalted light. They exclaimed, that 'Though we were slaves, we were gentlemen;' that 'the American people must be the best in the world to be so humane and generous to their countrymen in slavery.' The goodness of my country I shall never forget."[50] Foss' perceptions of Americans, after his experiences with the inhabitants of Algiers, harkened back to the stereotypes that preachers in the United States had been establishing for generations. Muslims were assumed to be prone to despotism, while Christians, particularly English and American Protestants, were "gentlemen" worthy of imitation.

Captivity Narrative: James Leander Cathcart

The four-year imprisonment that John Foss experienced was by no means the longest an American captive endured. James Cathcart, a future American Consul to the Barbary States, was a mariner aboard the *Maria* when it was captured by an Algerian vessel on July 25, 1785. Throughout his eleven-year captivity, Cathcart worked his way up the ranks of Christian slaves to the highest position a slave could occupy: the chief

---

down the head and legs, two men used large sticks to beat the prisoner's back. After receiving half of his punishment in this manner, the prisoner's ankles were chained to a pole which was held up by two men. The rest of the beatings were reserved for the soles of the feet. The prisoner was then expected to return immediately to work.

[50] Ibid., 95.

Christian secretary to the Algerian executive, the Dey. He was able to do this because of his conciliatory accommodation towards Islam.[51]

Cathcart did not sugarcoat the trials and sufferings that he bore at the hands of Muslim taskmasters. In 1793, he admitted that for eight years he had experienced "every indignity that a Mahomedan could invent, to render the life of a Christian captive truly and sentimentally miserable." Equally disturbing to Cathcart was the American government's perpetual unwillingness to intercede on behalf of its captured American citizens. The psychological torment that Cathcart endured was so intense that he questioned a principle that had so long been preached from the pulpits of America's churches: that the United States would always stand for liberty and combat the forces of "barbarous despotism."

> Have we sold our birth right? Are we excluded without a cause from the privileges enjoyed indiscriminately by the lowest class of our citizens? Was it not the calamities attending our country, that involved us in the misery we have so long experienced? Why then must we not be taken notice of? Why are we left the victims of arbitrary power and barbarous despotism, in a strange land far distant from all our connections, miserable exiles from the country for which we have fought, forgotten by our co[n]temporaries who formerly used to animate us in all our expedition with tales of liberty?[52]

While Cathcart's narrative shared many of the same themes as those advanced by Foss, the former was much more successful during the duration of his captivity because of his willingness to sacrifice the theological integrity of Christianity. This is evident in Cathcart's account of a conversation he had with a devout Muslim. One day during his captivity, Cathcart refused to stand up and surrender his seat when a Muslim man entered

---

[51] Baepler, ed., *White Slaves, African Masters,* 103.

[52] James Cathcart, *The Captives, Eleven Years a Prisoner in Algiers,* compiled by J.B. Newkirk (LaPorte, IN: Herald Print, 1899) in *White Slaves, African Masters*, ed. Paul Baepler, 141-142. J.B. Newkirk is the daughter of James Cathcart. It was not until 1899 that she was able to successfully compile her father's writings for publication purposes. She also organized a second book of Cathcart's writings entitled *Tripoli*. It was published by the same company in 1901.

the premises. Outraged, the Muslim called Cathcart a "dog without faith." Instinctively, Cathcart responded with a sense of indignation, all the while emphasizing the similarities between Christianity and Islam. "I do not know Mahomed as a prophet, but I believe him to have been a very great law-giver, who converted millions of Idolaters and induced them to worship the only true God as I do."[53] Cathcart then proceeded to humble the sherief in the presence of other Muslims by recounting the teachings of the Qur'an and important facts from Muhammad's life.

Even after various Muslims had mistaken Cathcart's identity as one of a clandestine misguided Muslim, the American sailor adamantly claimed that he had never given into the temptation to convert to Islam. The Algerian Dey himself had recognized the American's resilience when years earlier Cathcart had refused enticing offers in exchange for conversion: commanding a powerful warship, marrying a beautiful wife, owning an extravagant house, etc.[54] These enticements could not erase the sense of scandal that would have plagued such a conversion, yet because of the professional services he could render, and the sensitivity that he took when discussing religious matters, Cathcart advanced faster than any other Christian slave in Algiers. While Cathcart's servitude was bearable due in large part to his religious tact, some individuals such as surgeon Jonathan Cowdery were given preferential treatment solely based on their ranks or professional abilities.

[53] Ibid., 142-143.

[54] Ibid., 143.

Captivity Narrative: Jonathan Cowdery

The captivity narrative of Jonathan Cowdery, in contrast to those written by Foss and Cathcart, was relatively benign in nature. Cowdery, as previously noted, was a surgeon aboard the *U.S.S. Philadelphia* and was one of the crew members captured when the ship foundered on a reef near Tripoli. As a surgeon and officer, Cowdery experienced a relatively comfortable existence as a prisoner-of-war. He served as the personal physician for the Bashaw of Tripoli, effectively escaping the much more arduous tasks exacted upon non-commissioned American captives.[55]

In light of his humane treatment, Cowdery was relatively sympathetic towards his Muslim captors; a response that was not too popular in the genre of the captivity narrative. The major instance in which he discussed religion at great length was a fairly accurate exposition of the five pillars of Islam: conducting personal prayer five times a day in the direction of Mecca, fasting during the month of Ramadan, alms-giving, a pilgrimage to Mecca, and personal purity. Cowdery also alluded to four other significant Muslim beliefs: a Friday-based Sabbath, circumcision, and abstinence from the consumption of alcohol and swine.[56] In addition to this fairly even-handed treatment of Islam, Cowdery avoided the temptation to demonize his Muslim captors. In this manner, Cowdery was one of the few American Christians to discuss the inherent value in Islam's moral teachings.

---

[55] Baepler, ed., *White Slaves, African Masters*, 159-160.

[56] Jonathan Cowdery, *American Captives in Tripoli; or, Dr. Cowdery's Journal in Miniature. Kept During his Late Captivity in Tripoli.* 2nd ed. (Boston: Belcher and Armstrong, 1806), in *White Slaves, African Masters*, ed. Paul Baepler, 184-185. Cowdery was fairly accurate in his depiction of the Five Pillars of Islam. He was correct in mentioning the ritualistic prayer, fasting during Ramadan, alms-giving, and a holy pilgrimage. However, instead of personal purity, the fifth pillar rests on the belief that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet.

Captivity Narrative: William Ray

William Ray, another sailor who had served aboard the *U.S.S. Philadelphia*, experienced the rougher side of Islamic slavery. Unlike Cowdery, Ray was not an officer and was therefore subjected to hard manual labor. In fact, Ray actually wrote his account, *The Horrors of Slavery*, as a direct refutation of Dr. Cowdery's publication.

The aspect of Cowdery's narrative that Ray sought to correct the most was the relative comfort that American captives enjoyed at the hands of the Tripolitans. Ray's experience, along with that of most of the *Philadelphia's* crew, was characterized by suffering and anguish. On the one hand, the crew was forced to work as carpenters and human pack-mules. They carried provisions from the captured American frigate (gunpowder, food, etc.) back to Tripoli's fortifications and endured mocking, spitting, and brutal punishment. Meanwhile, the officers like Captain William Bainbridge and Surgeon Jonathan Cowdery enjoyed Barbarian hospitality. Ray was irate over his superiors' selfish indulgences, especially when the remainder of the crew had been abandoned and forced to "rely on the mercy of sanguinary barbarians."[57]

Conclusion

The narratives that have just been recounted highlight some of the major challenges that American Christians in the maritime world faced in their encounters with Muslims. The tradition of using Islam as a rhetorical tool essentially equated this religion with political and religious tyranny while exalting Protestant Christianity as the best hope for democracy, equality, and freedom. In this manner, maritime Christians reflected some of the dominant trends in society at large.

[57] Ray, *The Horrors of Slavery*, in Baepler, ed., *White Slaves, African Masters*, 194.

That being said, Americans who encountered Muslims on a face-to-face basis had to address situations completely atypical from the experiences of the average American. Christians in the Atlantic world were forced to walk a fine line in order to avoid the extremes of relativistic acceptance of Islam on the one hand and pure hatred towards Muslims on the other. Diplomats and political prisoners, whose positions rendered them dependent upon the benevolence of their Muslim contemporaries, tended to overlook the distinctions between Christianity and Islam while emphasizing shared beliefs about God and the Old Testament patriarchs. The writings of William Eaton and James Cathcart reflect this pragmatism. Other American Christians were far less accommodating, particularly for the radical enthusiasts of the faith, but most Americans were relatively tactful in their dealings with Muslims.

The captivity narratives that gained enormous popularity during the Barbary Wars expressed many of the fears and tensions that American Christians felt concerning Muslims. The ever-impending threat of denouncing Christ and "turning Turk," although not particularly common among the American captives, was still viewed by Christians as both a political and religious betrayal. Captivity itself was enough to cause unfathomable shame, although the conditions in which American prisoners lived were determined by their rank and abilities. Non-commissioned American sailors often succumbed to the demands of brutal taskmasters and endured despicable living conditions while their superiors enjoyed far more comfortable circumstances.

The interactions between American Christians and the Muslims of the North African Barbary States were complex to say the least. At a time in which the United States was struggling to solidify its place in the Atlantic maritime world, differences in

religious beliefs further compounded the mounting problems faced by the young nation. Wars waged with philosophies, words, and weapons allowed the United States to confront and ultimately overcome its Islamic foes, although Christianity, as practiced by American politicians and mariners, often fell short of its lofty ideals in Americans' treatments of others.

The following chapter will examine another area in which American Christians struggled to maintain the purity of their faith. By practicing providentialism, the long-held tradition of interpreting God's interactions with his created order, Americans simultaneously reinforced and undermined the principles of Christianity through a syncretic faith unique to maritime culture.

CHAPTER THREE

American Providentialism at Sea

Introduction

The dawning of a new day brought forth a sense of foreboding as American Master Commandant Thomas Macdonough scanned the horizon for unfriendly British sails. It had been over two years since the United States had initiated its second war against Great Britain, but as the hostilities progressed, the prospects of an American victory looked bleak indeed. Approximately ten thousand British regulars had assembled along the Canadian border in preparation for an invasion of the New England states. The only obstacle that could possibly hinder British success was a small American fleet that had been constructed for the sole purpose of defending Lake Champlain, the waterway by which Britain's military aspirations could be achieved.[1]

The conflict that ensued on the day of September 11, 1814, would prove to be one of the most decisive naval engagements of the War of 1812. Within minutes, the carnage of battle was unleashed as American and British fleets executed their respective battle plans. Macdonough, the American naval commander, was respected among his peers as a man of strong Christian conviction. As the battle drew nigh, Macdonough called together his officers and men aboard his flagship, the corvette *Saratoga*, opened his copy of the Episcopalian *Book of Common Prayer*, and proceeded to lead those present in a

[1] Lake Champlain forms a portion of the northern border between New York and Vermont.

moment of solemn supplication to God. According to eyewitness accounts, he reportedly read this prayer:

> O Most powerful and Glorious Lord God, the Lord of hosts, that rulest and commandest all things; thou sittest in thy throne judging right: And therefore we make our address to thy Divine Majesty, in this our necessity, that thou wouldest take the cause into thine own hand, and judge between us and our enemies. Stir up thy strength, O Lord, and come and help us; for thou givest not always the battle to the strong, but canst save by many or by few. O let not our sins now cry against us for vengeance; but hear us thy poor servants begging mercy, and imploring thy help, and that thou wouldest be a defence unto us against the face of the enemy: Make it appear that thou are our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.[2]

When the smoke of the last cannonades had cleared, the American fleet emerged victorious. Nearby, the town of Plattsburgh, New York, organized a dinner to celebrate the critical American victory that had effectively foiled any hopes the British leadership had of dividing New England from the Mid-Atlantic and the Southern states. The Americans' triumph had also given the national government more bargaining power as both sides earnestly sought an end to the war. For those who fought in the battle, such politics was drowned out by the brilliant strategy and piety of Thomas Macdonough. A toast was raised in honor of the American commander whose spiritual devotion had shone brightly even during the grimmest of circumstances. "The pious and brave Macdonough—the professor of the religion of the Redeemer—preparing for action, he called on God, who forsook him not in the hour of danger: may he not be forgotten by his country."[3] The effectiveness of Macdonough's prayer, whether coincidental or not, impresssed the commander's supporters.

---

[2] Charles E. Brodine, Jr., Michael J. Crawford, and Christine F. Hughes, *Against All Odds: U.S. Sailors in the War of 1812* (Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 2004), 61.

[3] Ibid., 60.

Macdonough, in accordance with the humility for which his subordinates came to revere him, bestowed all of the glory stemming from the Americans' triumph to the God whom he had prayed to for deliverance. Less than twenty-four hours after the engagement, Macdonough composed a personal dispatch to Secretary of the Navy William Jones to inform him of the events that had transpired. The text amounted to one short but potent statement. "Sir," Macdonough wrote, "The Almighty has been pleased to grant us a signal victory on lake Champlain, in the capture of one frigate, one brig, and two sloops of war of the enemy."[4] The one who reads this report carelessly runs the risk of overlooking a significant theological claim: Macdonough believed that God had orchestrated the outcome of the battle, favoring the Americans rather than their British foes.

Conducting a corporate prayer prior to a battle and attributing a military victory to the workings of God were not unusual practices in the early national period of the United States. As a matter of fact, for thousands of years, adherents of many faiths had engaged in these attempts to interpret and to perhaps even influence a deity's involvement in human affairs. Providentialism, as defined by historian Nicholas Guyatt, is "the belief that God controls everything that happens on earth."[5] Such a conviction can manifest itself in a variety of ways. For instance, a sailor might attribute his survival of a violent skirmish or the sustainment of his good health to God's grace. Others, like Thomas

[4] Thomas Macdonough, *Letter from the Secretary of the Navy to the Chairman of the Naval Committee, Transmitting Sundry Documents from Captain Macdonough Relating to the Capture of the British Fleet on Lake Champlain* (Washington, D.C.: Roger Chew Weightman, 1814), 4.

[5] Nicholas Guyatt, *Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607-1876* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 5. In this book, Guyatt attempts to trace the development of American exceptionalism, the idea that God has chosen the United States as his instrument to usher in the millennial reign of Christ. Providentialism was an extremely dynamic concept, and although it had been influential in the creation of the United States, it was not a uniquely American phenomenon. Americans had simply altered a pre-existing British tradition when the move towards independence had begun.

Macdonough, might view a particular outcome as God-ordained. All of a sudden, random and destructive acts of nature possess the potential to bear spiritual implications. Even the very nation-state itself might serve as a vehicle through which Providence could choose to operate.

Providentialism had obvious benefits for those who employed it and had plenty of biblical support for its application. As Guyatt claimed in his monograph entitled *Providence and the Invention of the United States*, successful use of providential language could help forge a communal identity among diverse groups of people. Its ability to help create a new nation was a significant achievement to say the least. Yet, the primary impetus behind providentialism was not social cohesion; rather, it was simply the assertion of one of Christianity's most foundational tenets which recognized the sovereignty of God over humanity, nature, and all the earth. This belief, in turn, encouraged individual Christians to live moral lives knowing that obedience would translate to God's favor and blessing, while sin and disobedience would elicit divine judgment and punishment.[6]

Christianity was, without a doubt, a significant influence during the Revolutionary era, but historians are starkly divided concerning the overall vitality of American Christianity and how influential it really was in regards to daily living. In relation to this thesis, Marcus Rediker challenges the notion that Christians, particularly those living in the maritime world, were orthodox in their beliefs and traditions. As one of the leading scholars concerning life in the Atlantic world during the seventeenth and eighteenth

[6] American religious historian John Fea affirms that a providential view of American history and those who practice it operate out of a strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God. "There are no coincidences. Nothing that has happened in the past can be explained by random chance. God has intervened in human history in miraculous ways in order to accomplish his purposes." See John Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 60.

centuries, Rediker has argued that the average sailor was typically irreligious and indulged in a syncretic faith; an amalgamation of paganism, superstition, magic, Christianity, and skepticism.[7] As an historian operating from of a distinctly Marxist worldview, Rediker sees a sharp divide between the spirituality of the average sailor in comparison to the bourgeois of society or even the officers who strove to keep their crews in line. For Rediker, a man's economic standing plays a major role in determining his beliefs about providentialism, and in a larger sense, religion in general.

While there is merit to be found in Rediker's arguments, particularly in light of the overwhelming evidence he procured through primary source materials, by viewing the maritime world through the eyes of Marxism and class struggle, Rediker yearns to see an unambiguous dichotomy between the officers of a ship and their subordinates as well as one between America's politicians and its plebeians. There are two primary avenues by which one can argue against his claims. By examining the primary source documents written by and about ordinary seamen, one can find enough evidence to argue that Christianity was a far greater influence on the average sailor's view of Providence than other factors such as luck, magic, superstition, paganism, etc. This particular chapter does not seek to disprove this aspect of Rediker's argument. In fact, the conclusions drawn affirm Rediker's evaluation of maritime culture. With the amount of evidence that he produces and the scarcity of sources pertaining to noncommissioned mariners, it is difficult if not nearly impossible to make such a claim.

The second way to attack Rediker's points, which this chapter tries to do, is to extend Rediker's analysis of a syncretic faith to include the officers and bourgeois of the

[7] Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 153.

American maritime world. Rediker, as previously noted, wants to create a dichotomy that pits the Christian officers against their irreligious crews. By examining the general religious beliefs of this class and coming to similar conclusions that Rediker did concerning the ordinary sailors, this chapter attempts to, at the very least, question Rediker's methodology.

The writings and rituals of American diplomats and naval officers in the early national period serve as unique case studies for the student of history seeking to understand the general state of American Christianity, particularly concerning this issue of providentialism. Like generations of Americans and Britons before them, these men functioned out of a worldview in which God fulfilled many roles that lent themselves to providential interpretations: the king over all of creation, an unyielding protector of his people, a fierce warrior, and a great physician. Alongside these traditional beliefs about God, however, distinct circumstances that existed exclusively in the maritime world often led to spiritual compromises that seriously undermined the integrity of the Christian faith. Paganism, superstition, and religiously-inclusive politics all impacted the belief systems of the American "bourgeois," and the result, more often than not, was the creation of a syncretic hybrid that openly challenged while it simultaneously reinforced some of traditional Christianity's fundamental claims.

Traditional Christian Beliefs

The United States during the Revolutionary era was anything but religiously static. The movement towards banning a national denomination and the endeavor to secure religious liberty for all individuals stemmed directly from the efforts of persecuted minorities such as the Baptists, Deists, Quakers, and Roman Catholics. The United

States, though comprised primarily of citizens who would have identified themselves as Protestants, could hardly claim to be a Christian nation. It was not a theocratic society that fashioned its laws solely on the influences of Christianity nor did its initial presidential administrations seek to claim that it was a Christian nation when dealing with foreign powers.[8] Yet whatever can be said of the religious pluralism found throughout the American public, particularly among those living in the maritime world, there were fundamental beliefs about Divine Providence derived from the Judeo-Christian tradition that manifested themselves over and over again in the actions and writings of American sailors.

Sovereignty of God

The case of Captain William Bainbridge is an excellent example of how a sailor could find solace in God's sovereignty even in the midst of severe suffering. Following the Treaty of Paris of 1783 in which Great Britain recognized the United States as an independent nation, American merchant vessels lost the protection that had been guaranteed by the might of the British Royal Navy. Pirates from the Barbary States of Morocco, Tripoli, Tunis, and Algiers harassed American vessels in the Atlantic, forcing American concessions in the forms of ransom and annual tribute.[9]

The political leaders of Tripoli, upon discovering that they were receiving significantly less tribute than their neighbors to the west, declared war on the United States in 1801. William Bainbridge took command of one of the most powerful ships

[8] For a more extensive exposition of this issue, see Mark A. Noll, Nathan O. Hatch, and George M. Marsden, *The Search for Christian America* (Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard, 1989).

[9] L. Carl Brown, "The United States and the Maghrib," in *Middle East Journal*, vol. 30, no. 3 (Summer 1976), 276-277.

constructed by the United States at the time, the *U.S.S. Philadelphia*. With orders to blockade the ports of Tripoli, Bainbridge quickly suffered one of America's greatest defeats in the Tripolitan War. The *Philadelphia* ran aground on October 31, 1803. Unable to break free from the reef with Tripolitan gunboats moving in to surround the Americans, Bainbridge surrendered the new warship and its crew comprised of over three hundred men.

Dejected in spirit and rejected by their government, Bainbridge and his crewmen spent much of the war in Tripoli as political prisoners. The only sense of comfort and hope that American officials offered to the imprisoned American commander was the ability of Divine Providence to accomplish God's intended designs. Tobias Lear, the United States Consul General to Algiers, took charge of the negotiations for the American prisoners' releases. In writing to Bainbridge, Lear assured him that the political leader of Tripoli, the Bashaw, would eventually understand that peace with the United States was in Tripoli's best interests. America, for its part, desperately sought amity in the Mediterranean but would not accept it on "unjust terms." Like many of his contemporaries, Lear believed that the United States held a unique position in the new world order that resulted from the American Revolution. "We are a Nation different from all others, we are now powerfull, if we chuse to exert our strength; and we are rising rapidly to a great pitch of importance, while most other nations, which are known here, are at their full growth, or on the decline."[10]

In the end, however, diplomatic pressure from the United States proved insufficient in securing the immediate release of Captain Bainbridge and his crew. Lear

[10] Tobias Lear to William Bainbridge, August 28, 1804, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1939-1944), 4:471-472.

could only offer his condolences that imprisonment might serve to refine the Americans' collective moral character. The crew's captivity, according to Lear, had "excited the Commisseration of our Countrymen, and your [Bainbridge's] fortitude will be a Subject of their admiration, you will come out like gold tried in the fire, and I trust that Providence will yet smile upon you and place you among the favorite Sons of America."[11] Even if the Americans were ultimately condemned to prolonged captivity or even death, Lear asserted that Providence would bless Bainbridge and his men indirectly through renown and glory.

Bainbridge, for his part, did not agree with Lear's optimistic assessment of the American sailors' prospective futures. Captain Bainbridge, though comfortable enough in the confines of his Tripolitan prison, was overcome by feelings of shame and regret. In a letter to his wife Susan, William attempted to describe the great turmoil stirring within him. "So maddened am I sometimes by the workings of my imagination, that I cannot refrain from exclaiming that it would have been a merciful dispensation of Providence if my head had been shot off by the enemy, while our vessel lay rolling on the rocks."[12] For Bainbridge, the Almighty would have exercised his sovereignty most mercifully by ending the captain's existence, thus sparing him of a life of subjugation and dishonor.

Bainbridge's colleague, Captain Edward Preble, could do little to assuage William's turmoil. Preble concluded that the collective fate of Bainbridge and his crew ultimately rested in the hands of God, but he vowed to continue fighting the enemy with

[11] Ibid.

[12] William Bainbridge to Sarah Bainbridge, November 1, 1803, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 3:178.

the ultimate hope of liberating his fellow countrymen. A few months after the *U.S.S. Philadelphia* had been captured, Preble wrote to Captain Bainbridge, "May the Almighty disposer of all events aid me in my plans and operations for the good of my Country and may you be liberated by them…"[13] In the midst of great trials, including political captivity, American Christians, regardless of how hopeless the situation appeared to be, sought solace in the omnipotence of their sovereign God. As for Bainbridge and his crew, they were released when the war ended.

God of Nature

The first few chapters of Genesis recount the creation story and the various processes by which God crafted the heavens and the earth. Since that time, according to the Judeo-Christian tradition, God has been active in changing weather patterns, defying the laws of nature, and performing miracles through his created works in order to carry out his intentions for humanity. The Christian scriptures, particularly the Old Testament, are filled with narratives in which the divine intervenes through natural means: a global flood as a punishment for humanity's wickedness, the ten plagues launched against the Israelites' Egyptian masters, the parting of the Red Sea, and the giant fish sent to swallow (thereby rescuing) the prophet Jonah during a violent storm.[14] These are but a few of the examples of stories that Christian sailors would have known by heart and formulated their beliefs upon.

[13] Edward Preble to William Bainbridge, January 23, 1804, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 3:353.

[14] For complete accounts of these biblical stories, see Genesis 6:1-8:22, Exodus 7:14-11:10, Exodus 13:17-14:31, and Jonah 1:1-17 respectively.

In the early years of the American republic, some of the most influential "Founding Fathers," including Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, were not orthodox Christians; rather, they followed an "Enlightened" religion known as Deism. Rejecting basic Christian doctrines such as the Trinity and the divinity of Christ, Deists accepted the premise of one rational god, Nature's God. This deity, much like its Christian counterpart, had created the world as well as the laws by which nature functioned. After the creation process was complete, however, Nature's God withdrew from the affairs of the world. Like a Swiss clockmaker who winds a clock and then allows it to function on its own, Nature's God forsook the affairs of men, thereby making providentialism a moot concept.[15]

While Deism found substantial roots in the circles of America's educated elite, particularly among its first generation of politicians, the traditional Christian belief that God intervened through nature continued to play a prominent role in the lives of ordinary Americans, including sailors. Many of these men, confronted with the terrifying, unpredictable nature of the sea, wanted to believe that a benevolent power was in control of their circumstances and was fighting for their well-being. Captain Thomas Willson, commander of the brig *Essequebo Packet*, is an excellent example of someone who believed in this type of natural providentialism.

In the year 1799, the United States was in the midst of an undeclared naval war with France. Much like the War of 1812, the Quasi-War with France was an effort by the United States to secure its neutrality rights and to end France's practices of seizing American merchant vessels and impressing her sailors. Within this context of warfare,

[15] Richard T. Hughes, *Myths America Lives By* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 48-50. It is important to note that while Jefferson and Franklin are often described as Deists, they, unlike some of their peers, did express belief in Providence's ability to intervene in the world from time to time.

Willson found himself in need of a miracle. On January 30, 1799, a French warship engaged in hot pursuit of the *Essequebo Packet*. The American captain, vastly outgunned by his French adversary, prepared to surrender his vessel, but a British officer onboard realized that a heavy squall appeared to be heading towards the two ships and encouraged the captain to see how such weather might affect their circumstances. Willson, apprehensive about the amount of time he had left until the French vessel would catch the Americans, resigned his fate to Providence. He hoped, above all else, that Providence would fight the battle that seemed inevitable.

What happened next raised mixed emotions within Captain Willson. "The squall arose as it were in an instant, which took her [the French ship], and she finally upset, and every soul on board perished. I made use of every exertion to save the crew, but all ineffectual. I then made the best of my way into port and glad to think we had so narrowly escaped the *paws* of a pirate! but sorry at the loss of so many lives."[16] In the eyes of Captain Thomas Willson, God in his Providence had spared the Americans through the forces of nature.

The Great Physician

While Christians have often emphasized the omnipotence and transcendence of God as the creator of the universe, he has also been characterized as a personal deity who cares intimately for the physical well-being of his people. Biblical stories recount healings from all types of ailments: leprosy, blindness, demon-possession, and even death itself. A letter written by Captain Richard O'Brien exemplifies this belief that

[16] Thomas Willson, "Encounter of Brig *Essequebo Packet*, Captain Thomas Willson, with French Picaroon, to Windward of Martinico," January 30, 1799, in *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France*, ed. Dudley Knox (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1935-1938), 2:295.

Providence would willingly intervene in the health of American Christians. O'Brien and his crew had been taken prisoner by Algerian pirates in 1785. As of April 1787, these sailors were still in Algiers living as political slaves. Their experiences, while not as harsh as those of their African-American counterparts, still caused significant suffering. Diseases, particularly the bubonic plague, claimed numerous lives in the cramped Algerian prison cells. Yet even in the midst of such trials, O'Brien saw God's healing hand at work. "One of my crew is dead and another after having the pest 14 days with two large buboes on him it has pleased God that he should recover."[17] For some fortunate souls, Providence stepped in to play a healing role.

Even in the midst of great personal tragedy, when God chose not to heal the afflicted, Christian sailors often reacted with a sense of peace in the assurance that God was sovereign and had a higher purpose to fulfill. Seth Harding, a veteran of the Revolutionary War who later became a prominent merchant, served as captain of the brig *Cato*. On November 29, 1784, Harding regrettably reported to his wife back home that their twelve-year old daughter, who had accompanied Captain Harding on his voyage to the West Indies, had become ill, contracted a fever, and died a few days later. The sorrow that poured forth from his heart was palpable. "O my dear wife my hart Is Broke but my dear wife god has takeen our dear Child from us and taken hur hom to him self for one of his dear Children…" Even in the midst of her own affliction, the daughter had comforted her father about the assuredness of her spiritual destination. Harding, though obviously grieving about what had transpired, ended his letter with a short benediction for the sakes of both himself and his wife. "Let us now Com together O god of infinite

[17] Richard O'Brien to unknown, April 28, 1787, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 1:15.

goodness let us Live to god let us die in peace let us be happy hear and hear after…"[18] When Providence miraculously intervened, as in the case of Richard O'Brien's fellow crewman, Christians believed that death itself could be overcome. Yet even in those circumstances when Providence refrained from active involvement, Christians could still find comfort in their faith.

The Great Protector

The Christians' active God cared not only for the healing of individuals but also the protection of them through chaotic battles or long and dangerous journeys. Sailing Master William V. Taylor was a mariner who served under Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry during the War of 1812. Perry became a national war hero after leading American naval forces in a crucial victory over the British in the Battle of Lake Erie (1813). After the fighting had ceased, William Taylor wrote to his wife Abby, giving credit to God for both the American victory and for Taylor's personal safety. While the letter alluded to the fact that Taylor was happy just to be alive, the significance of an American triumph in the face of overwhelming odds permeated Taylor's account. "My prayers were for you & my little children—God be praised that I was spared, to take care of you all—may I never lose that confidence which I placed in him on that day it animated me to exertion.—Heaven bless you The British were 10 guns & 200 men superior to us."[19] For Taylor, it was natural to assume that surviving a battle had just as much to do with the designs of Providence as it did with luck, chance, or skill on behalf of the Americans.

[18] James L. Howard, *Seth Harding: Mariner* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), 166-167.

[19] William Taylor to Abby Taylor, September 15, 1813, in *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, ed. William S. Dudley (Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1985-2002), 2:559.

"God of Battles"

One of the most popular applications of providentialism, in addition to the forms already discussed, flowed directly from the notion of a national covenant found in the Old Testament. According to the Judeo-Christian tradition, God had chosen the peoples of Israel as the vehicle through which he would make himself known to the rest of the world. If the Israelites obeyed his commandments, God would help them prevail against their enemies, even in the face of overwhelming odds. Throughout the Old Testament, the Israelites were reminded that God himself would fight their battles. In Deuteronomy 3:22, Moses, the figure who had led the Israelites out of their bondage in Egypt, encouraged his successor Joshua with this promise: "Do not be afraid of them [the Canaanites inhabiting the Promised Land]; the Lord your God himself will fight for you."

This tradition has flourished throughout the course of human history, beyond the American Revolution, and even into the modern era. In the earliest American naval victories, patriots were willing to attribute the results of various battles to God's Divine Providence. General George Washington, who was one of the first Americans to truly understand the necessity for a Continental Navy following the siege of Boston in 1775, was one of the strongest proponents of providentialism during the Revolutionary War. On November 29, 1775, when Captain John Manley and the *Lee* captured *H.M.S. Nancy* based solely upon the element of surprise, Washington's reaction was filled with elation and humility. "We must be thankful, as I truly am, for this instance of Divine favour."[20]

Regardless of whether their enemies were Protestant, Catholic, or Muslim, the American people had subconsciously adopted John Winthrop's Puritan ideas concerning

[20] M. Hill Goodspeed, *U.S. Navy A Complete History* (Hong Kong: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, Inc., 2003), 15.

a "New Israel" and believed wholeheartedly that God was going to fight on behalf of the United States. On July 8, 1804, Captain William Bainbridge, who was still a prisoner in Tripoli, wrote to his friend Captain Edward Preble who was actively trying to liberate the American captives. Ensuring that the contents of his communications were secure by composing his letters in lime juice, Bainbridge informed his peer of the base conditions American prisoners had to endure and the contentious divisions that were building among Tripolitan officials. Hoping desperately that he could have the opportunity to fight against his captors, Bainbridge felt no qualms about affirming that God was on the Americans' side as the captain prayed for the destruction of Tripoli. He encouraged Preble to launch his attack on the city, finding his hope for victory in both Providence and the American military:

> I hope to God that you will be enabled to reduce this place; but don't you think that ships boats would answer better than Gun boats? they would be more wieldy for attack in the Harbour which must be sudden & furious—I build my hopes on the effects of Bomb Vessells—I wish to God our Country would send troops to take the place—Pray inform me what effect the loss of the Frigate *Philadelphia* had in America. May prayers attend you for Success, on account of our liberation & from yourself & squadron—Cursed fate! which deprives me from sharing the danger & glory…[21]

There were also instances during the War of 1812 in which American commanders believed wholeheartedly that God had favored them over their British, though still Protestant, opponents. It was on June 18, 1812, that Congress declared war against Great Britain. Four days later, Secretary of the Navy Paul Hamilton informed Commodore John Rodgers that he was to protect incoming American merchant vessels at all cost, accompanying them into American harbors if necessary. Along with the merits of Rodgers's own moral strengths, Hamilton assumed that God would be with the

[21] William Bainbridge to Edward Preble, July 8, 1804, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 4:259.

American commander if an engagement was forthcoming. As an encouragement to his subordinate, Hamilton blessed him with a benediction. "Go forth then, under the assurance that in your valor & discretion every confidence is placed; & may the God of battles be with you, & with all our beloved Countrymen."[22]

A ship's commander, such as Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, was just as prone to acknowledge God's hand in battle as his subordinates like Perry's Sailing Master William Taylor. On September 10, 1813, following the Battle of Lake Erie in which nine makeshift American ships defeated six heavily-armed British vessels, Perry relayed a dispatch to Secretary of the Navy William Jones describing the American victory. Once again, for Christian officers, such an unlikely outcome was only made possible with the intervention of Providence. Captain Perry, who was soon to be promoted to Commodore, wrote, "It has pleased the Almighty to give to the arms of the United States a signal victory over their enemies on this Lake."[23] It was but one year and one day later that Thomas Macdonough submitted his own report, remarkably similar to Perry's, concerning the Americans' victory at the Battle of Lake Champlain.

Non-Christian Influences

As one can see, there were plenty of examples among American, bourgeois Christians, officers and diplomats in particular, who espoused beliefs about God and his Providence that aligned reasonably well with the dominant trends in the Judeo-Christian tradition. This serves as an affirmation of Rediker's analysis. However, the presence of

[22] Paul Hamilton to John Rodgers, June 22, 1812, in *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, ed. William S. Dudley, 1:148-149.

[23] Oliver H. Perry to William Jones, September 10, 1813, in *The Naval War of 1812*, ed. William S. Dudley, 2:554.

orthodoxy does not necessarily mean that these Americans were orthodox in *all* of their beliefs. In fact, there were many instances in which maritime Christians were faced with difficult challenges to their faith.

Tattoos

Normally, tattoos would have been taboo for American Christians in the early national period. In the book of Leviticus, which established many of the purification laws for the Israelites, God had forbidden his followers from marking themselves as the inhabitants of other nations had done.[24] Yet tattoos among America's sailors had become commonplace, a unifying and identifiable aspect of maritime culture. Ironically, many of the most popular tattoos were often religious in nature. After examining the naval records of Philadelphia from 1798 to 1816, historian Simon Newman concluded that roughly 9% of the 500 tattoos he had classified were religious symbols. The cross of Christ and a crucifix were the most recurring images, particularly among Roman Catholics. In a sense, tattoos had become religious talismans among ordinary sailors, serving as reminders that Providence was watching over them. "For seamen, the emblem served as both a badge of their trade and an expression of hope for safety and good fortune."[25] Tattoos, with all the tensions surrounding Old Testament prohibitions of such markings, had become a means through which Christians could express their faith in God's Providence.

[24] Leviticus 19:28 (NIV) states, "Do not cut your bodies or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the Lord."

[25] Simon P. Newman, *Embodied History: The Lives of the Poor in Early Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 118. Tattoos were also used to denote the sailors' patriotism. Etchings of eagles, flags, and the year "1776" bore witness to the individual's love of country and the widespread Anglophobia that was developing among American sailors due to the British practice of impressment.

Theological Compromise

The Old Testament, including its prohibition of tattoos, holds significant influence in the world's largest monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Yet whatever similarities there might be between the gods of these three religions, each group, particularly the Christians, has emphasized the exclusivity of their faith. John 14:6, in effect, allows no leeway for the worship of other gods and no other means by which an individual could worship the creator.[26] Christianity was, from its earliest beginnings, an exclusive faith in that regard. American Christians serving in the maritime world, though they believed many of Christianity's traditional theological tenets, often diluted this principle in an effort to alleviate political tensions and to promote trade with peoples of a different faith.

The willingness of Americans to compromise on theological issues was an important development, for it was necessary in the movement towards independence. During the Revolutionary War, British American colonists from all parts of the religious spectrum; Deists, Congregationalists, Quakers, evangelicals, Catholics, and Jews; united around generic religious principles by emphasizing beliefs most of American society shared such as the ban on a national denomination, equality by a common creation, the threat of human sinfulness, the need for public virtue, and national providentialism.[27] This, in effect, created a new American civil religion, aspects of which continue to the present-day. This marriage of Christianity to the political ideologies of the United States

[26] John 14:6 (NIV) states, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

[27] Thomas S. Kidd, *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 5.

is viewed by some Christian historians as problematic if not idolatrous, weakening the radical teachings of Christianity while sanctifying the less-than-virtuous actions of the nation-state.[28]

This issue of religious compromise became prominent once again in the United States' dealings with the predominantly Islamic Barbary States of North Africa. American Christians; specifically politicians, ambassadors, and military officers; often downplayed the importance of their faith or claimed that there was little theological distinction between Christianity and Islam to achieve their economic and political goals. President John Adams and his contemporaries in the national government are prime examples. Adams, who had grown up in a Congregationalist home in Massachusetts, became more skeptical of Christian doctrines such as the Trinity and predestination as he grew older.[29] He eventually attended the Unitarian Church, because it resonated with his personal convictions about the divine. However, as the chief executive of the United States, Adams and the leaders of Congress resorted to pragmatism when dealing with issues of religion. In an oft-quoted treaty with Tripoli ratified by the U.S. Senate on June 10, 1797, the United States affirmed that it was a religiously neutral entity, explicitly denying any Christian origins for the sake of making peace with the Islamic regency.[30]

---

[28] George M. Marsden, "The American Revolution," in *The Wars of America: Christian Views*, edited by Ronald A. Wells (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1991), 30. For more on Christian Republicanism, see Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 73-92.

[29] Matthew L. Harris and Thomas S. Kidd, eds., *The Founding Fathers and the Debate over Religion in Revolutionary America: A History in Documents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 162.

[30] "Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the United States of America and the Bey and Subjects of Tripoli of Barbary," in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 1:178. This block quote constitutes Article 11 of the peace treaty signed between Tripoli and the United States.

In other situations, when religious language could bolster his standing with foreign leaders, Adams willingly used generic and inclusive theological statements. In January 1800, as the days of his administration drew to a close, Adams shared with the Bey of Tunis his hopes that "Almighty God would cause to reign between our respective nations, a peace firm & durable."[31] Like most chief executives prior to the War of 1812, Adams was extremely committed to establishing tranquility in the Mediterranean so that American trade would profit. To do so, Adams asserted that God in his Providence desired cooperation among peoples of different faiths.

As was the case with John Adams, it was also common for American ambassadors to use generic religious benedictions about the workings of Providence in closing their correspondence with Muslims. David Humphreys, the American minister to Portugal during the mid-1790s, demonstrated this tactic when composing multiple letters to the Emperor of Morocco, Muley Soliman. On May 21, 1795, Humphreys informed Emperor Soliman that he hoped "God Almighty preserve the precious life of your Imperial Majesty, and crown it with health, happiness & glory to the latest period."[32] Nineteen months later, on November 30, 1796, Humphreys once again exchanged letters with Emperor Soliman, ending with another illustrious benediction. "I pray Almighty God to have your precious life in his holy keeping, and to crown it with length of days, felicity & glory."[33] By focusing on the Providence of God rather than using specifically

[31] John Adams to the Bey of Tunis, January 15, 1800, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 1:344.

[32] David Humphreys to Muley Soliman, May 21, 1795, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 1:102.

[33] David Humphreys to Muley Soliman, November 30, 1796, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 1:182.

Christian language, Humphreys and other Americans were able to conduct civil and somewhat successful diplomatic relations with non-Christian leaders.

Meaningless Clichés

While some American Christians attempted to downplay the theological differences between the Christianity and other religions, other Americans used God's name in a flippant manner. Following the capture of the *U.S.S. Essex*, a warship that had won great renown for its successful raids against British whaling ships in the Pacific Ocean during the War of 1812, Americans still considered its Captain David Porter to be a war hero who would continue to strike fear in the hearts of the British. In reaction to some of the atrocities committed by British soldiers during the land war, some American editorials welcomed Porter's retribution more than they did the intervention of Providence. "Gracious God! grant that the hour may soon arrive when Porter shall chastise these monsters for their savage cruelty."[34] Although Providence was traditionally the force by which justice was to be served, in this instance, Porter had become the judge and executioner.

While some Americans in the maritime world, including Thomas Macdonough and Oliver Hazard Perry, attributed their nation's military victories to God's Providence, others emphasized the individual or collective strength of human beings instead. Captain James Barron of the *U.S.S. Chesapeake* wrote to Secretary of the Navy William Jones on July 22, 1813, requesting the command of a warship. Barron had been the captain of the *Chesapeake* during a shameful debacle in 1807 in which the American commander

[34] "Editorial on the Loss of the *Essex* from *The Columbian*," in *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, ed. Michael J. Crawford (Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1985-2002), 3:762.

allowed a British warship to search the vessel for deserters. Six years later, Barron was just as confident as ever. He ended his correspondence with a short faux prayer. Lacking any particular spiritual focus, Barron voiced his request that "the navy may be cherished and protected by the nation and guided by nautical wisdom" rather than referencing any trust in Divine Providence.[35]

Hollow clichés that seemed to allude to God's Providence but were actually saying something else entirely were not uncommon. In April 1813, Captain John Sinclair of the privateer *General Armstrong* claimed that his crew had conducted a mutiny against him. In a letter spelling out the crew's complaints, it became apparent that for want of food, the crew was close to the point of starvation. After presenting their case to their commanding officer, the sixty-three members who had filed the grievance ended their report with an ominous warning in the hopes of influencing their commander's next course of action:

> Trusting you will consider seriously the dreadful situation you are about placing us in, and without the most singular interposition of Divine Providence will prove a total loss to yourself and owners; We say, we trust you will shape our course towards the United States, or if you think we can get to France before our provisions be out, got thither; in so doing, we are willing and at all times ready to obey your commands.[36]

The crewmen were so convinced that their circumstances were unsalvageable that only God's direct intervention could save them. With the sarcastic tone of this letter suggesting that such aid was unlikely, the crew was more than willing to accept mutiny as a viable alternative if the captain continued to ignore the well-being of his subordinates.

---

[35] James Barron to William Jones, July 22, 1813, in *The Naval War of 1812*, ed. William S. Dudley, 2:191.

[36] "Memorial of the Crew of the Privateer *General Armstrong* to John Sinclair," March 18, 1813, in *The Naval War of 1812*, ed. William S. Dudley, 2:64.

Mythology and Superstition

In spite of the deep inroads that Christianity had made in the early republic, ancient pagan mythologies continued to play a prominent role in the practices and traditions of the nation's sea-bound warriors. Roman mythologies of the sea were especially prevalent; Neptune being the god of the sea. Ironically enough, even chaplains paid credence to Neptune in their writings. Assheton Humphreys, the acting chaplain aboard the *U.S.S. Constitution*, often wrote about events that fascinated him during his tour of the seas. One day, the *Constitution* sailed through a rather large manifestation of the Portuguese Man-of-War jellyfish. Humphreys was filled with awe at the majestic sight and remarked that "it would be doing father Neptune and his Court no injustice to suppose that they had forsaken their abode upon the equator to wanton in the smooth seas at this season."[37]

References to pagan gods were also present in rituals such as the widely celebrated procession known as the "crossing the line" ceremony. Midshipman William W. Feltus of the *U.S.S. Essex* recorded that on November 23, 1812, a celebration took place to commemorate his ship's crossing of the Tropic of Cancer. Sailors dressed up as Neptune, his wife Amphitrite, and other gods and goddesses, boarded a small rowboat, and then returned aboard their own warship as honored guests. This informal celebration served as a break from the monotony and stringency of naval life as well as a rite of passage for those crew members sailing on their first voyage.[38] Rediker viewed this act

[37] Tyrone G. Martin, ed., *The U.S.S. Constitution's Finest Fight, 1815: The Journal of Acting Chaplain Assheton Humphreys, US Navy* (Mount Pleasant, SC: The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 2000), 40.

[38] William W. Feltus, "Journal of Midshipman William Feltus 'Kept on Board the U.S. Frigate *Essex*'," November 23, 1812, in *The Naval War of 1812*, ed. William S. Dudley, 1:625-626.

as a rejection of Christian baptism. "Seamen stripped baptism of its religious meanings and used it to serve the ends of occupational solidarity. The rites not only expressed a shared consciousness among seamen but simultaneously dramatized divisions within the social order of the ship."[39] This tradition continues on to this day when ships from all nations cross the equator.

Beliefs concerning evil spirits also influenced sailors' understandings of Providence and led to various forms of superstition. Keith Wilbur stressed that most American sailors had a Bible, attended morning devotions, and were God-fearing men. These men, however, still held deep-seated superstitions. For example, silver coins were sometimes placed under the main-mast to bring about a successful voyage of prize-taking. Launching ceremonies often included flowers as a vestige of ancient purification rites. The figure-head located at the bow of the ship was believed to have represented the spirit of the vessel. The Ancient Egyptians thought that such figureheads gave eyes to the ship.[40]

Ancient mythologies and superstitions, in addition to fostering rituals among the sailors, also influenced shipwrights and the construction of American vessels. In the late 1790s, a design for an elaborate figurehead was put in place for a new frigate that was later christened the *U.S.S. Constellation*. Religious, though not particularly Christian, imagery abounds in the proposed description of this figurehead:

> The Seasons represented in the trail crowning the Muses, as a pledge of the Free and Uninterrupted progress in all the pleasing branches of Science that open to View in the new World…On the Larboard side, next to Justice, is the Figure and

[39] Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 189.

[40] C. Keith Wilbur, *Pirates & Patriots of the Revolution: An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Colonial Seamanship* (Old Saybrook, CT: The Globe Pequot Press, 1984), 54-55.

> emblems of Science, joined to the Arts of Ship building, Navigation, &c. supported by Neptune, the God of the seas, in the larboard quarter-piece.[41]

It was unclear whether this figurehead was ever constructed.

The sloop of war christened the *Chesapeake*, not to be confused with the larger ship of this name, was launched on June 20, 1799. Unlike the shipwrights building the *Constellation*, those who designed the *Chesapeake* knowingly installed a figure-head to appease their superstitious tendencies. This head was "represented by a Neptune-like man, of huge stature and long beard, holding with both hands, an urn, through which, the waters are pouring in profusion by his feet." This elegant design was intended for far more than mere aesthetics, however. A figure-head of Neptune paid homage to the god of the seas out of hope that such a deity would bless the crew in return. "May his waters overwhelm our enemies; and may the thunder from his *ports* be a *death tribute* to the apostate Talleyrand and all his adherents."[42]

Marcus Rediker acknowledged these pagan influences on eighteenth-century sailors and drastically downplayed the importance of Christian beliefs. "To his contemporaries the early eighteenth-century seaman appeared to be foul-mouthed but plain-spoken, superstitious but irreligious, courageous and dependable but rowdy and difficult to discipline."[43] In Rediker's opinion, work and survival were of much greater importance than religious beliefs. Spirituality among the men was weak due to a number of factors: a natural skepticism among lower-class society, a significant distance from churches, and the self-help nature of sailors' tasks. Reliance upon another person,

---

[41] "Design of the Head for the Frigate *Constellation*," 1798, in *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France*, ed. Dudley Knox, 2:146.

[42] "Launching of the Sloop of War *Chesapeake* and Description of her Figure Head," in Knox, ed., *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War Between the United States and France*, 3:377.

[43] Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 153.

whether that meant God or a fellow sailor, was a foreign concept for the average sailor.[44] While Christianity was rarely practiced, according to Rediker, superstitions flourished as sailors were keenly aware of their natural surroundings: the sun, moon, stars, winds, clouds, animals, etc. "Further, seamen did not commonly invoke 'God's will' as an all-embracing explanation of their situation."[45] While Rediker correctly addresses this hybrid-like faith common among the ordinary sailors, he fails to recognize two critical points: the influence that paganism, skepticism, and superstition play in the life of the "bourgeois" and the important role that Christianity played in the maritime world.

Conclusion

In many ways, the act of interpreting the inclinations of Providence, particularly in the maritime world, was a reinforcement of traditional Christian views. American sailors in the early republic often expressed within their writings historic beliefs like the sovereignty of God, his willingness to act through nature, his ability to heal diseases or sustain the health of an individual, and his vow to fight military battles for those who are obedient to him.

Yet various forms of providentialism also threatened undermined some of the foundational principles of Christianity. Christians who viewed America as the "New Israel" assumed that God was on their side in spite of New Testament understandings of God's covenant with believers. Others, typically political officials, ignored the exclusive claims made by Christ for the sake of economic and diplomatic gains. Paganism and superstition established strong footholds in many sailors' understandings of the sea.

---

[44] Ibid., 173-174.

[45] Ibid., 185.

While such challenges should not be ignored, Christianity was still a viable force. The conglomeration of all these influences culminated in a hybrid, a syncretic faith, with its base in traditionally historic Christianity. Such syncretism existed among all classes of sea-going peoples, from the ranking officers to the ordinary crewmen.

One of the primary means by which God's providential will was revealed was through chaplains who accompanied American warships wherever they sailed. The next chapter will examine the roles that American naval chaplains played during the early national period and will seek to understand the conflict that existed between a chaplain's spiritual responsibilities and other obligations imposed by the ships' officers as well as the American government.

CHAPTER FOUR

U.S. Naval Chaplaincy Corps

Introduction

In the early fourth century A.D., a young Roman cavalryman, who would later be canonized as Saint Martin of Tours, encountered a half-naked beggar on his way to the city of Amiens, located in modern-day France. Filled with compassion towards the stranger, Martin unsheathed his sword, cut off the bottom portion of his cloak, and presented it as a gift to the beggar. Later that evening, Martin experienced a vision in which the beggar, wearing the cloak that Martin had given him, appeared. This time, however, Martin recognized that the man was not simply a vagabond, but was, in fact, Jesus Christ. Jesus praised the awestruck Martin for his generosity but voiced his deep concern that Martin was not baptized. Upon awakening, Martin earnestly sought Christian baptism, yet surprisingly enough, he decided to serve in the Roman legions for an additional two years.[1] Saint Martin's willingness to remain with the army after his life-altering conversion continues to be one of the most poignant justifications offered by Christians who support the legitimacy of a military chaplaincy.

Most Christians throughout the past two millennia, with a few notable exceptions, have accepted the premise that a military chaplaincy was compatible with the teachings

[1] Adrian S. Hoch, "St. Martin of Tours: His Transformation into a Chivalric Hero and Franciscan Ideal," in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 50, no. 4 (1987): 473. In 336 A.D., as a battle loomed between the Romans and the Gauls, Martin felt convicted that he should not personally participate in the fighting. He was subsequently jailed for cowardice. To prove his courage, Martin offered to go to the front lines unarmed. This test ultimately proved unnecessary. When the Gauls fled prior to battle, Martin was released from his military duties.

of Jesus Christ.[2] The United States' Congress and many influential leaders of the founding generation also agreed that a chaplaincy corps was advantageous but for reasons complementary to fostering adherence to the Christian religion. Leaders in the early national period believed that a republic could only survive as long as its people remained virtuous. Primarily through the means of education and organized religion, members of the national government hoped to foster morality in both the American public and its armed forces. The expression of this desire in the maritime world was the Naval Chaplaincy Corps.

This government-sponsored chaplaincy was not as controversial or divisive during the early national period as it has sporadically been during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In the late eighteenth century, government support for a chaplaincy, whether Congressional or military, was largely assumed. Although President James Madison, the "Father of the Constitution," raised personal critiques against federally-funded chaplains later in his retirement, his voice represented a diminutive minority viewpoint.[3]

Despite widespread support in the realm of public opinion, the naval chaplaincy created during the Revolutionary period faced many challenges in the forms of funding, immorality among its sailors, and balancing the tensions between practical education and spiritual edification. Yet regardless of all of these trying circumstances, it is important to

[2] Various denominations, including Quakers and Anabaptists, have typically espoused principles of nonviolence and reject Christians' participation in their nations' respective militaries.

[3] For Madison's beliefs concerning the freedom of conscience, see Vincent P. Muñoz, "James Madison's Principle of Religious Liberty," in *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 97, no. 1 (February 2003): 18-23. To read about his denunciation of chaplaincies as "a palpable violation of equal rights," see James Madison, "Monopolies, Perpetuities, Corporations, Ecclesiastical Endowments," in "Madison's 'Detached Memoranda,' " edited by Elizabeth Fleet, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., III (1946): 551-562 as quoted in Irving Brant, "Madison: On the Separation of Church and State," in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, vol. 8, no. 1 (January 1951): 22.

emphasize that the new republican government was not openly antagonistic to the religious observances of Christianity. A subtle and unstable alliance between the members of the national government and Christianity allowed some chaplains to rise above the adversity that they encountered in order to fulfill the traditional calling and expectations placed upon a Christian minister.

The structural foundation of this chapter is based on the work of Clifford M. Drury, the author of the first official history of the United States Navy Chaplain Corps. His text provides a thorough decade-by-decade analysis of the chaplaincy's birth and development. Drury is painstakingly meticulous in his efforts to highlight the importance of education, the noteworthy feats of individual chaplains, and the social context of each time period. While Drury's work is certainly the standard by which future writings are to be judged, he fails to address the fundamental question, "Why?" Why did the American government promote Christian education to such a degree? This chapter, in addition to answering this question, attempts to highlight the tensions between chaplains' various roles.

A Tradition of Chaplains

For much of the history of their faith, Christians have wrestled with the legitimacy of a "warrior priest" charged with the task of shepherding their nation's soldiers. The Old Testament provides countless instances in which a spiritual leader accompanied an army to secure God's favor and blessing. Generally speaking, there is little support for the philosophy of pacifism in the narratives of the Old Testament which chronicle the ascendency and decline of the Israelites as God's chosen people. The New Testament, with its emphasis on the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, typically prompts a more

nuanced interpretation of military service. Some New Testament texts, including the famed "Sermon on the Mount," forbid Christians from using violence against their enemies.[4] The scriptures to which Christians have looked for guidance have proven to be inconclusive concerning the justness of military chaplains.

Regardless of the initial challenges that a Christian must confront prior to military service, chaplains have been a mainstay among predominantly Christian nations since the Christianization of the Roman Empire during the reign of Constantine in the early fourth century. The United States, as former colonies of the British Empire, perpetuated the traditions of its mother country as early as 1609 when Chaplain Robert Hunt accompanied the English settlers to Jamestown.[5] The presence of these "holy men" aided in the attempts to justify war, raise morale, foster courage, and instill discipline within the ranks in times of severe suffering. For example, in the case of the American Revolution, chaplains serving the Continental Army helped the martial spirit of 1776 endure the dreadful miseries of Valley Forge while much of American society had shunned active participation in the war effort.[6]

The various roles that naval chaplains fulfilled from the dawning of the American Revolution to the culmination of the War of 1812 demonstrated that public officials, regardless of their own religious convictions, believed wholeheartedly that religion and education were the primary venues through which the government could help create a virtuous citizenry. While the performance of religious rites, evangelism, and the battle

[4] For the biblical passage concerning the Sermon on the Mount, see Matthew 5:38-48.

[5] Hai Gan, "Discussion of the American Military in Relation to War, the Bible, the First Amendment, and Constitutional Cases: Ethical and Constitutional Considerations" (master's thesis, Baylor University, 1997), 22.

[6] Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army & American Character, 1776-1783* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 167.

against sin all continued to be important foci in the personal missions of America's naval chaplains, the government created a chaplaincy corps with the principal concerns of education and the building of sound, moral character among its sailors.

Continental Navy Chaplains

In April 1775, the Battles of Lexington and Concord initiated the military conflict between Great Britain and her North American colonies. Although the local militias and the newly-formed Continental Army experienced surprising victories during the early stages of the rebellion, the British Navy maintained constant supremacy on the high seas. Patriot leaders, including General George Washington and Congressman John Adams, immediately recognized the need for a Continental Navy to protect American merchants, to secure ammunitions for the war, and to disrupt British trade.

Six months after the start of the war, on October 13, 1775, the Continental Congress passed a law that authorized the construction of the Continental Navy. The regulations concerning how the fleet was to be organized mirrored those of the Royal Navy and were approved a little more than a month later. Within the by-laws of this Congressional act was an overt effort to promote religious morality among the crews. Article II ordered the commanders of American vessels "to take care that divine service be performed twice a day on board, and a sermon preached on Sundays, unless bad weather or other extraordinary accidents prevent." Although this particular piece of legislation had not created an official chaplaincy corps, it did make the duties of a

chaplain mandatory and thus set the stage for the admission of chaplains aboard American warships.[7]

Military chaplains, regardless of their branch of service, helped to fuel the revolutionary "spirit of 1776" during times when many Americans had turned their back on the war effort. Charles Royster, although somewhat pessimistic towards the results of the chaplains' collective efforts, believed the significance of military chaplains lay in relation to the execution of the war:

> The surviving sermons strive to attain a very demanding ideal: to nourish and justify the hopes for America's future that made soldiers fight the British, to foster individual courage in the face of both suffering and combat, to celebrate the unity of courageous men in a just cause, to awaken soldiers' watchfulness for the signs of their own salvation, and to encourage the orderly conduct of a disciplined soldier and upright Christian.[8]

Although the chaplains were hard-pressed to reach the high expectations of creating a virtuous army, their use of providentialism in an attempt to argue that God was on the side of the Americans was a powerful tool that raised the spirits of an otherwise weakened and demoralized army.

While the written sources for Continental Army chaplains remain quite numerous, those of the Continental Navy are much scarcer. This disparity can best be explained in two ways. First of all, the conditions of sea-faring life were not conducive to massive amounts of written records. Space and time were both limited, particularly for chaplains trying to fulfill multiple roles aboard their ships. Secondly, the Navy was always a minor focus for the Continental Congress. Realizing that it was impossible to compete with the British Navy, Congress decided to build few warships and rely heavily on privateering.

---

[7] Clifford M. Drury, *The History of the Chaplain Corps, United States Navy*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps, 1984), 3.

[8] Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War*, 167.

Thus the number of chaplains enlisted in the Navy was far fewer than those who joined the Army. In fact, there were only two naval chaplains who were known to have served during the Revolutionary War: Reverend Benjamin Balch and James Geagan.

Like many of his counterparts in the Continental Army, Benjamin Balch joined the armed forces with a ministerial background. The first chaplain to have received a formal commission in the Continental Navy, Reverend Balch was a second-generation Congregationalist minister who had earned his theological degree at Harvard College in 1763. When war broke out with Great Britain, Balch set aside his ministerial robes to fight for the American cause and to care for the spiritual needs of his compatriots.

Balch's résumé of accomplishments was as distinguished as any other chaplain who fought for the United States during the American Revolution. He was present at the Battle of Lexington as one of the Minute Men and later found his way to Boston where he served as an Army chaplain during Washington's siege against the British. Once commissions were available for the Continental Navy, Balch seized this opportunity as well.[9] On October 28, 1778, Balch was assigned to the frigate *Boston* under the command of Samuel Tucker and began his tour of the high seas as the first American naval chaplain.[10]

Balch later transferred to the *Alliance* which was commanded by an Irish Catholic immigrant named John Barry. By 1781, the *Alliance* and the *Deane* were the only two remaining American frigates left to challenge the British Royal Navy. It was on this ship

[9] M. Hill Goodspeed, *U.S. Navy: A Complete History* (Hong Kong: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, Inc., 2003), 29. By 1776, sailors commissioned as chaplains were the second highest paid officers in the Continental Navy. Captains earned $32.00 per month, chaplains $26.67 per month, and surgeons $21.33 per month. Chaplains also had a share in the ship's profits if British prizes were taken. For a more extensive breakdown of monthly salaries in the Continental Navy, see Chester G. Hearn, *Navy, An Illustrated History: The U.S. Navy from 1775 to the 21st Century* (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2007), 12.

[10] Drury, *The History of the Chaplain Corps*, 4.

that Balch would earn his nickname the "Fighting Parson." He was accompanied by his two sons, Thomas and Benjamin, when the *Alliance* challenged two British warships off the coast of Nova Scotia.

> The peril the ship was in brought out the desperate courage of every man on board the *Alliance*, the 'cloth' being no exception. Reverend Benjamin, armed cap-a-pie, was seen in the midst of the fray, and thereafter is said to have become known on the ship as the "fighting parson." His son, Thomas, was also in the fight, and when father and son met afterwards, it was with an embrace and with the words, "Thank God, my son."[11]

During the early national period, it was not uncommon for chaplains to participate in actual battles in addition to tending to the spiritual needs of their flock. What some modern-day sociologists see as a contradiction or a critique of the chaplaincy, namely a compromise of Christ's principles of nonviolence, was expected of these men during the late eighteenth century.[12] Historian Charles Metzger, who conducted a study of chaplains who served in the American Revolution, chronicled the slow development of the organization necessary to provide chaplains for the Continental Army and Navy. While spiritual needs were significant to America's leaders, these were not the only priority. Spiritual edification had to be complemented with other duties such as fighting and hospital service. Metzger, unlike Royster, viewed the chaplaincy as a big success. "The

[11] *Danvers Historical Collection*, VII: 89-91, as quoted in Drury, *The History of the Chaplain Corps*, 4-5. Benjamin's father Thomas had served as a chaplain during King George's War in the mid-1740s. Benjamin Balch's son William became the first chaplain to receive a commission in the United States Navy after the Navy Department was re-established in the late 1790s.

[12] Waldo W. Burchard, "Role Conflicts of Military Chaplains," in *American Sociological Review*, vol. 19, no. 5 (October 1954): 534. Burchard interviewed a small pool of thirty-six active duty chaplains and thirty-five ex-chaplains from all branches of the military during the post-World War II era. Although the time differential between this sociological study and this paper is important, the theological implications for Christians serving in the military remain the same.

chaplains, in addition to providing for the spiritual needs of the soldiers, sustained morale and aroused patriotism; by word and conduct they were an example and an inspiration."[13]

Metzger's argument for a multi-purpose chaplain can be easily applied to the Continental Navy's chaplains. Like Balch, Chaplain James Geagan fulfilled multiple roles aboard his ship. In 1782, Geagan replaced Reverend Balch as chaplain aboard the *Alliance*. Prior to this appointment, Geagan was the ship's surgeon. Clifford Drury, author of the first official history of the Navy Chaplaincy Corps, asserted that it was unlikely that Geagan was ever ordained. Geagan served in this position for seven months before he resigned, because he was no longer being paid for his services.[14]

While Benjamin Balch certainly met the spiritual qualifications of a chaplain, as far as ministerial training was concerned, the selection process for a ship's chaplain was susceptible to favoritism, and thus corruption. In the early period of the chaplaincy corps, individual captains had the right to choose their own chaplains. This could lead to compromises in which the spiritual character of a man was deemed secondary to other more practical abilities he might possess.[15]

John Paul Jones, the United States' most renowned naval hero from the Revolutionary War, serves as a perfect case-in-point.[16] Prior to his command of the famous *Bon Homme Richard*, Jones was captain of a smaller ship christened the *Ranger*. Using France as his base of operations, Jones patrolled the northern Atlantic in order to

---

[13] Charles H. Metzger, "Chaplains in the American Revolution," in *The Catholic Historical Review*, vol. 31, no. 1 (April 1945): 75.

[14] Drury, *A History of the Chaplain Corps*, 5.

[15] Ibid., 12.

[16] Jones won renown when his ship, the *Bon Homme Richard* (42 guns), defeated the *H.M.S. Serapis* (50 guns) in 1779. Although Jones' ship eventually sunk as a result of the battle, the Americans' tenacity won the day. Jones claimed the *Serapis* as his new flagship.

harass English merchant vessels. Jones recognized the utility of a chaplain and composed a letter to his confidant Henry Grand on July 12, 1778, searching for suitable applicants. In defining what qualifications a chaplain had to fulfill, Jones wrote:

> I could wish him to be a man of reading and of letters who understands, speaks and writes the french & english with elegance and propriety: For political reasons it would be well if he were a clergyman of the protestant profession whose sanctity of manners and happy natural principles would diffuse unanimity and cheerfulness thro' the ship. And if to these essentials are added the talent of writing fast and in fair characters, such a man would necessarily be worthy the highest confidence, & might, therefore, assure himself of my esteem and friendship; he should always have a place at my table, the regulation whereof would be entirely under his direction.[17]

While Captain Jones desired a clergyman who professed the Protestant religion, that was obviously not the primary focus of his search for a worthy candidate. Jones wanted a personal secretary as much as he did a religious exhorter.

In another letter of correspondence, John Paul Jones shocked many of his American peers when he requested the services of a Catholic chaplain for his ship, the *Bon Homme Richard*. Although Jones had a sizeable crew of over three hundred sailors, only thirty of these were Americans. Most of his sailors were French Catholics. On April 30, 1779, Jones wrote to Father John Mehegan to inform the latter of Jones' need. "Having a number of French under my command, I am in want of a Chaplain. You know whom I would prefer if they are disengaged."[18] While there was no evidence that Jones ever hired a chaplain, let alone a Catholic one, the intent was certainly there. During the Revolutionary War, there were no confirmed Catholic chaplains serving aboard American ships. There were, however, Catholic naval chaplains who accompanied the

[17] *Jones Collection*, Letter No. 6783 as quoted in Drury, *A History of the Chaplain Corps*, 4.

[18] *Jones Collection*, Letter No. 7073 as quoted in Drury, *A History of the Chaplain Corps*, 4.

French sailors. Roughly 89% of all French chaplains who served during the Revolutionary War did so aboard French warships.[19]

Fighting in battle, fulfilling secretarial roles, and doubling as a ship's surgeon were all noteworthy accomplishments, but the term "chaplain" carries a religious connotation manifested by the performance of spiritual rituals and legitimate attempts at evangelism. Delivering sermons was one of the primary weapons available to the chaplain who sought to fulfill his responsibility to combat sin. Although very few sermons written by naval chaplains during the early national period survive to this day, plenty of journals and officers' logs reference preaching, exhortation, and divine service. Captain Joseph Hardy, a Marine serving onboard the *Confederacy,* captured the seriousness of attending sermons in his journal. On Sunday, February 6, 1780, as preparations were being made for an upcoming excursion, the *Confederacy's* marines and sailors paused to hear their chaplain's sermon. Hardy appreciated this call to moral living. "Notwithstanding our Chaplain delivered us abt. 11 OClk an excellent well adapted Sermon on the abominable Practice of Swearing."[20]

If Marcus Rediker's analysis of the average sailor living in the eighteenth century holds true, chaplains confronted significant immorality, superstition, and irreligion among sailors. Some of the prevalent sins included swearing, as evidenced by Hardy's journal entry, a disregard for the church and its ambassadors, failures to honor the Sabbath, a hardening towards the near-death experiences of the sea, beliefs in magic and superstition, references to polytheism (Neptune and his court), drinking, prostitution, etc.

---

[19] Dom A.H. Germain, "Catholic Military and Naval Chaplains, 1776-1917," in *The Catholic Historical Review*, vol. 15, no. 2 (July 1929): 171.

[20] James L. Howard, *Seth Harding: Mariner* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), 229-230.

According to Rediker, "The seaman's worldview was an amalgam of religion and irreligion, magic and materialism, superstition and self-help."[21]

Unfortunately, the amount of historical evidence produced by the chaplains of the Continental Navy was small and sporadic. Chaplains also accompanied American privateers as well as the ships of the state-controlled navies, but their written record has proven to be just as fragmentary. The end of the Revolutionary War brought about the termination of the Continental Navy. Congress was utterly destitute due to its inability to collect taxes and the massive war debts it had incurred to finance the war effort. Those few American ships that had evaded capture or destruction by the British were soon decommissioned and sold to the highest bidder. With no legitimate warships to serve upon, naval chaplains retired from the service and returned to their homes. The need for a government-funded chaplaincy lay dormant for nearly a decade.

The maritime world of the 1770s and early 1780s presented a particular challenge to the government's goal of forging a virtuous military with which to fight its wars. Uneducated sailors with a culture all their own, hundreds if not thousands of miles from the doors of the nearest church, with all the temptations that such a life could offer, exemplified an immoral type of people a republic simply could not afford to have. Chaplains were necessary to ensure that the fledging United States Navy, upon its rebirth, fostered republican virtue wherever its sails might be unfurled.

[21] Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 185. Harkening back to the previous chapter, remember that this thesis does not seek to contradict Rediker's analysis, rather, it extends his diagnosis of maritime culture to include not only the ordinary sailor but the officers as well.

A Permanent Chaplaincy Corps

In the late 1790s, the United States stood on the brink of war with France. Like Great Britain, France had tired of the United States' trading patterns in which the young republic operated out of a misguided belief that a neutral nation could trade with two warring powers without fear of repercussions. France's leaders felt particularly betrayed after having devoted vast amounts of financial aid, weaponry, and manpower to the American cause during the Revolutionary War.

In retaliation for America's double-handed trade, both France and England engaged in the impressment of American sailors and the confiscation of American merchant vessels. The vulnerability of the young nation, particularly at sea, was painfully exposed. Over the course of the next few decades, chief executives John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison sought to secure America's sovereignty by constructing a permanent navy and deploying it to confront the French, the Barbary States, and eventually the British.[22] This rebuilding program called for new recruits, including chaplains.

In the years leading up to the formation of the Navy Chaplain Corps, the relationship between the American government and religion was much more fluid than it has been at various times in American history. In fact, some scholars of the Revolutionary period argue that the impermeable wall of separation between church and state that has surfaced in many of the modern culture war debates was actually contrary

[22] From 1798 to 1815, the United States engaged in four major wars that sought to establish the nation's right to trade on the open seas. The Quasi-War with France (1798-1800) was an undeclared war that was fought primarily in the Atlantic and West Indies. Government-sponsored corsairs from the North African regencies of Morocco, Tunis, Tripoli, and Algiers had also harassed American shipping, captured American sailors, and forced Congress to pay annual tribute since the end of the Revolutionary War. The Tripolitan War (1801-1805) and the Algerine War (1815) effectively secured the United States' rights to trade in the Mediterranean. The War of 1812 between Great Britain and the United States sought to end the British practice of impressing American sailors.

to what the Founding Fathers intended. Thomas Kidd argues that the push for the disestablishment of a national church was by no means an effort to make religion a private matter. It was simply an attempt to promote religious freedom for denominations that had been persecuted by the state churches: Baptists, Quakers, Roman Catholics, and Jews to name a few.

Religion during the early national period was a public matter. The American people still expected their national leaders to institute days of fasting and prayer in times of catastrophe or suffering. A civil religion was, after all, necessary for the success of the American Revolution. Generic religious principles such as equality before God, a common creation, the need for virtue, and providentialism united the American colonists who were otherwise divided by the religious pluralism of the 1770s. Ultimately, Kidd asserts, "almost no one in the revolutionary era expected that ending direct government support for religion would also remove faith from the public sphere."[23] In the matter of military chaplaincies, the revolutionary era failed to end direct government support for religion.

One of the most noted arguments put forth by a Founding Father concerning the importance of religion and morality in the public sphere was President George Washington's Farewell Address of 1796. Washington had become disillusioned with the corruption and divisiveness of the partisan politics rampant during the 1790s. Washington warned his fellow Americans to cling to religion and its principles:

> Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally

[23]Thomas S. Kidd, *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 169.

> with the pious man, ought to respect and cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connexions with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked; where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid use to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.[24]

In Washington's mind, religion was necessary if the young republic was to survive the turbulence of its infancy. Many Americans, including those in political power, heeded the words of their commander-in-chief and promoted religion as a path to moral and political prosperity. When the Department of the Navy was established in 1798, there was little debate concerning the legality of a chaplaincy. Thus the Navy Chaplaincy Corps re-emerged, calling upon those who accepted a chaplain's commission to reprise the roles fulfilled by their predecessors and to tackle new tasks, namely the education of younger sailors.

Non-Religious Roles

Educator

Taking for granted that the national government's decision to create a military chaplaincy was constitutional and widely supported, the roles that these naval chaplains played during their tours of duty reflect the multi-faceted expectations placed upon them by their superiors. After the Revolutionary War, the role of educator or "school-master" was perhaps the most vital function that naval chaplains were expected to perform. The

[24] *Washington's Farewell Address, the Proclamation of Jackson against Nullification, and the Declaration of Independence* (Washington, D.C.: 1862), 4-5, 8-9, 11 as quoted in Matthew L. Harris and Thomas S. Kidd, eds., *The Founding Fathers and the Debate over Religion in Revolutionary America: A History in Documents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 121.

widespread belief that the American republic would only survive through the efforts of an educated, virtuous citizenry extended to the armed forces and validated such a job description.

From the American Revolution to the dawn of the nineteenth century, the legislative acts that defined a chaplain's role in the United States Navy were focused solely on religious tasks. In the naval regulations of 1800, commanders who had chaplains employed aboard their ships were ordered to "take care that divine service be performed in a solemn, orderly and reverent manner twice a day, and a sermon preached on Sunday, unless bad weather, or other extraordinary accidents prevent it." Such a command was reflective of the regulations in place during the Revolutionary War. The only difference was the emphasis on order and solemnity during the worship services. To ensure that the average sailor was at least encouraged to live morally, attendance to these services was compulsory for all sailors who could be spared from their respective duties.[25]

This particular piece of legislation also spread the burden of enforcing morality to the vessels' commanders and other officers serving on the ship. Legislators and high-ranking naval officials expected their subordinates to show "in themselves a good example of virtue, honor, patriotism, and subordination" while simultaneously exercising the authority to punish those crewmen who engaged in "oppression, cruelty, fraud, profane swearing, drunkenness, or any other scandalous conduct, tending to the

[25] David Steel, *Seamanship, Both in Theory and Practice to Which is Annexed, An Essay on Naval Tactics & Signals also, Regulations for the Government of the Navy of the United States of America…and An Act Concerning Letters of Marque and Reprisals to Which is Subjoined, A List of Post Captains in the Navy of the United States* (New York: Edmund M. Blunt, 1812), 197.

destruction of good morals."[26] Personal and corporate accountability were critical if the nation were to survive with God's blessing. Recognizing that naval officers would be hard pressed to balance their primary obligations with meaningful spiritual instruction, Congress provided the funds to appoint professional chaplains who would serve on some of the largest ships in the American fleet. In this manner, the naval regulations of 1800 differed ever so slightly from those passed by the Continental Congress in 1775.

This thread of continuity emphasizing the religious duties of a naval chaplain was altered two years later in 1802 when President Thomas Jefferson approved an updated version of the Navy's regulations. Although he was not an orthodox Christian, Jefferson strongly believed that Jesus' teachings concerning morality were worthy of emulation. Thus, Jefferson maintained that chaplains had moral responsibilities to uphold. However, in addition to the spiritual duties performed by a minister, a naval chaplain was also required to educate those in his care. "He shall perform the duty of a school-master; and to that end he shall instruct the midshipmen and volunteers, in writing, arithmetic and navigation, and in whatsoever may contribute to render them proficients…"[27] Initiation into naval service, a task formerly performed by older, more-experienced sailors, was now delegated to the chaplains.

This development of having chaplains serve as educators, though not formally required until 1802, had already been in effect prior to Jefferson's mandate. On August 21, 1800, the Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Stoddert informed his chief accountant, Thomas Turner, that smaller vessels would be permitted to employ school masters rather

---

[26] Ibid.

[27] "U.S. Navy Regulations Issued by Command of President Thomas Jefferson, January 25, 1802," in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1939-1944), 2:34.

than chaplains at a monthly salary of thirty dollars and a guarantee of two rations per day. This order stood in stark contrast to an act passed in the mid-1790s which had ensured that the larger frigates would be assigned a chaplain with a monthly salary of forty dollars.[28] The difficulty of finding ordained ministers coupled with significant disparities in salary rates forced a naval department deprived of financial resources to make decisions between the education and edification of its sailors. As of 1800, some officials started to emphasize the latter.

Granted, the education of its officers was of paramount importance to achieving the goals of the United States Navy. The Naval Academy, located in Annapolis, Maryland, was not constructed until 1845. Before that time, the instruction of younger sailors was primarily the responsibility of seasoned veterans, and more specifically, chaplains. Robert Thompson, a naval chaplain who served during the early 1800s, exemplified this merger between teacher and preacher.

Robert Thompson proved to be an excellent educator whose legacy continued well beyond his commission. In April 1801, Thompson's superiors aboard the *U.S.S. President* recognized the teaching skills that Thompson possessed and rued the day that he would leave the ship. His captain, Thomas Truxton, described Thompson as "an excellent schoolmaster" whose potential warranted further encouragement. Truxton

[28] Benjamin Stoddert, "To Accountant of the Navy, from Secretary of the Navy," in *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France*, ed. Dudley Knox (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1935-1938), 6:272. In a report made by the Secretary of the Navy on Christmas Eve in 1798, chaplains were to be assigned to 32-, 36-, and 44-gun frigates with crews of 260, 340, and 400 men respectively. See Drury, *The History of the Chaplain Corps*, 8.

viewed his chaplain as "a great acquisition to our young midshipmen" and hoped to retain Thompson's services for a substantial period of time.[29]

Unfortunately for Captain Truxton, Robert Thompson's abilities were desired elsewhere. With strong support from Secretary of the Navy Robert Smith, Thompson opened a school for midshipmen aboard the *U.S.S. Congress* when it was docked at the Washington Naval Yard throughout the first decade of the 1800s. The school proved to be a great success. Chaplain Andrew Hunter, a Presbyterian minister who had served as an army chaplain during the Revolutionary War, succeeded Thompson in March 1811 and continued to direct the thriving school until 1823.[30]

This concept of a school conducted by chaplains became quite popular during the early national period. Chaplain Cheever Felch organized a school of his own at Sackets Harbor, New York. Once again, the venture was so successful that Chaplain Felch found himself unable to continue his work at the same rate of pay. On February 17, 1815, Felch sent a letter to Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Crowninshield complaining that his workload was too great. By that time, Felch was teaching mathematics, navigation, astronomy, philosophy, and geography to 95 officers and 71 young boys. Felch believed that such responsibility warranted greater compensation.[31]

---

[29] Thomas Truxton to William W. Burrows, April 12, 1801, in *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France*, ed. Dudley Knox, 7:188. `

[30] Drury, *The History of the Chaplain Corps,* 20.

[31] Cheever Felch to Benjamin Crowninshield, February 17, 1815, in *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, ed. Michael J. Crawford (Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1985-2002), 3:691-692.

Warrior

In addition to training their shipmates in subjects necessary for sea-faring life, chaplains oftentimes rose above others' expectations in assisting their comrades in arms. Benjamin Balch, the "Fighting Parson," was an exemplary figure in this regard during the Revolutionary War. Yet even after a generation had passed, chaplains still considered themselves warrior priests with no qualms about raising the sword for God and country. Two naval chaplains who were veterans of the War of 1812 perpetuated the tradition that Balch had started: Samuel Livermore and Thomas Breese.

Samuel Livermore, a chaplain from Boston, Massachusetts, was commissioned aboard the *U.S.S. Chesapeake* during the War of 1812. On June 1, 1813, the *Chesapeake* left its moorings in Boston harbor in an attempt to disrupt the British blockade of the city. Upon doing so, the *Chesapeake* was confronted by the *H.M.S. Shannon*. Although the British ship was slightly smaller, its gunners were more experienced and reduced the American frigate to shambles in a matter of minutes. James Lawrence, captain of the *Chesapeake*, urged his men not to give up the ship, but was mortally wounded during the battle. Chaplain Livermore, who was quite fond of Captain Lawrence, tried to avenge his friend by shooting at the British Marines attempting to board the American ship. Livermore was wounded in the exchange and taken prisoner.[32]

Chaplain Thomas Breese gained similar renown during the pivotal Battle of Lake Erie, a conflict which ultimately denied the British of an easy invasion route into northern New York and Pennsylvania. On September 10, 1813, British and American fleets engaged on Lake Erie. Breese was chaplain to the American commander, Oliver Hazard

[32] Washington Iriving, *Biography of James Lawrence, Esq. Late a Captain in the Navy of the United States Together with a Collection of the Most Interesting Papers, Relative to the Action between the Chesapeake and Shannon, and the Death of Captain Lawrence* (New Brunswick, NJ: L. Deare, 1813), 35.

Perry. Although Perry's flagship *Lawrence* was quickly disabled by the British cannonades, Perry shunned tradition by abandoning his own ship and transferring his command to the *Niagara*. Yet not all of the *Lawrence's* crew was willing to accept defeat. According to personal accounts of the battle, Chaplain Thomas Breese and a few other sailors continued to fight, manning the final cannon until it exploded.[33]

Other Roles

Although few men gained notoriety in the Pacific Ocean during America's wars of independence, Chaplain David P. Adams was able to do just that. A graduate of Harvard, Adams taught mathematics and astronomy at Columbia College prior to his enrollment in the United States Navy. After serving a brief time aboard the *U.S.S. President,* Adams transferred to the *U.S.S. Essex* under the leadership of Captain David Porter. The principal mission of the *Essex* was to interrupt the lucrative whaling business that the British were conducting in the Pacific. The Americans were so successful in taking prizes that Chaplain Adams was called upon to command at least three of the captured vessels on the way to safe harbor.

In addition to his leadership abilities, Captain David Porter also praised his chaplain's willingness to aid the ship's surgeons during the heat of battle and rewarded such actions with his trust. Because of the efforts of Dr. Richard Hoffman and Dr. Alexander Montgomery, as well as "the benevolent attentions and assistance of Mr. D P Adams the Chaplain," many lives had been saved during the *Essex's* time at sea. Adams

[33] Drury, *The History of the Chaplain Corps*, 27. Perry's flagship had been named in honor of his friend, Captain James Lawrence, who had died a few months earlier.

was eventually taken prisoner when the *Essex* was captured off the neutral coast of Chile.[34]

While the achievements of Chaplain David Adams were certainly rare due to his unique circumstances, other chaplains won the respect of their peers by performing more "mundane" tasks. In some cases, chaplains filled in as temporary clerks and interpreters, significant roles that were foreshadowed by John Paul Jones' personal description of a worthy chaplain. Peter Leonard was appointed chaplain of the *U.S.S. Constitution* in 1803 when the ship's former chaplain resigned his position. Leonard, who was formerly the ship's clerk, continued to perform such duties even after his new appointment.[35] Chaplain Cruize of the *U.S.S. Constellation*, in addition to his spiritual responsibilities, acted as an interpreter between his superior officers and the Bey of Tunis.[36]

As evidenced by this wide array of responsibilities, naval chaplains during the early national period had to be flexible in accordance with the situation in which they found themselves. The national government was particularly adamant in its desire to have chaplains educate sailors in nautical matters. As members of the military, chaplains were exposed to the carnage of battle and often rose to the occasion by repelling enemy marines, firing a cannon, or aiding the wounded. Other chaplains functioned as personal assistants whose skills aided their ships in the execution of everyday life. While these

[34] David Porter to William Jones, July 3, 1814, in *The Naval War of 1812*, ed. Michael J. Crawford, 3:737-738. The *Essex* caused an estimated 2.5 million dollars in damages to the British whaling fleet before its capture.

[35] Edward Preble to Robert Smith, December 10, 1803, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 3:258.

[36] John Rodgers to Robert Smith, July 7-September 1, 1805, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 6:262.

non-religious tasks were quite significant, chaplains by definition were religious leaders responsible for fostering faith among their peers.

Religious Roles

Chaplains were expected to be the religious example aboard their respective ships, inculcating virtue and morality among the crew. Even the national government, whose leaders wanted chaplains to provide their men with a more practical education, recognized the importance of religious teachings and rituals in the lives of American sailors. In addition to conducting divine service and delivering a weekly sermon on the Sabbath, chaplains were responsible for periodic prayers, and if necessary, funeral services. According to the naval regulations of 1802, a chaplain was expected to "read prayers at stated periods; perform all funeral ceremonies over such persons as may die in the service…"[37]

With this religious instruction in place, the American government hoped to combat the waywardness that had become stereotypical of maritime culture. The dangerous lifestyle of the average sailor in conjunction with the prolonged separation that sailors experienced from a stable church setting fostered what some historians would define as an irreligious culture. There were indeed many temptations for the eighteenth-century sailor to overcome. It was the chaplain's responsibility to lead their men through personal example and admonition. Unfortunately, chaplains were not always successful in their struggle against sin.

[37] "U.S. Navy Regulations Issued by Command of President Thomas Jefferson, January 25, 1802," in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 2:34. "Divine service" was fluid term that included taking communion, corporate worship, and prayer.

Sins of the Sea

Women. For men living at sea for months or even years at a time, the company of a woman was a powerful temptation. William Eaton, a powerful diplomat whose reputation soared during the Barbary Wars, recounted a situation involving scantily-clad dancers that was all too common in port cities. Unlike most of peers, however, Eaton showed utter disgust towards these open displays of crude behavior. On December 21, 1804, Eaton and his friends attended an "exhibition" of dancing women. He went on to degrade them as "Haggard prostitutes, disgustful, obscene monsters, who exhibit savage nature in jestures of studied and practiced depravity…"[38] Eaton refused to indulge in such temptations.

The existence of various rules outlawing the presence of women on American warships attests to the fact that William Eaton's propriety was not the norm. According to the U.S. Naval Regulations passed by President Jefferson in 1802, the captain of the ship was responsible for ensuring that his crewmen were not faced with unnecessary temptations. The act forbade the captain from transporting any woman, whether she be a wife or mistress, without the express written consent of the "navy office" or the commander of his squadron.[39] Based on sources, including the story that follows, captains often failed to live up to this standard.[40]

---

[38] William Eaton, "Extract from Journal of William Eaton, U.S. Navy Agent for the Barbary Regencies, Friday, December 21, 1804," in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 5:206.

[39] "U.S. Navy Regulations Issued by Command of President Thomas Jefferson, January 25, 1802," in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 2:31.

[40] Drury, *A History of the Chaplain Corps*, 21.

Some officers, even though their ships were bound for war, still brought their wives along. One such instance occurred in 1803 aboard the *U.S.S. Chesapeake*. On February 22 of that year, Mrs. James Low, whose husband was "Captain of the Forecastle," gave birth to a son. The ship engaged in all types of celebratory ceremonies including an infant baptism and a worship service organized by the ship's chaplain, Reverend Alex McFarlane. Three other women, all wives of the ship's officers, did not find the occasion to be one worthy of celebration. Instead, they "got drunk in their own Quarters out of pure spite—not being invited to celebrate the Christening of Melancthon Woolsey Low."[41]

Dealing with the presence of officers' wives was a disruption of the status quo more than it was a spiritual transgression. Unfortunately, not all women who were brought aboard were married. Some openly engaged in prostitution. There is some evidence of such activity in the captain's log of the *U.S.S Essex*. In written orders that had been confiscated from the *H.M.S. Superb*, some commanders in the British Navy were permitted to let prostitutes onboard to reward men who had earned such merit.[42] Although it is uncertain if such orders were ever given in the United States Navy, American sailors were known to have initiated relationships with prostitutes and mistresses.

One particular case study involves a sailor who was reprimanded for disorderly conduct with a woman in December 1812. Master Commandant James T. Leonard arrived in Sackets Harbor, New York, with a woman whom he claimed to be his wife.

---

[41] Henry Wadsworth, "Extract from Journal of Midshipman Henry Wadsworth, April 2, 1803," in *Naval Documents Relating to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 2:387.

[42] Drury, *A History of the Chaplain Corps*, 22.

For a time, Leonard was able to conceal the fact that she was only a mistress. When the true identity of Leonard's courtesan was discovered, his superiors took immediate action to discipline the Master Commandant. On April 13, 1813, Commodore Isaac Chauncey delivered an arrest warrant for Leonard, citing "disobedience of orders," "neglect of duty," and "dissolute immoral practices" as the charges. It was within the explanation of this last charge that Chauncey expressed his utter disgust at Leonard's relational escapade:

> Charge third—Dissolute and immoral practices—Specification—For introducing some time in December last, your Mistress, to the family of Major Samuel Brown and Suffering her afterwards to pass as your Wife and in violation of your promise to me, you are now living with the same Woman in the most public manner, whereby you neglect your duty to your Country and to your Ship, and Set a bad example to the officers generally, and the young Midshipmen in particular one which lives in the House with you and your Mistress.[43]

Dueling. Chaplains seeking to encourage morality also had to concern themselves with dueling, a ritual in which two men attempted to kill each other according to a widespread and unwritten code of honor. Chaplains were not only forced to conduct the subsequent funeral ceremonies; they also had to repair relationships torn asunder by the duel. The Navy was plagued by such "legalized murders," especially during the early national period.

The reaction of Captain Daniel Carmick upon losing a friend to a duel is representative of the damage that such a practice could invoke, even to those who were not directly involved. Captain Carmick, a member of the U.S. Marine Corps, informed his superiors of a duel which took place in 1802. Captain McKnight of the Marines, a

[43] Isaac Chauncey to James T. Leonard, April 13, 1813, in *The Naval War of 1812*, ed. William S. Dudley, 2:442-443.

personal friend of Carmick, was killed after challenging Lieutenant Lawson of the *U.S.S. Constellation*. Both men agreed to walk six paces, turn, and fire. If they both missed their mark, the duelers would then engage in sword fighting until one had fallen. Lawson proved to be the better shot, hitting Captain McKnight right in the heart. Carmick, who was noticeably upset over the loss of his friend, was a testament to the dangers of such a practice.[44] In fact, according to Clifford Drury, a naval historian and former U.S. Navy chaplain, approximately two-thirds as many officers were killed because of dueling during the first fifty years of the Navy's existence than there were in all of America's wars throughout that same period.[45]

Drinking. Promiscuous living and dueling were significant issues that chaplains had to address, but perhaps the greatest challenge for chaplains during the early national period was the abuse of alcohol. Sailors had become notorious for their drinking habits which, in turn, bred other problems such as profanity, crime, and violence. Captain William Bainbridge experienced firsthand the attraction that liquor had among sailors, particularly those confined to a foreign prison.

While he and his crew were imprisoned in a Tripolitan jail, Captain Bainbridge mourned his inability to provide for his crew's basic needs; clothing being the number one priority. Many of his crew had sold their best clothes for one last taste of alcohol. Bainbridge was totally disgusted with his men's addictions and informed his colleague Edward Preble of the loose morals that had become all too characteristic of American

[44] Daniel Carmick to William W. Burrows, October 15, 1802, in *Naval Documents Relating to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 2:293-294.

[45] Drury, *A History of the Chaplain Corps*, 31. It was only after the death of one of the Navy's most esteemed war heroes, Stephen Decatur, that public opinion was incited against dueling. Decatur was killed in a duel with Captain James Barron on March 22, 1820.

sailors. "I believe there never was so depraved a set of mortals as Sailors are; under discipline they are peaceable & serviceable;--divest them of that, and they constitute a perfect rable."[46] Midshipman Henry Wadsworth, providing an outsider's perspective, affirmed this belief that Bainbridge's crew was primarily comprised of drunkards. Wadsworth claimed that when the *U.S.S. Philadelphia* was first captured near Tripoli, the raiders found "every man on board drunk, & laying about the decks like dead men."[47]

Sailors were drawn to the excessive use of alcohol for a plethora for reasons. For Lieutenant John T. Drury, drinking was a means by which he could cope with the sins of his past. In August 1814, in an effort to discern his crew's effectiveness and preparedness, Drury disguised himself as a British sailor and walked into the local tavern. In the chaos that ensued, the tavern keeper was killed. Drury fled from the area and succumbed to heavy drinking.

Drury found a pastoral counselor in Thomas Macdonough. Although Macdonough was not a chaplain, his reputation for strong Christian piety was well-known among his peers. A few months after the incident, Macdonough sent a letter of advice to Lieutenant Drury, urging him to "lay your hand on your heart and acquit your Conscience and feelings to God of being intentionally, directly, or indirectly instrumental in the unfortunate occurrence…"[48] Reminding Drury that God was merciful and forgiving, Macdonough warned him that drinking and moping were not effective ways to

[46] William Bainbridge to Edward Preble, November 25, 1803, in *Naval Documents Relating to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 3:176.

[47] Henry Wadsworth to unknown, January 10, 1804, in *Naval Documents Relating to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, ed. Dudley Knox, 3:323.

[48] Thomas Macdonough to John T. Drury, November 12, 1814, in *The Naval War of 1812*, ed. Michael J. Crawford, 3:593.

deal with what had happened. "Now let me advise you in the most earnest and strong manner to refrain from such a mode of quiting or alleviating your feelings, your own good sense will I trust and sincerely hope point out the fallacy of such a remedy…"[49]

These stories above, though not directly tied to a particular chaplain, address some of the vices that plagued American sailors in the early national period. It was the chaplains' responsibilities to address such excesses through counseling, prayer, and public exhortations. As a means to contest, limit, and ultimately eradicate the effects of sin, chaplains encouraged their listeners to establish a personal relationship with God through knowledge of the Bible and a conversion experience. Dr. Andrew Hunter, while serving as chaplain of the Washington Naval Yard, sought to fulfill his ministerial responsibilities by handing out religious tracts and copies of the New Testament to any Marine or sailor who would receive them. In a letter written on March 31, 1813, Dr. Hunter implored Secretary of the Navy William Jones to provide additional funding for the endeavor. Hunter believed that such written material would "produce an amelioration of their morals and increase their civilization."[50]

Despite the popular stereotypes of eighteenth-century seamen, Dr. Hunter was convinced that sailors held religion in high esteem; so much so that such proclivity toward faith and any effort to foster such belief could be used to the government's advantage. "Our seamen and marines would be more attached to their government and their country," Hunter asserted, "if they found themselves regarded as rational beings, independent of the services which we demand and expect from them in defence of our

[49] Ibid.

[50] Andrew Hunter to William Jones, March 31, 1813, in *The Naval War of 1812*, ed. William S. Dudley, 2:82-83.

country and its precious rights." Until 1813, Dr. Hunter had been successful in sponsoring his ministry through the support of wealthy benefactors and local Bible societies. However, if the quest for a moral Navy was to become a reality, Hunter argued that greater financial support from the federal government was vital.[51]

Conclusion

This final plea by Andrew Hunter represents quite well the American government's expectations when it had created a naval chaplaincy. Religion and education were the means by which civic virtues could be instilled into the average sailor. While religious rituals were promoted, leaders were much more concerned about education in practical areas of study. Chaplains were challenged to move beyond the realm of spiritual edification to accomplish this.

While Congressional leaders were certainly not antagonistic towards the Christian faith, they were not overly concerned with proselytizing American's sailors either. Religion was merely a means by which the government could foster morality and discipline. Chaplains who could serve as private secretaries or teach nautical subjects were often more desirable than those who were morally upright or outspoken evangelists. Still, ministers like Benjamin Balch and Andrew Hunter fulfilled their call to spread the gospel by preaching sermons or handing out Bibles and religious tracts.

It was assumed some by some, particularly the British, that American sailors cared very little about religion or gentility. Chaplain Assheton Humphreys rejected such sentiment. He was surprised that Americans' enemies viewed them as a "set of uncouth animals uniformed and possessing little more intelligence than a brute…Such was the

[51] Ibid.

force of British prejudice that they had never troubled themselves with the idea that we might be Christians.[52]

[52] Tyrone G. Martin, ed., *The U.S.S. Constitution's Finest Fight, 1815: The Journal of Acting Chaplain Assheton Humphreys, U.S. Navy* (Mount Pleasant, SC: The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 2000), 37.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion: Contributions of this Project

Introduction

As the previous three chapters attest, the state of American Christianity in the maritime world, particularly during the initial decades of the United States' existence, is hard to describe. Christianity, the religion to which most Americans adhered to, was both alive and well, making its presence known via the personal beliefs and actions of America's mariners. While such an impact was certainly present, these mariners also functioned in a sea-faring culture that incorporated many non-Christian influences and confronted ideologies that challenged rather than reaffirmed their faiths.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter Two explored the intricacies of American Christians' interactions with the Islamic world, particularly the inhabitants of Tunis, Tripoli, Morocco, and Algiers. Christians in the maritime world believed many of the same preconceived notions concerning Islam and its followers. A derisive rhetoric formulated and reinforced through sermons, pamphlets, and other forms of literature cast Islam as the opponent of representative democracy, Christianity, and all other ideals that the Anglo-American tradition held so dear. If the United States was to survive its infantile stages, Americans staunchly believed that they had to shun what they perceived to be the submissive and tyrannical decrees of Islam. While Christians in the Atlantic world shared these attitudes

with the broader American society, the former group did experience Islam in a way that most Americans could only read or hear about.

American Christians in the early nineteenth-century maritime world responded to Islam from a wide range of possibilities that included scorn, tolerance, and acceptance. Various Americans, both sailors and politicians, belittled their Muslim counterparts as fanatics or religious enthusiasts. Captivity narratives, depending on the circumstances of the author, proved to be some of the most virulent treatments of Islam. Former captives of the Barbary States often criticized their Muslim taskmasters as cruel barbarians who mistreated their Christian prisoners.

Other Americans, especially diplomats, attempted to practice relative tolerance towards Muslims. Although there was little theological debate transpiring between Christians and Muslims, leaders on both sides of the Atlantic saw the need for compromise if their shared economic and political goals were to be achieved. This required a delicate balance between faithfulness to one's unique religious beliefs and an accommodation of a general, all-encompassing portrayal of the divine.

A few American sailors even accepted Islam as an equal or even superior alternative to Christianity. Although such cases among Americans were relatively sporadic, evidence exists to suggest that various factors led Christians to forsake their faith in exchange for Islam. These included compassion on behalf of the Muslims, fear, and pragmatism. Other Christians, such as American diplomat William Eaton, sought to emphasize in their writings and speeches that both Islam and Christianity were different paths to worshipping the same god.

This chapter ended with an analysis of the captivity narrative, a form of popular literature written by Americans who had served time as prisoners among the inhabitants of the Barbary States. After reviewing a few of the more prominent examples published around the turn of the century, it became apparent that individual experiences were contingent upon the rank and skills of the prisoner. The higher the rank or more practical the skill meant more comfort and vice versa.

The following chapter examined the historic tradition of providentialism, the act of interpreting God's will in human affairs. In response to Marcus Rediker's thesis concerning a stark contrast between the religious beliefs of officers and the average sailor, this chapter sought to disprove such a Marxist dichotomy while affirming the presence of a syncretic faith in maritime culture. To do so, primary sources written almost exclusively by officers and other "bourgeois" Americans were incorporated as evidence.

American Christians in the maritime world once again shared many of the convictions that their terrestrial-bound neighbors had. The first half of the chapter attempted to reinforce the idea that orthodox Christianity was a powerful influence on America's middle- and upper-class citizens in the Atlantic world. Traditional beliefs pertaining to the sovereignty of God, his dominion over creation, and his benevolent nature resurfaced time and again in these men's understandings of Divine Providence.

The latter portion of the chapter reaffirmed Rediker's analysis of religion in the maritime world by extending the influence of non-Christian beliefs to the bourgeois. Rituals and convictions that were not tolerated in "proper" American society, such as

tattoos, paganism, and superstition, were all deeply engrained in the character of the sea-faring man regardless of his station in life.

The final chapter of this thesis sought to complement Clifford Drury's history of the Navy Chaplain Corps by explaining why education was so central to the American government while capturing its struggle to define clear expectations of such a chaplaincy. This chapter analyzed the multi-faceted roles that naval chaplains fulfilled during the early national period. America's government officials and leading political philosophers believed that civic virtue and morality were critical to the progress of the nation. Religion was one of the best means to cultivate such civic virtues, especially among the armed services. For centuries, Christian chaplains had accompanied the military forces of Europe and America in an effort to secure God's blessings.

American leaders wanted the ideal naval chaplain to be a man of good morals who could promote virtuous living among a group of people notorious for their waywardness. Many of the chaplains during this time period were avid Christians, even ordained ministers, who sought to spread the gospel to their crews through sermons, communion, worship, religious tracts, and prayer. These men tried to combat the vices that plagued maritime culture while exhibiting high levels of virtue in their own lives.

This image of the spiritual exhorter, however, was not the only requirement considered during the appointments of naval chaplains. Other expectations abounded. Commanders sought learned men who could educate their peers in practical nautical matters such as astronomy, mathematics, and geography. They also wanted men to fill skilled roles such as interpreter, clerk, surgeon, or secretary. Rather than being a purely

spiritual position, the naval chaplain of the early national period was an amalgamation of religious, educational, practical, and political considerations.

Contributions to Field

These individual chapters concerning Christian-Muslim interactions, American providentialism, and naval chaplains, comprise a larger project designed to confirm and challenge various arguments within the existing historiography. One of the most unique aspects of this thesis is its attempt to tackle a new question. At the heart of this project, as the title suggests, is an examination of the challenges to American Christianity as experienced by those living in the maritime world. Each chapter sought to expound on an issue that existed primarily away from America's shores. While all three issues had significant historiographical sources to contend with, there is neither a satisfactory nor a definitive work concerning the religious beliefs of Americans in the maritime world.

Marcus Rediker's book contains an insightful chapter that examines the religious beliefs of the ordinary eighteenth-century sailor, but again, his view of history forces him to overlook the syncretic faith of America's bourgeois class. This project has attempted to rectify this by introducing the primary sources of officers and American diplomats in the Atlantic world and comparing them to Rediker's analysis. The findings, which constitute this project's second contribution, affirmed Rediker's thesis concerning syncretism in maritime religion. These conclusions, however, call into question the validity of his historical philosophy, for among American sailors, both officers and crewmen, providentialism was influenced by a mixture of Christian and non-Christian beliefs.

On a related note, this thesis also emphasized the vitality of Christian conviction among America's sailors. In the recent works of many maritime historians, including Rediker and Frank Lambert, the role of Christianity in the Atlantic world has been minimized in favor of other forces such as politics and economics. While some of the primary sources suggest that market realities could temper religiously exclusivist language, they just as often supported the basic tenets of the Christian faith by using overtly religious terminology. Each of the body chapters, while addressing some of the challenges and failures that Christians experienced, also stressed the widespread impact that Christianity had during the early national period. America's sailors, while capable of loose morals and unorthodox beliefs, often held fairly traditional views of Islam and providentialism that reflected broader trends within American Christianity.

To substantiate these claims, this project has relied on the use of primary source documents found in several multi-volume works. Although the writings of these naval officers and sailors have been published before, there have not been many books that have incorporated such materials. This thesis, while attempting to analyze the general state of American Christianity among a particular group of people, was able to cross disciplines by integrating religious and maritime history; thereby opening up a treasure trove of resources waiting to be used.

Conclusion

The introduction to this work began with a short description of how unpredictable life on the sea could be. American Christians in the early national period strove to maintain their faith in the midst of trying circumstances, but they often fell short of their lofty goals. This study, which lends itself to future discussions concerning the state of

religion in the maritime world, was but one contribution in the process of shedding more light on the truth about a complicated past.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Books and Pamphlets

Cathcart, James. *The Captives, Eleven Years a Prisoner in Algiers*, edited by J.B. Newkirk. LaPorte, IN: Herald Print, 1899. In *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives*, edited by Paul Baepler. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Cowdery, Jonathan. *American Captives in Tripoli; or Dr. Cowdery's Journal in Miniature. Kept During his Late Captivity in Tripoli*. 2nd ed. Boston: Belcher and Armstrong, 1806. In *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives*, edited by Paul Baepler. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Foss, John. *A Journal, Of the Captivity and Sufferings of John Foss; Several Years a Prisoner in Algiers: Together with Some Account of the Treatment of Christian Slaves when Sick: --And Observations on the Manners and Customs of the Algerines*. Newburyport, MA: A. March, 1798. In *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives*, edited by Paul Baepler. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Irving, Washington. *Biography of James Lawrence, Esq. Late a Captain in the Navy of the United States Together with a Collection of the Most Interesting Papers, Relative to the Action between the Chesapeake and Shannon, and the Death of Captain Lawrence*. New Brunswick, NJ: L. Deare, 1813.

Macdonough, Thomas. *Letter from the Secretary of the Navy to the Chairman of the Naval Committee, Transmitting Sundry Documents from Captain Macdonough Relating to the Capture of the British Fleet on Lake Champlain*. Washington, D.C.: Roger Chew Weightman, 1814.

Ray, William. *The Horrors of Slavery, or The American Tars in Tripoli*. Troy, NY: Oliver Lyon, 1808. In *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives*, edited by Paul Baepler. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Steel, David. *Seamanship, Both in Theory and Practice to Which is Annexed, An Essay on Naval Tactics & Signals also, Regulations for the Government of the Navy of the United States of America…and An Act Concerning Letters of Marque and Reprisals to Which is Subjoined, A List of Post Captains in the Navy of the United States*. New York: Edmund M. Blunt, 1812.

The Life of the Late General William Eaton: Principally Collected from His Correspondence and Other Manuscripts, edited by Charles Prentiss. Brookfield: E. Merriam and Company, 1813.

Washington, George. *Washington's Farewell Address, the Proclamation of Jackson against Nullification, and the Declaration of Independence*. Washington, D.C.: 1862. In *The Founding Fathers and the Debate over Religion in Revolutionary America: A History in Documents*, edited by Matthew L. Harris and Thomas S. Kidd. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Letters

Adams, John. John Adams to Bey of Tunis, January 15, 1800. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 1. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Bainbridge, William. William Bainbridge to Edward Preble, November 25, 1803. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 3. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Bainbridge, William. William Bainbridge to Edward Preble, July 8, 1804. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 4. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Bainbridge, William. William Bainbridge to George Davis, November 22, 1804. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 5. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Bainbridge, William. William Bainbridge to Sarah Bainbridge, November 1, 1803. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 3. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Bainbridge, William. William Bainbridge to Tobias Lear, November 11, 1804. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 5. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Barron, James. James Barron to William Jones, July 22, 1813. In *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, edited by William Dudley. Vol. 2. Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1985-2002.

Carmick, Daniel. Daniel Carmick to William W. Burrows, October 15, 1802. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 2. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Cathcart, James L. James L. Cathcart to James Madison, August 25, 1802. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 2. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Cathcart, James L. James L. Cathcart to James Madison, December 15, 1803. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 3. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Chauncey, Isaac. Isaac Chauncey to James T. Leonard, April 13, 1813. In *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, edited by William Dudley. Vol. 2. Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1985-2002.

Cowdery, Jonathan. Jonathan Cowdery to Dr. Mitchell, November 24, 1804. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 5. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Eaton, William. William Eaton to Robert Smith, December 13, 1804. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 5. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Eaton, William. William Eaton to Rufus King, June 6, 1802. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 2. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Eaton, William. William Eaton to Timothy Pickering, June 15, 1799. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 1. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Eaton, William and Richard O'Brien. William Eaton and Richard O'Brien to Timothy Pickering, February 22, 1799. In *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 2. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1935-1938.

Felch, Cheever. Cheever Felch to Benjamin Crowninshield, February 17, 1815. In *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, edited by Michael J. Crawford. Vol. 3. Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1985-2002.

Hamilton, Paul. Paul Hamilton to John Rodgers, June 22, 1812. In *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, edited by William Dudley. Vol. 1. Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1985-2002.

Humphreys, David. David Humphreys to Muley Soliman, May 21, 1795. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 1. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Humphreys, David. David Humphreys to Muley Soliman, November 30, 1796. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 1. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Hunter, Andrew. Andrew Hunter to William Jones, March 31, 1813. In *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, edited by William Dudley. Vol. 2. Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1985-2002.

Ingraham, Joseph. Joseph Ingraham to Timothy Pickering, September 26, 1799. In *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 4. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1935-1938.

Jones, John Paul. John Paul Jones to Father John Mehegan, April 30, 1779. *Jones Collection*, Letter No. 7073. Quoted in Drury, Clifford M. *The History of the Chaplain Corps, United States Navy*. Vol. 1. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps, 1984.

Jones, John Paul. John Paul Jones to Henry Grand, July 12, 1778. *Jones Collection*, Letter No. 6783. Quoted in Drury, Clifford M. *The History of the Chaplain Corps, United States Navy*. Vol. 1. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps, 1984.

Lear, Tobias. Tobias Lear to William Bainbridge, August 28, 1804. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 4. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Macdonough, Thomas. Thomas Macdonough to John T. Drury, November 12, 1814. In *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, edited by Michael J. Crawford. Vol. 3. Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1985-2002.

Mohamet, Soliman Ben. Soliman Ben Mohamet to Thomas Jefferson, October 11, 1803. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 3. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

O'Brien, Richard. Richard O'Brien to Thomas Jefferson, June 8, 1786. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 1. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

O'Brien, Richard. Richard O'Brien to unknown, April 28, 1787. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 1. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Perry, Oliver H. Oliver H. Perry to William Jones, September 10, 1813. In *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, edited by William Dudley. Vol. 2. Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1985-2002.

Porter, David. David Porter to William Jones, July 3, 1814. In *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, edited by Michael Crawford. Vol. 3. Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1985-2002.

Preble, Edward. Edward Preble to Prime Minister of the Bashaw of Tripoli, January 4, 1804. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 3. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Preble, Edward. Edward Preble to Robert Smith, December 10, 1803. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 3. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Preble, Edward. Edward Preble to William Bainbridge, January 23, 1804. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 3. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Rodgers, John. John Rodgers to Robert Smith, July 7-September 1, 1805. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 6. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Smith, Robert. Robert Smith to Daniel McNeill, October 1, 1801. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 6. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Stoddert, Benjamin. Benjamin Stoddert to Thomas Turner, August 21, 1800. In *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 4. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1935-1938.

Taylor, William V. William V. Taylor to Abby Taylor, September 15, 1813. In *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, edited by William S. Dudley. Vol. 2. Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1985-2002.

Truxton, Thomas. Thomas Truxton to William W. Burrows, April 12, 1801. In *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 7. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1935-1938.

Wadsworth, Henry. Henry Wadsworth to unknown, January 10, 1804. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 3. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Articles

Madison, James. "Monopolies, Perpetuities, Corporations, Ecclesiastical Endowments." In "Madison's 'Detached Memoranda,' " edited by Elizabeth Fleet, *William and Mary Quarterly* 3 (1946): 551-562.

Journal Entries

Cowdery, Jonathan. August 9, 1804. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 4. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Eaton, William. December 21, 1804. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 5. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Eaton, William. March 30, 1805. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 5. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Feltus, William W. November 23, 1812. In *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, edited by William S. Dudley. Vol. 1. Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1985-2002.

Wadsworth, Henry. April 2, 1803. Eaton, William. March 30, 1805. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 2. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Willson, Thomas. "Encounter of Brig *Essequebo Packet* with French Picaroon, to Windward of Martinico, January 30, 1799." In *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 2. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1935-1938.

Other Primary Sources

Danvers Historical Collection, VII: 89-91. Quoted in Drury, Clifford M. *The History of the Chaplain Corps, United States Navy*. Vol. 1. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps, 1984.

"Design of the Head for the Frigate *Constellation*, 1798." In *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 2. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1935-1938.

Eaton, William. "Proclamation to Inhabitants of Tripoli, March 29, 1805. In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 5. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

"Editorial on the Loss of the *Essex*." In *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, edited by Michael J. Crawford. Vol. 3. Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1985-2002.

Edwards, Jonathan. "1 Corinthians." In *The Blank Bible*, edited by Stephen J. Stein. Vol. 24 of *Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

Edwards, Jonathan. "Sermon 26." In *A History of the Work of Redemption*, edited by John F. Wilson. Vol. 9 of *Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.

Jefferson, Thomas. "U.S. Navy Regulations Issued January 25, 1802." In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 2. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

"Launching of the Sloop of War *Chesapeake* and Description of her Figure Head, June 20, 1799." In *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 3. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1935-1938.

"Memorial of the Crew of the Privateer *General Armstrong* to John Sinclair, March 18, 1813." In *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, edited by William Dudley. Vol. 2. Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1985-2002.

"Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the United States of America and the Bey and Subjects of Tripoli of Barbary, 1798." In *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, edited by Dudley Knox. Vol. 1. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Secondary Sources

Multi-Volume Works

Dudley, William S., and Michael J. Crawford, eds. *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*. Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1985-2002.

Knox, Dudley, ed. *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1935-1938.

Knox, Dudley, ed. *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939-1944.

Monographs

Allison, Robert J. *The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World, 1776-1815*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Baepler, Paul, ed. *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Bailyn Bernard. *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967.

Brodine, Jr., Charles E., Michael J. Crawford, and Christine F. Hughes. *Against All Odds: U.S. Sailors in the War of 1812*. Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 2004.

Davis, Robert C. *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Drury, Clifford M. *The History of the Chaplain Corps, United States Navy*. Vol. 1. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps, 1984.

Fea, John. *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011.

Goodspeed, M. Hill. *U.S. Navy: A Complete History*. Hong Kong: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, Inc., 2003.

Guyatt, Nicholas. *Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607-1876*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Harris, Matthew L. and Thomas S. Kidd, eds. *The Founding Fathers and the Debate over Religion in Revolutionary America: A History in Documents*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Heam, Chester G. *Navy, An Illustrated History: The U.S. Navy from 1775 to the 21st Century*. St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2007.

Howard, James L. *Seth Harding: Mariner*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930.

Hughes, Richard T. *Myths America Lives By*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003.

Kidd, Thomas S. *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

Kidd, Thomas S. *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution*. New York: Basic Books, 2010.

Lambert, Frank. *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2005.

Martin, Tyrone G., ed. *The U.S.S. Constitution's Finest Fight, 1815: The Journal of Acting Chaplain Assheton Humphreys, U.S. Navy*. Mount Pleasant, SC: The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 2000.

Matar, Nabil. *Britain and Barbary, 1589-1689*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005.

Matar, Nabil. *Europe through Arab Eyes, 1578-1727*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.

Matar, Nabil. *Islam in Britain, 1558-1675*. Cambridge: Columbia University Press, 1998.

Matar, Nabil. *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

Milton, Giles. *White Gold: The Extraordinary Story of Thomas Pellow and Islam's One Million White Slaves*. New York: Picador, 2004.

Newman, Simon P. *Embodied History: The Lives of the Poor in Early Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003.

Noll, Mark A. *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Noll, Mark A., Nathan O. Hatch, and George M. Marsden. *The Search for Christian America*. Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard, 1989.

Rediker, Marcus. *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Royster, Charles. *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army & American Character, 1776-1783*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979.

Tucker, Glenn. *Dawn Like Thunder: The Barbary Wars and the Birth of the U.S. Navy*. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1963.

Wilbur, C. Keith. *Pirates & Patriots of the Revolution: An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Colonial Seamanship*. Old Saybrook, CT: The Globe Pequot Press, 1984.

Wood, Gordon S. *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. New York: Vintage Books, 1991.

Articles/Book Chapters

Baepler, Paul. "White Slaves, African Masters." *Annals of the American Academy of Political & Social Science* 588 (July 2003): 90-111.

Bouânani, Moulay Ali. "Propaganda for Empire: Barbary Captivity Literature in the US." *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 7 (December 2009): 399-412.

Brant, Irving. "Madison: On the Separation of Church and State." *William and Mary Quarterly* 8 (January 1951): 4-24.

Brown, L. Carl. "The United States and the Maghrib." *Middle East Journal* 30 (Summer 1976): 273-290.

Burchard, Waldo W. "Role Conflicts of Military Chaplains." *American Sociological Review* 19 (October 1954): 528-535.

Germain, Dom A. H. "Catholic Military and Naval Chaplains, 1776-1917." *The Catholic Historical Review* 15 (July 1929): 171-178.

Hoch, Adrian S. "St. Martin of Tours: His Transformation into a Chivalric Hero and Franciscan Ideal." *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 50 (1987): 471-482.

Marsden, George M. "The American Revolution." In *The Wars of America: Christian Views*, edited by Ronald A. Wells, 13-31. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1991.

Metzger, Charles H. "Chaplains in the American Revolution." *The Catholic Historical Review* 31 (April 1945): 31-79.

Munoz, Vincent P. "James Madison's Principle of Religious Liberty." *The American Political Science Review* 97 (February 2003): 17-32.

Dissertations/Theses

Gan, Hai. "Discussion of the American Military in Relation to War, the Bible, the First Amendment, and Constitutional Cases: Ethical and Constitutional Considerations." Master's thesis, Baylor University, 1997.