Winner of the KATH George C. Herring Graduate Writing Award

September 28

2013

Humanity Begins at Home: America's First Refugees and the Roots of U.S. Humanitarianism

Bethany Sharpe, University of Kentucky

Humanity Begins at Home:
America's First Refugees and the Roots of U.S. Humanitarianism

Introduction

In 1783, with the end of the War for Independence, the US both produced and accepted refugees. It warmly welcomed Canadian refugees who had participated in the Revolutionary War, while at the same time it passed discriminatory and persecutory acts against former Loyalists to Britain. Consequently, large numbers of people left and arrived in the United States. This post-war crisis of population movements represented America's first test of national compassion to those outside and inside its borders. Divisive debates ensued about the moral, monetary, religious, and political obligations the nation owed these two sets of people. The history of American humanitarian action in the world to relieve the distress of vulnerable and desperate populations can be traced to this time, the debates around this home-grown crisis, and the ways in which particular sets of people associated with war and ideological conflict were treated.

Yet, this first humanitarian crisis and the ensuing questions over responsibility of protection that stemmed from it have been overlooked by historians. This study will argue that the culture of providing protection for those in distressful situations underwent a significant reshaping during the years 1783-1786. The tension between religion and republicanism, in the context of refugee protection, played an integral role in transforming how Americans thought about refugee protection. This study will compare the treatment of Canadian and Loyalist refugees to show that American justice, benevolence, and care were first narrowly understood in their application. They were bestowed only on those who fit a pre-conceived republican and Protestant image. Only through much debate over the place of religion in refugee protection was this vision broadened to include those who did not fit such an image. By 1786, republicanism

and religion merged in the context of refugee protection to create a broader understanding of benevolence. As a result, Americans began providing care and aid to a wider variety of groups.

The heart of this study deals with the question of what exactly was the relationship between America and the world and how America formulated conceptions about what it owed to the world. This is a topic that concerns many historians of foreign relations, and several works have been produced that develop the specifics of this relationship. Taken together, these studies shed important light on the evolution of American foreign relations, but two troubling concerns arise from this body of literature.[1] First, if one did not know better, it would seem as though the history of America's foreign relations began only post-1865. Although we have a good grasp of the political, gendered, racial, and cultural dimensions of events post-1865, the same cannot be said of the period before. Talking about this deficiency in the literature, Andrew Preston commented on the consequences of leaving this early period untouched when he stated that this period, and the Revolutionary War in particular, "remains central to understanding the American worldview and diplomatic tradition."[2] If historians of foreign relations fail to acknowledge the way this period shaped the course of events, then the existing studies present an incomplete picture.

---

[1] A few of the better-known works that show the evolution of American foreign relations thought include Kristin Hogan's innovative use of gender in *Fighting For American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) highlights the way in which gender proved an important motivating factor in the Spanish-American and Philippine-American wars of 1898. Mary Renda's *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001) uses paternalism and race to explore American occupation of Haiti between 1915 and 1940.Dower's *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986) unpacks the crucial role that race played throughout World War II. Jeremy Suri's *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Detent Protest* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003) merges history from the top with that of history from below to explain the rise of détente and its place in the Cold War. Michael Hunt's *Ideology and US Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987) focuses on the ideology behind American action in the world. George Herring's *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776 (*Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) provides a valuable synthesis of works devoted to America's relationship with the world.

[2] Andrew Preston, "Bridging the Gap between the Sacred and the Secular in American Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History* vol. 30, no. 5 (2006): 783-812, 801.

A second concern with the field of foreign relations is the preponderance of war-based works. Focusing so intently on war overshadows the other ways America interacted with the world. One such way is humanitarianism. Humanitarianism, or the disposition to act out of a concern for human welfare rather than for pragmatic or strategic reasons, has been an important part of American engagement with the world.[3] Yet scholars have neglected to dissect this behavior. Foreign relations scholars who do examine acts of giving or acting charitably most often subsume such actions within theories of development and modernization ideology that are inevitably bound up with national economic and social restructuring objectives directly related to wars.[4]

As a result of these historiographical omissions, America's humanitarian action has been narrowly defined, cemented to larger strategic global objectives that America pursues, and understood in light of that particular frame of reference. There is no denying the intimate relationship between America's acts of compassion and the deliberate strategic paths it pursues in its foreign policy. But to see humanitarianism as simply part of strategic, rational decision-making by national leaders is to flatten the complexity of the acts that America does undertake. In not studying the topic on its own, scholars neglect important considerations of ethics and moral responsibility that the United States does contemplate separate from strategic foreign policy goals. Readers and students of foreign relations are left with nagging questions over the

---

[3] Oxford English Dictionary definition of humanitarianism

[4] Michael Latham's *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and Nation Building in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000) and Nick Cullather's *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010) best represent the subsuming of charitable acts under development and modernization theories. Latham's work highlights the Kennedy Era programs Alliance for Progress, the Peace Corps, and the strategic hamlet counterinsurgency strategy in Vietnam to show how the vision of America as a shining example of development drove Kennedy's foreign policy. Cullather's work shows Americans attempted to control a world of uncertainty through development programs in Asia that intended to promote economic growth as a means to curtail the turmoil of the region.

origins of this responsibility, how this responsibility applies in different contexts, and the evolution of this responsibility.

One way to study American humanitarian action is to look at refugees. Given the unique circumstances surrounding refugees and asylum seekers, they are an ideal group through which to study America's commitment to humanitarianism and its own understanding of that commitment.[5] The work that has been done on this population in an historical context often comes from those outside of history,[6] but the historians who have addressed this subject are few and far between.[7] As a result, there is as yet little in the way of ongoing debate that traditionally defines most other historiographies. However, three historians who have considered refugees stand out for their distinctive studies in American history between 1607 and 1804. Each of these

---

[5] Aristide Zolberg's *Escape from Violence: Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in the Developing World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) makes a compelling argument for why refugees are different from other migrants.

[6] Political scientist Gil Loescher's *Calculated Kindness: Refugees and America's Half-Open Door, 1945 to the Present* (New York: Free Press, 1986) is one of the most cited works detailing America's refugee policy. He begins his study with America reaction to refugees fleeing Nazi persecution during World War II and ends with the place of refugees in the Reagan administration. Focusing on the evolution of U.S. refugee policy during this time period he finds that American policy makers have become increasingly calculated about who they extend official protection to. Such calculation rests on a complex set of factors that include foreign policy goals, the domestic zeitgeist, and constituent demands. Aristide Zolberg is another political scientist that concentrates on refugees within the framework of international migration. His focus remains of contemporary refugee crises and conflicts especially within the African continent. Anthropologist David Haines offers an overview of refugee history in the US in *Safe Haven?:A History of Refugees in America* (Sterling: Kumarian Press, 2010). He focuses primarily on resettlement issues and whether America has provided as safe a refuge to refugees as its rhetoric has claimed. With this focus, he necessarily concentrates on the domestic context and how refugees have, or have not, been received by their American neighbors. Refugee topics are also intently studied by geographers. Social Geographer Jennifer Hyndman, *Managing Displacement: Refugees and the Politics of Humanitarianism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), looks at how the spatial boundaries of refugee camps in Africa produce certain behaviors in refugee populations.

[7] See Marilyn Baseler's *"Asylum for Mankind", America, 1607-1800* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), Ashli White's *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010). See also Maya Jassanoff's *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011). Jassanoff uses the subject of Loyalist exile resettlement to explore the strengthening of British imperial power after the Revolutionary War. Also, see Bon Tempo's *Americans at the Gate: the United States and Refugees During the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). He answers the question of how and why the U.S. chose to resettle certain groups of refugees beginning with World War II. His conclusions echo those of Gil Loescher's as he finds that domestic politics play an important role in how certain groups are welcomed into the United States.

studies presents a valuable foundation for future historians to shape the contours of debates around American humanitarian action.

Allan Everest's *Moses Hazen and the Canadian Refugees in the American Revolution* (1976), Marilyn Baseler's *Asylum for Mankind: America, 1607-1800* (1998), and Ashli White's *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (2010) all use refugees to explore questions America struggled with in the early republic. Everest looks at Canadian refugees to uncover the complex diversity of Revolutionary War casualties, while Baseler uses them to understand the image-building America was actively pursuing in the early republic. Meanwhile, White looks to refugees to explain the shape that the internal debate over slavery eventually took. Even as they use refugees as a lens of analysis, these authors fail to address the fundamental questions surrounding refugees.

What we should really be asking when we look at refugees in the early republic is how America came to understand its responsibility towards distressed groups seeking aid. Other questions surrounding refugees that are left unanswered include how America understands its humanitarian role at home and in the world; how it enacts that role in different contexts; which kinds of groups are afforded relief and why; and why and how the application of relief, aid, and protection has changed over time. A better understanding of the struggle America faced with the refugees at its door during this time period will help answer some of those questions. If we are to take seriously the role that America has played in the world through its humanitarian acts and decisions, how it has shaped the world through such actions, and how it has been shaped by the consequences of such actions, we must treat it as a subject in its own right.

To consider how America understood its responsibility towards distressed groups in the early republic, this discussion is divided into three sections. The first section looks at how the

Catholic religion of Canadian refugees mediated American response towards their appeals for aid. The second section looks at how the Protestant religion of Americans shaped the response to Loyalists seeking aid. Both sections also discuss the ways in which republicanism influenced the kind of responses different refugees received. In both cases, when confronted with the prospect of new entrants into the community, Americans found themselves asking how the religion and republicanism of the refugees would affect their behavior in the commonweal. Many came to the conclusion that politics was the crucial factor in determining refugee response. The third section moves on to explore the ways in which republicanism and religion merged in the context of refugee protection to create an expanded definition of benevolence which was then extended to a wider variety of groups.[8]

Canadians and the Limits of Refugee Protection:

As Aristide Zolberg explains, in its original usage, the term "refugee" was applied to persons escaping religious persecution.[9] The term gained common currency during the seventeenth century when it was applied to Huguenots streaming into England after Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Because refugees fled to a sympathetic Protestant country, they were welcomed and offered protections that other persons did not receive.[10] The defining association between flight and religion carried over into British North America. When colonists spoke of

---

[8] Many historians agree that religion and politics merged in many ways in American life prior to the 1786 period I refer to as the origin of the two margining in the context of refugee protection. Patricia Bonomi, for example, details significant increase in religious impulses in colonial America and its influence on political life while Harry Miller Stout, "Religion, Communications, and the Ideological Origins of the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* vol. 34, no. 4 (1977): 519-541 examines the way that religious rhetoric fused with the rhetoric of republican ideology creating the means for participation in the revolution for classes that were not learned, schooled, or elite. Political theorist Ellis Sandoz also looks at religion and republicanism in the United States in his work *Republicanism, Religion, and the Soul of America* (Columbia Press: University of Missouri, 2006). He discusses the importance of itinerant preachers in fusing religious rhetoric into the American Revolution, 56.

[9] Aristide Zolberg, *et al*., *Escape From Violence: Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in the Developing World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 5-8.

[10] Zolberg, 5.

refugees, they were usually speaking of people fleeing their homes to escape religious intolerance.[11]

With the onset of the Revolutionary War, Marilyn Baseler argues that the defining characteristic of a refugee fleeing religious persecution became less distinct.[12] The term "refugee" lost some of its religious dimensions and took on political characteristics.[13] As defining characteristics of refugeeness evolved, so did the assumptions about what was owed to a refugee. Unlike their early seventeenth-century cousins who dissented for religious reasons, Revolutionary War political dissenters were not welcomed.[14] When the definition of refugee became linked to the political dispute between America and Britain, it became less certain that the newly independent states should provide assistance to those who today we would consider refugees.[15]

Not all political dissenters were the same, however. As Allen Everest has explained, there were political dissidents who, making their way to the United States, found a welcome reception. The refugees from Canada who migrated from Nova Scotia to New York exemplify this.[16] The American public so sympathized with this group of refugees that the Continental Congress enacted a formal monetary policy for their support and maintenance in the refugee camp towns of Albany and Fishkill, New York.[17] When placed against the changing context of refugee definitions and the increasing resistance to receive refugees, the reception of this group

---

[11] Zolberg, 5; Baseler, 56.
[12] Baseler, 118.
[13] Ibid.,199; Ritcheson, *Aftermath of the Revolution: British Policy Toward the United States, 1783-1795* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1969), 50.
[14] Ritcheson, 50-55; Tansman, 60-63 speak particularly of Loyalist dissenters that were not welcomed after the war.
[15] Ritcheson, 50.
[16] Allan Everest, *Moses Hazen and the Canadian Refugees in the American Revolution* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1976), 118-119.
[17] Everest, 118-119.

highlights the question of why they were so welcomed when they were political dissidents. Two things stand out when answering this question: first, the U.S. felt a sense of moral responsibility towards these men and their families; and, second, these particular political refugees were understood to be fighting on the right side of the Revolutionary War. As George Herring notes, Revolutionaries saw Canada as an integral part of their military strategy and extended invitations to these colonies to join in the War effort. The vast territory would act as a bulwark against any attempted future invasions by Great Britain and the fisheries would contribute to American wealth. More immediately, Revolutionaries understood joining arms with Canada, would strain British military forces.[18] The Canadians who took up the American invitation found that at the conclusion of the war they had no home to go back to in Canada.[19]

The U.S. welcomed these refugees for more reasons than out of a simple sense of responsibility towards their plight. In fighting so diligently for the patriot cause, the Canadians proved their allegiance to republican ideals. Placing refugees within the framework of republicanism proved the catalyst for accepting them in America and, once they were in the country, of supporting them. Members of the Confederation Congress demonstrated a concern early on with how well refugees adhered to republican principles. In 1783 Congress explicitly stated that they "retain a lively sense of the services the Canadian officers and men have rendered the United States, and that they are seriously disposed to reward them for their virtuous sufferings in the cause of liberty."[20] A sense of U.S. culpability is clear in this statement, but the motivating factor for acting on this responsibility is refugee allegiance to the cause of liberty.

---

[18] George Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Everest 62-67.
[19] Everest, 113-114.
[20] Journals of the Continental Congress, April 23, 1783.

Gordon S. Wood explains that Americans understood republicanism, in part, as "the sacrifice of individual interests to the greater good of the whole."[21] What Canadian refugees sacrificed in order to advance the cause of liberty remained a consistent theme throughout Congressional debates and hearings over how to treat Canadian refugees. So many memorials had been presented to Congress on behalf of the refugees related to their losses during the War, that a "Committee on the Memorial of Refugees from Canada" was established. In 1784, the culmination of this report appeared in Congress and the theme of sacrifice played heavily. The Committee declared that in choosing the side of the Revolutionaries this "occasioned the loss of the greatest part of their property and reduced many of them to the utmost distress."[22] George Washington also weighed in on the conversation. He wrote that the refugees deserved some kind of recompense for their great loss of property.[23] The presence of these Canadian refugees did not cause a tremendous amount of suspicion from Americans when they were thought about in the framework of republicanism. In Canada, these men had established farms, properties, and businesses, and they willingly sacrificed these for the greater, public cause – perhaps the greatest cause there was – of spreading liberty.

The individual sacrifice of losing property dovetailed with another crucial ingredient of republicanism, that of public virtue. Wood defines public virtue as "the willingness of the people to surrender all, even their lives, for the good of the state" and "was primarily the consequence of men's private individual virtues."[24] Sacrificing individual interests in Canada highlighted that Canadian refugees already possessed an inherent sense of public virtue. What they did in their

---

[21] Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), 53.
[22] Journals of the Continental Congress, Feb. 10, 1784.
[23] George Washington, *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799, Volume 27* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 69-70.
[24] Wood, 69.

private lives buoyed the common cause. There was little question that men such as Josiah Throop, who left his family and property in Canada to support the war, would do everything in their power to display public virtue once they arrived in the U.S. George Washington subtly reiterated this point when he wrote in a letter to Congress that Canadian refugees would prove a boon to the larger American community.[25]

However, there was one troubling aspect to admitting Canadian refugees into the country, and that was their religion. Canadian refugees were practicing Catholics.[26] American suspicion of certain religions, of which Catholicism was one, had a long history that was rooted, in part, in fear.[27] Chris Beneke explains that at least part of this fear and suspicion stemmed from the association between Catholicism and the brutal violence of the Spanish inquisition.[28] Many Americans saw the pope as the primary instigator of this violence, a man who had "deluged the earth with the Blood of Christians."[29] The association between Catholicism and violence in the per-Revolutionary era was so close that advocates of religious liberty used the Catholic case as an example of why America needed religious toleration. If Americans were to carry on

---

[25] George Washington, *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799, Volume 27* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 69-70.
[26] Hazen, 113
[27] Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 1967), 96-98, 144. Bailyn notes the importance revolutionaries attached to religious conspiracies and the deep seated fears these conspiracies inspired. Bailyn discusses the especial resistance to Anglican theology due to the idea that England was behind an "ecclesiastical conspiracy against American liberties" (97). In essence, colonists believed London was trying to establish an American episcopate from which Britain could then circumscribe colonial liberties. Although this particular conspiracy focused on the Anglican religion, Catholicism was seen as yet another hierarchical religion, with obedience to the Pope above all others that could infiltrate early America with the intent of destroying liberties. John Miller, *Popery and Politics in England, 1660-1688* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973). Miller explains that while Catholics were a minority in England, the English took a fearful view of them as Louis XIV became the most powerful ruler in Europe and the "self-styled champion of Catholicism," 67. English Protestants feared that the Catholic James, the Duke of York, would implement a bloody persecution of Protestants if he took power.
[28] Chris Beneke, "Not by Force or Violence": Religious Violence, Anti-Catholicism, and Rights of Conscience in the Early National United States," *Journal of Church and State* vol. 54, no. 1 (2012): 5-32.
[29] Elisha Williams, The Essential Rights and Liberties of Protestants: A Seasonable Plea for the Liberty of Conscience and the Right of Private Judgment in Matters of Religion (Boston: S. Keneland and T. Green in Queenstreet, 1744), 44-45, quoted in Chris Beneke.

enlightenment ideals, they had to stand vigilante against the kind of violence a religion like Catholicism incited. [30]

Although deep suspicion of Catholics remained in early America, Chris Beneke suggests that the Revolutionary years opened a window of toleration for Catholics in America. Because patriot Catholics suffered at the hands of the British alongside Protestant patriots, this, according to Beneke, shifted the focus of religious violence to civil violence. As a result, the door opened for greater religious toleration. Patriot martyrs, rather than religious martyrs, were made during the Revolution, resulting in the idea that anyone could become a patriot martyr. In trying to understand the Catholic Canadian patriots who arrived at their borders seeking aid, Americans found that religion muddled the seemingly simple divide in the formula to include proven republicans and exclude vile traitors in body politic.

Space was opening for religious toleration, yet the specter of anti-Catholicism lingered.[31] Americans struggled with how to incorporate these newcomers to the country in such a way that promoted their most valuable characteristics, while simultaneously de-emphasizing those characteristics they found troubling. What sources are available require a certain amount of speculation to understand how Americans responded to Catholic republicans seeking aid.[32]Allan

---

[30] Chris Beneke, "Not by Force or Violence": Religious Violence, Anti-Catholicism, and Rights of Conscience in the Early National United States," *Journal of Church and State* vol. 54, no. 1 (2012): 5-32.

[31] Ibid., "Not by Force or Violence": Religious Violence, Anti-Catholicism, and Rights of Conscience in the Early National United States," *Journal of Church and State* vol. 54, no. 1 (2012): 5-32. Although anti-Catholicism lessened, it did not completely disappear.

[32] I am not able to explore fully primary sources at this time, but *The Papers of the War Department* collection offer what look to be promising documents. This collection offers a series of documents related to refugees from Canada and their interaction with government officials from 1784-1800. For example, it was not uncommon for refugees to send requests to Congress asking that subsistence money promised at the conclusion of the War be delivered (see Edward Antill, Feb. 12, 1784). Non-remuneration occurred in large part because the nation's coffers dwindled (Everest, 113-117) which also explains why so many other American patriot soldiers were also not paid (Morris, 36). Using these documents from the War Department might shed some light on the different reactions, if there were any, Congress had to the refugees versus the reactions they had towards other casualties from the War. This, in turn, could help answer the question of just how seriously Congress, and the nation, took its responsibility towards groups

Everest tells us important information concerning the spatial arrangements of the Canadian refugee. He explains that the refugees lingered for at least three years in camps awaiting land tracts promised by Congress as repayment for their service during the War. It was not until 1786 that they were moved to Clinton, New York, near Lake Champlain, in part because Congress believed the refugees were becoming public charges.[33] Prior to 1786, they lived on food and money rations provided by Congress.

It is interesting to note that Congress elected to spend money on giving rations to a people living in a centralized, bounded location of a refugee camp rather than encouraging the refugees to incorporate themselves into society. This action appears even more striking in light of the many descriptions ascribed to Canadian refugees as virtuous republicans.[34] Furthermore, when providing rations within the camp proved too much of a fiscal responsibility, Congress took urgent action to then move the group of refugees en masse to another bounded territory on Lake Champlain. In neither location was there much interaction with larger American society.[35] It is certainly plausible that the refugees wanted to maintain this group cohesion and elected to stay together as a unit rather than attempt to make new lives separate from their kinsmen. But, when minority groups are physically separated from the larger society and given limited

---

in distress. In other words, were the calls to support Canadian refugees for their virtuous behavior any more than mere rhetoric?

[33] Everest, 125- 129. According to Everest, directly after the war Canadian refugees encamped in Albany and Fishkill until it was decided what form of repayment Congress would provide to them in return for their services during the War. Those in the camps received rations from Congress. Congress also decided that Canadians would receive land grants along Lake Champlain as a form of repayment, but distributing those lands became a long and slow process. As a result, the camps remained active until 1786 when the rations expired. By this time it was apparent that little progress had taken place in Congress on moving the refugees to Lake Champlain. To alleviate any more responsibility Congress would owe to the refugees, rations were extended for fifteen more months and they decided to subsidize the move of the refugees to Lake Champlain. This was all in an attempt to keep the refugees from acting as a further drain on public resources.

[34] Journals of the Continental Congress, April 23, 1783.

[35] Everest, 133. Everest notes that while many of the refugees settled on Lake Champlain, not all did. Some sold their rights to the land.

opportunities for incorporation, questions do arise in regards to the expected outcome of that group's political participation.[36] In light of the potential consequences of incorporating practicing Roman Catholic Canadian refugees into the republic, it is also plausible that Americans opted to *not* incorporate them into the community as a means to limit their participation in the fragile republic. In this case, refugee religion limited protection, and thus the kinds of rights that refugees would receive. But Americans still had to answer the question of how to account for the refugees' virtuous services during the War. Moving them to Lake Champlain was one solution. The refugees were allowed into the country, which became an acknowledgement of their virtuousness, but in living on a separate tract of land, it was harder for them to become a functioning part of the republican community where their Catholicism might cause irreparable rents in that community.

Religion and republicanism played central roles in shaping US conceptions of Canadian refugees. Americans feared admitting Canadian refugees into the nation because of their Catholic religion, but simultaneously felt a compulsion to grant them entrance because of their republican virtuousness. Where one ideology explained or justified why a group of refugees should be accepted into America, the other ideology just as easily provided reasoning for why the same group should be excluded. In deciding who to let into the republic, Americans had to weigh carefully every aspect of an individual's life. Religion and virtue acted as important markers for how potential citizens would function in the new republic. Americans faced a perplexing situation in which Canadian refugees confounded easy understandings of the ideal republican. As

---

[36] Leonard Feldman, "Redistribution, Recognition, and the State," *Political Theory* vol. 30, no. 5 (2002): 410-440. Important questions that arise concerning the spatial segregation of groups include how such groups will participate in the larger community and what will be made of their rights.

they debated whether to allow in, and support, Canadian refugees, Americans decided that refugee religion was less important when compared to their politics of opposition to monarchy.

Religion further complicated issues around protection because it was not simply refugee religion that Americans took into account. Their own Protestant tradition of offering protection consistently resurfaced refugee debates, but its weight played out differently among various refugee groups.[37] In context of Canadian refugee protection, Americans struggled less with their own religious convictions in debating what support to give to Canadians because of the political ideologies that Canadians held. In the context of Loyalist refuge protection, on the other hand, Protestant religion was strikingly at odds with republicanism. When normally these two ideologies were mutually reinforcing in many aspects of America's national life, within the context of refugee protection they operated in tension with each other between the years 1783 and 1786.[38] The following section will look in more detail at how this tension played out in Loyalist protection.

Loyalists and the Limits of Refugee Protection:

As discussed above, a dramatic shift took place with the onset of the Revolution in how Americans understood what kind of protection to provide refugees.[39] With more and more persons fleeing from their communities because of *political* persecution, Americans were less

---

[37] See, for example, religious based arguments promoting Loyalist reintegration in "News and Opinion," *The Boston Evening Post and The General Advisor*, 10 May 1783, 3.

[38] Major proponents of the republican school include Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic* (New York: Norton, 1969); Bernard Bailyn, *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967); J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975). In addition, several authors have explored the influence of republicanism in American life. See, for example, Jan Lewis, "The Republican Wife: Virtue and Seduction in the Early Republic," *William and Mary Quarterly* vol. 44, no. 4 (1987): 689-721 for a discussion on republicanism and marital relations and Linda K. Kerber, "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment—An American Perspective," *American Quarterly* vol. 28, no. 2 (1976): 187-205 for a discussion on republican motherhood.

[39] Baseler, 56. Baseler notes that a shift took place, but she does not examine the extent of this shift.

willing to extend traditional refugee protections to this new class of refugee.[40] Although rumblings of discontent over providing protection to political dissenters may have been expected, what is striking is just how far Americans had departed during the Revolution from any idea of protection for refugees. This shift was especially prevalent in the Loyalist refugee case.

The satirical poem *The Cow Chace*, written in 1780 by John Andre to retell the story of a failed raid on Loyalists, highlights this dramatic change.[41] Andre uses the term "refugee" only in the context of a people who have fled a country because of political disputes. These are not religious refugees, but political refugees, and as such were dissenters of the worst kind. According to the poem, political refugees produced by the Revolutionary War are not persons acting on good faith and consciousness as it was understood that previous religious refugees had done. On the contrary, according to the author, these were "paltry" persons deliberately acting on bad faith and consciously trying to stir up trouble. These men were undeserving of a special refugee status. They may have been refugees, but they were not going to receive the protections that had once accompanied that status. In fact, the author of the poem deems it more than acceptable to persecute them *because* of their refugee status. He states that appropriate treatment of these men would involve "a horrid slaughter, We'll drive the scoundrels to the Devil, and ravish Wife and Daughter."[42] As *The Cow Chace* shows, by 1780 the reason for flight was crucial in determining how to treat refugees. The label of refugee no longer equated to automatic protection, but could in fact bring about disastrous consequences, including murder and rape.

---

[40] Ibid., 56.
[41] John Andre, *The Cow Chace; A Poem in Three Cantos* (Albany: J. Munsell, 1866). According to the preface in this edition, on July 21, 1780 a small revolutionary party led by General Wayne set out to overtake a position held by Loyalist refugees near New Jersey. According to newspaper accounts approximately 2,000 revolutionaries were kept at bay by only a handful of refugees.
[42] John Andre, *The Cow Chace: A Poem in Three Cantos* (Albany: J. Munsell, 1866), 5.

Several thousand Loyalists fled because of the kind of persecution described above or were expelled during the War, yet many clung to the desire to return to the communities in America from which they had been exiled.[43] Acting on this desire they agitated for equitable treatment in their home communities once they did return home, but Americans were reluctant to extend such treatment.[44] If republican virtue proved the motivating force in 1783 for weaving Canadian refugees into the American fabric and providing them with protection, it was also a catalyst for excising Loyalists, out of that same cloth.[45] Robert Livingston wrote to Benjamin Franklin that if Loyalists returned as fully restored citizens to the nation they "will neglect no means to injure and Subvert our Constitution and Government, and to sew divisions among us in order to pay the way for the introduction of the Old System."[46] As Livingston pointed out, Loyalists would only be poison in the republican water. Because the fragile nature of republicanism needed vigilant protection, true patriotism revealed itself by thoroughly rejecting any danger to it which translated into rejection of the Loyalists.[47] Such vehement dismissal of

---

[43] Tansman, 32-33; Ritcheson's *Aftermath of the Revolution* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1969), 49, talks about the desire of many Loyalists to return home. They were such an important sticking point in the Treaty of Paris negotiations that Ritcheson refers to them as the "Gordian knot" of negotiations. Maya Jassanoff and Christopher Moore trace the routes of those who decided to make their fortunes elsewhere.
[44] Tansman, 62; Ritcheson, 49.
[45] Tansman, 61-63.
[46] *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, William Labaree, ed. 40 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 399.
[47] Robert M. Calhoon, "The Reintegration of the Loyalists and the Disaffected" in *The Loyalist Perception and Other Essays* (Colombia: University of South Carolina Press, 2010), 350-369, quote from 353. Part of the problem with Loyalist reintegration was that the differing degrees of Loyalism were collapsed into one simplistic position by many. Calhoon argues in *The Loyalists in Revolutionary America* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc., 1973) that Loyalist ideology was a complex set of beliefs that were really represented by three very different positions. In the first, Loyalists argued that the very nature of empire the colonies operated within rendered the question of independence moot. In the second, Loyalists argued that negotiations with Britain, rather than outright hostilities, would place the colonies in the best position. In the third, Loyalists argued that independence was amorally wrong path to pursue. John Jay's private words to Robert Livingston on April 22, 1783imply that even though some were aware of a spectrum of Loyalist thought, it was difficult to voice support for reintegration against so strong an opposition. He wrote of Loyalist return, "I hope that nothing will be done by the states for the Tories until the British forces shall be withdrawn and then I confess it would be our honor to forgive all except the perfidious and cruel." *The Papers of John Jay*. April 22, 1783. Document 4246. *Columbia University Libraries*. Web.

Loyalists manifested in written law. In 1783 several state laws passed that prohibited Loyalist return to their homes and communities and cut-off any legal path to citizenship.[48] Similar to Canadian refugees, Loyalist refugees were understood within a framework of republicanism. Only in this case, Loyalists were the antithesis of republican virtue. As a result, many Loyalists simply fled their homes and communities out of a fear of persecution for their political beliefs.[49] The situation of Loyalists in comparison to Canadian refugees made clear that the application of justice, aid, and benevolence applied only to select groups that comported with a well-defined republican image. However, republicanism was not the only thing Americans took into account when thinking about refugee protection and Loyalists.

Just as in the case of the Canadians, religion complicated a seemingly simple matter of accepting virtuous republican refugees or rejecting vile monarchist refugees. Where Canadian refugee religion wrinkled conceptions of protection, in the case of the Loyalists it was the American Protestant religion that gave pause. The Anglo-American religious heritage of refugee protection was something that could not be so easily dismissed even when the refugees represented the very antithesis of republican virtue. In debating whether or not to allow for

---

[48] Roberta Tansman, *The Treaty and the Tories: The Ideological Reaction to the Return of the Loyalists, 1783-1787* (Diss. Cornell University, 1974), 64, 71-77. On pages 65-68, she discusses actions in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia taken by Americans to prevent the return of Loyalists. For example, in Pennsylvania a society was formed to deport any Loyalist who returned to the state; in Massachusetts a returning Loyalist was hung from the neck by being propped up from beneath with a handspike from a sloop overnight and allowed only to leave the community when he signed a paper recognizing that his return would result in his death; and in South Carolina people were given to dragging Loyalists through mud with an exhortation not to come back. In regards to laws, one example Tansman cites is that of Georgia, where a general convention in Savannah resolved that anyone involved with helping the British during the war would not be allowed to become a citizen of the state. In 1783, North Carolina passed a similar law. In New York, groups agitated continuously for a disenfranchisement law based on aid give to the British (91-94). Robert M. Calhoon discusses the oaths of allegiance put in place during the war became an important indicator of how states viewed persons attempting to gain citizenship once the war ended in his chapter "The Reintegration of the Loyalists and the Disaffected" in *Tory Insurgents: The Loyalist Perception and Other Essays* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2010), 350-369.

[49] In *The Loyalists: Revolution, Exile, Settlement* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1984), Christopher Moore provides a detailed account of the transition American refugees made to Canada. See also Maya Jassanoff' s *Liberties Exiles* (New York: Knopf, 2011) for her study on American refugees in Barbados and Africa.

Loyalist return, two clear positions developed. On the one hand, it was a matter of Christian duty to accept Loyalists back into the community as a means of enacting Christ's love, but on the other, those same principles formed a platform for exclusion.

Debates about their return proliferated in several public places, including the church.[50] Religion so permeated political understanding in colonial America that clergymen regularly infused sermons with political topics.[51] After the War, sermons continued to speak to hotly contested, political topics of the day, which included Loyalist reintegration.[52] So, while readers could pick up a newspaper and read characterizations of Loyalists as "atrocious," "obnoxious," and most alarmingly of all, as "incendiaries who are trying to introduce anarchy and confusion," they could also attend a service to hear what their clergyman had to say about the topic.[53]

Congregationalist minister Zabdiel Adams' 1783 sermon provides one example of how Americans used religion to think about Loyalist return. With hostilities between the British and Americans ceasing, Adams took the opportunity to provide an explicit formula for how the nation should move forward in its interactions with Britain. In his sermon, the community, or the larger whole, is the most important unit. Drawing parallels to the Genesis story of Joseph, Adams states that America, like Joseph, should reconcile with Britain, as the two countries were brothers in the family of God and "needed to maintain a friendly intercourse."[54] Forgiveness, Adams

---

[50] Teidemann, "Loyalists and Conflict Resolution in Post-Revolutionary New York: Queens County as a Test Case," *New York History* vol. 68, no. 1 (1987): 27-43.
[51] Andrew Preston, *Sword of Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York: Random House, 2012), 84; Mark Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 73; Bonomi, 216.
[52] Preston, 97; Mark Noll, 214.
[53] Anonymous, "Political Opinion," *Independent Ledger and the American Advertiser*, Vol. 6, Issue 311 (1784), 3. This was written in response to a proposed partnership between Loyalists who remained in Boston and Whigs to create a dancing assembly. The fear of the prospect of coming together to discuss dancing illustrates how deep-seated were these fears of subversion in the community.
[54] Zabdiel Adams, *The Evil Designs of Men Made Subservient by God to the Public Good* (Boston: Benjamin Edes and Sons, 1783), 17.

reiterated, was the "duty" of his parishioners if they were to act on the "laws of Christianity."[55] He encouraged his listeners to see that "great allowances are to be made for the weakness and follies of mankind," and that it was necessary to "be indulgent to the follies and vices of others."[56]

Zabdiel Adams deployed the concept of forgiveness in a very specific way, in order to make sense of the world in 1783. He frames forgiveness within Christian-republicanism, an ideology in which the thoughts and ideas undergirding religion and republicanism coalesced into a coherent framework.[57] Zabdiel uses this framework to show that if America were to move forward in such a way that encouraged God's blessings and gifts, it had to follow the model of Joseph and forgive its former enemies. Interestingly, though, the forgiveness that Adams preached and the forgiveness that Joseph enacted operated on two different levels. Joseph offered forgiveness to his individual brothers. His was a relationship among individuals which needed mending. Adams, on the other hand, preached forgiveness among communities, or nations. In 1783, the community was the most important unit and self-sacrifice for the good of the larger whole was an important part of both Christian belief and republican ideology.[58] In the case of Adams, he asks his listeners to put aside their personal desires for revenge against the nation that killed so many of their own community members, in order that America could move forward. In winning the war, God granted Americans an opportunity to rise from oppression and tyranny. To deliver God's purpose of building a republic, they needed peace. Peace, which a new nation needed if it was to prosper, could only happen if Adams's parishioners were obedient to the

---

[55]Ibid., 22 and 23.
[56] Ibid., 23.
[57] Noll, 81; Patricia Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 7; Sandoz, 57.
[58] Wood, 68.

"King of kings," "letting His laws adorn our external conduct" as a way to repair community relationships.[59] Forgiveness had to be extended nation to the nation. Adams was clear, however, that it did not have to extend to individual Loyalists.[60]

What is important here is that the external conduct of forgiveness in 1783 applied to the actions of nations and communities and not to individuals. Adams was so adamant that readers not mistake the purpose of his sermon as a call for forgiveness to Loyalists that he added a footnote in the published version stating that "the preacher had no intention to recommend: the reception of the refugees or to persuade the people of the Massachusetts so far to overlook the vile conduct of those persons."[61] Adams's sermon is striking in its eagerness to extend forgiveness to the nation of Britain and yet withhold it from individuals who remained loyal to it during the War.[62] This tension highlights an important understanding of community and assumptions about America's character in the immediate aftermath of the War. Adams's message implies that Americans possessed an inherent virtue that could sustain the republic.[63] True, this virtue needed cultivation, but it only added to the inherent proclivity Americans already had towards virtue.[64] There was a fear that the republic might crumble due to the vice of

---

[59] Adams, 34.
[60] Ibid., 17.
[61] Ibid., 17.
[62] Janice Potter *The Liberty We Seek: Loyalist Ideology in Colonial New York and Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983) and Robert Calhoon *Loyalists in Revolutionary America, 1760-1781* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1973) discuss the wide spectrum of Loyalist thought. It is also true that not all Americans lumped all Loyalists together. John Jay, for example, wrote in the Paris negotiations that only the perfidious of Loyalists should be excluded from the new Republic. However, it does seem that many more Americans understood Loyalists as one group. Discussions in the papers towards Loyalists during this time (1783) are extremely vitriolic.
[63] Bailyn, 318-319.
[64] See, for example, Susan Klepp's *Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility, and Family Limitation in America, 1760-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009) work on republican motherhood which stresses the need for education of the public in republican ways. Gordon Wood's *Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1991), 218 also talks about the need to domesticate virtue.

its own people, but in 1783 it was slight.[65] Many Americans believed that it was external forces acting on the republic rather than internal forces that would facilitate decay. In other words, danger to the republic would come from the outside and not the inside.

The tangible consequences of reinforcing inherent American tendencies towards virtue meant that Americans were already thinking about who should be excluded from the community, and the Christian-republican framework acted as a guide for exclusion.[66] The safety of the republic relied primarily on keeping people out who might pose a danger to it. If any suspicious elements from the outside were allowed into the community, the republic might begin to crumble. In not throwing their efforts behind the American cause, Loyalists demonstrated that they were the antithesis of the kind of citizen the republic needed to include. For Adams, it was part of his Christian duty to keep suspicious persons out of the community as a means to protect the commonweal to ensure God's blessings.

In stark contrast to this view, other Americans refused to abandon completely their tradition of offering protection to refugees, even to Loyalists who approved of monarchy. When thinking about refugees, they drew from their inherited Protestant tradition of providing protection, and found that responsibility towards others in need had to be addressed.[67] For them, this responsibility was couched in Christian principles.[68] So strong was the association between religion and return, that some explicitly stated, "We ought to admit them on the principles of

---

[65] Wood, 396.
[66] Mark Noll discusses the framework, generally, but he does not go into detail about how that framework was used to understand specific issues like exclusion of community members. He roots his work in the ideas of this Christian-republican framework, but offers little concrete evidence of how this framework was applied by Americans. See Cherry Conrad's review of Noll's work for further discussion in "America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln," *American Historical Review* vol. 108, no. 4 (2003): 1144-1145.
[67] "On the Return of Refugees," *Independent Chronicle*, 17 November, 1785, 1; "From the Massachusetts Centinel, Public Opinions," *The Pennsylvania Evening Herald*, 18 January 1786, 205.
[68] "On the Return of Refugees," *Independent Chronicle*, 17 November, 1785, 1; "From the Massachusetts Centinel, Public Opinions," *The Pennsylvania Evening Herald*, 18 January 1786, 205.

Christian Charity."[69] In this view, Christ's love extended to everyone, and one way to exemplify this love was by allowing Loyalist reintegration. Religious advocacy of return held fast to the religious ideal that it was necessary to "love our neighbors, and to do good to those who despitefully use us."[70] They did not deny the treachery of the Loyalists, or those who "despitefully use us"; they merely reinforced that it was their Christian duty to allow return.

By 1783, republicanism was the determining factor in how Americans understood and determined their reaction to those labeled as refugees, but it often stood in opposition to the Protestant religious tradition of offering protection to refugees. Struggling with how to reconcile the two positions, a legal solution developed to the problem of protection. Rather than consider protection in terms of a tradition rooted in religious affinity, protection was placed within a framework of citizenship. Working within this framework allowed Americans the opportunity to disavow their tradition of protection. The poem "The Custard" highlights this solution. As the author describes the deceitfulness of refugees, or Loyalists, he closes his remarks with the lines "The eggs are citizens if you please/ the *rotten* ones are *refugees*/A single rotten egg shall spoil/ the largest custard you can boil/ You ne'er can sweeten it or cure it/ No human palate can endure it."[71] In his poem, refugees are recognized on some level as part of the citizenry. The author discriminates between the "rotten egg" citizens and those who are good eggs, but in his analogy, he implies that all, good or not, are part of the citizenry. If refugees are recognized as citizens, they must also be afforded some semblance of rights and protections that other citizens are

[69] "On the Return of Refugees," *Independent Chronicle*, 17 November, 1785, 1.
[70]Ibid., 1.
[71] Anonymous, "The Custard: A Modern Simile," *Massachusetts Centinel*, 22 November 1786, 76.

granted.[72] But because these refugees had been disloyal to the American cause, there was no guarantee that they would perform in the community in a responsible manner.

The author of "The Custard" faced a serious problem. He recognized the special status and protections that were afforded refugees, but because being a refugee could now be caused by means other than religion, taking in refugees or allowing them to return raised the specter of a fractured community. For the author, the solution was simple. He proposed that refugees simply not enter into the citizenry. Legal scholar Linda Bosniak points out that the process of assigning citizenship is often seen as a means to further the project of the nation state as a bonded community whose persons were bound through commonalities.[73] The author of "The Custard," and others like him, took seriously this concept of a bonded community. Looking at refugee protection through the lens of citizenship emphasized the differences, rather than the commonalities, that refugees would bring to the citizenry. Transferring protection to the realm of citizenship obscured the religious responsibility that attended protection at one time.

Another citizen writing to the *Boston Gazette* in 1786 fine-tuned the legal nuances of not providing protection to Loyalists by referencing William Blackstone's "Of the People, whether Aliens, Denizens, or Natives" from his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765-1769). With Blackstone as the starting-point, he showed that Loyalist refugees were in fact *not* refugees at all.[74] The author explains that, because Loyalist refugees made the choice to side with England, they also chose to reject the protection of the United States. In effect, because they were still under the protection of Britain, they were thus granted the rights of British subjects.

---

[72] Zolberg, 5-7.
[73] Linda Bosniak, "The Citizenship of Aliens," *Social Text* vol. 16, no. 3 (1998): 29-36, quote from page 37.
[74] Anonymous, "Messieurs Edes," *Boston Gazette*, 1 September 1786, 2. Although this public opinion piece was written in 1786, the debate over whether Loyalist citizenship began as early as 1783. They were a contentious sticking point in the negotiations of 1783 and many Loyalists were stripped of their rights as Americans (see Tansman, 188).

They did not have recourse to seek the rights and protections of the United States. And, because they were allied with the British, they were aliens in the U.S., *not* refugees. In the writings of both authors, there is a tension with granting refugee status to an unwanted group because of the long-standing tradition of protection that refugee status afforded. Religion, in the case of Loyalist return, worked in opposition with the prevailing sentiment of republicanism. Christian principles and duty forced Americans to contend with their tradition of refugee protection, but in the end, it could not be reconciled with republicanism. As a result, refugee protection was taken out of the sphere of religion and placed within the sphere of citizenship, which limited how much and the kind of protection different groups of refugees would be given.

It was clear in the wake of the War that refugee protection had changed. Looking at both Canadians and Loyalists it is also clear that, as Americans struggled to answer these questions, religion and republicanism mediated the kind of responses that developed for different groups under inspection. For Loyalists, Protestant religious duty, on the one hand, could not be abandoned. But neither could republicanism be sacrificed. For Canadians, it was the Catholic religion that Americans balanced against republicanism. Between the years 1783 and 1786, a negotiation took place in which religion and republicanism played a very fluid role and often stood in opposition. The result was that protection of some refugees was rejected out-of-hand, while the protection of others took on a highly qualified form. This tension was soon resolved, however, as religion and republicanism merged in the realm of humanitarianism to create a coherent framework for offering protection to a diverse group of people who sought aid.

Refugee Protection and Redemption:

Although the situation seemed precarious for Loyalists between 1783 and 1786, there were distinct changes that took place by the end of 1786 in favor of Loyalist return. By late 1786, in

discussions of Loyalist return, republicanism and religion merged and complemented each other in a harmonious explanation for why benevolence should be expanded. It appeared as though Loyalists, the recipients of vitriolic attack only a few short years before, could now expect a certain standard of justice and benevolence associated with humanitarianism.[75]

This reversal in the application of humanitarian ideals took place in such a short period of time only through a specific mix of circumstances. By 1786, Americans struggled to explain the lack of prosperity their nation had acquired. The economy stood in a precarious state and the United States' international fragile and new reputation teetered on the verge of collapse.[76] Americans needed some way to explain the failures they saw before them. Some looked closely to the behavior of people as an explanation and found that individuals failed to display the virtue assumed so inherent in America's citizens.[77] Examples of this lack of virtue took different manifestations, including the manner in which Loyalist refugees were treated. [78] The kind of protection offered Loyalist refugees now became bound up with the fate of the nation. If

---

[75] Tansman, 190, 202 – 205, in John Jay's 1786 report to Congress on state infractions of the 1783 Treaty concluded that states did not have the power to implement laws in opposition to national treaties. In addition, by 1786 states began dismantling their anti-Loyalists laws; Baseler, 211.

[76] Tansman explains that because the British felt the United States had not adhered to the 1783 Treaty of Paris articles surrounding Loyalist return, they were not obligated to uphold their obligations around surrender of ports and repayment of slaves to Americans. Until America remedied these treaty breaches, Britain would not engage in drafting a commercial treaty with the United States .The inability of the United States to conclude a commercial treaty limited the market and trade opportunities available, 184-185,203. She further concludes, based on letters from John Adams, that such egregious obstruction of an international treaty served as a warning to other nations not to involve themselves with the United States, especially with regards to trade agreements. Adams himself contended that the "Morals of the People have been proved to be defective, by the many inattentions to Public Faiths."; Guisinger and Smith, "Honest Threats: The Interaction of Reputation and Political Institutions in International Crises," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* vol. 46, no. 2 (2002): 175-200, provide an illuminating insight that corroborates Tansman's analysis of reluctance to engage with America because of their refusal to honor international treaties. They posit that future expectations in diplomatic negotiations rest heavily on the perceived honesty of national leaders. Endangering a nation's credibility puts at threat its future negotiating ability. According to Guisinger and Smith, American diplomatic leaders were well aware of the importance of credibility as it was a common theme in American diplomatic manuals from every era. Furthermore, in *Radicalism of the Revolution*, Gordon Wood notes that reputation was of paramount importance, 40-41.

[77] Wood, 397, 399, 418.

[78] Wood, 417; Klepp, 113-114,

America was going to redeem itself, its citizens had to act in a more virtuous manner. One way to do this was to expand benevolence and change the way Loyalists were treated. To articulate this expansion of benevolence, Americans revisited the Christian-republican framework to explain that, if Americans were to receive the bounty of God's promise, they would have to act in a more virtuous manner. They called upon Christian teachings, which reinforced republican ideology. Acting out Christ's principles would create a more virtuous, or republican, citizenry.[79]

Wood notes that, by 1786, the fear of outside forces causing republican decay was inverted. The country now faced a greater threat from inside. It was the nation's own citizenry who put the land in danger and some started to question the inherent virtuousness of the United States.[80] The change that took place by 1786 in how Americans understood their own proclivities towards corruption is crucial to understanding why anti-Loyalist sentiment underwent a drastic decline. Americans went from understanding damage to the commonweal as a result of outside forces to seeing it as under threat from those already inside the community. Loyalists benefitted from this reframing as they found a less hostile reception of their return.[81]

---

[79] Noll, 91; In understanding Loyalist reintegration and how they became the beneficiaries of benevolence, scholars have paid due attention to national reputation and economics. Baseler talks about the role that local merchants played in advocating for Loyalist return. Tansman and Ritcheson discuss how resistance to Loyalist reintegration negatively affected the international reputation of America. Because Americans were not enacting conditions of the 1783 Treaty of Paris, Great Britain was unwilling to enact its obligations such as giving up its forts. Also, because America was reluctant to comply with the Treaty this dissuaded other countries from entering into trade or diplomatic negotiations. In essence, America was not a country that was trusted on the international scene. Little, however, has been said of religion and the influence it wielded in opening the door for an extension of benevolence to a variety of groups. At most, authors mention in passing that religion did play a role, but that role receives little sustained analysis. Baseler, for example, makes the crucial point that "Loyalist reintegration occurred because people came together who were motivated by religious concerns, national honor, and economics." (201) Her analysis, however, tells us little about what religion actually did to inform Loyalist reintegration.

[80] Wood, 414.

[81] Tansman, 207-208. State laws, for example, were either changed or repealed to allow for Loyalist return. The Pennsylvania General Assembly substituted a law that had returners declare general loyalty to the United States for one that had previously required they swear they had not aided the British in any way and the Delaware Assembly passed a law that did not include any reference at all to past Loyalist activities.

Part of this warming to Loyalists was due to the precarious economic situation Americans faced after the War.[82] Historian Robert Morris provides a description of this economic downturn, calling it the nation's first depression. Throughout the 1780s, trade with Great Britain, which had been America's primary partner, drastically declined. Britain subjected America to severe trade restrictions, which cut off U.S. access to the lucrative West Indies. These circumstances, alongside the cost of rebuilding from the War, created a general economic decline for Americans during most of the 1780s.[83] Marilyn Baseler provides an important dimension to this economic decline when she discusses Loyalist flight as exacerbating monetary tensions. Many Loyalists were merchants, and when they fled, they took their trading connections and money with them. It was difficult for many Americans to rebuild anew without the money, connections, and expertise that so many Loyalists claimed.[84]

As important as the economic crisis was to the return of the Loyalists, reintegration likely would not have occurred if there had not been a parallel crisis in republican virtue. The decline in American prosperity worked in tandem with the fear of the tyranny of the masses to create questions about the inherent nature of American virtue – were Americans as virtuous as men such as Zabdiel Adams thought in 1783? It appeared not, according to different sources of the time.[85] Christian-republicanism was one way to explain the connection between lack of virtue and the unfulfilled promise of prosperity Americans experienced in the 1780s. If a lack of virtue was what caused God to withhold his protection and blessings from the community, questions over redemption surged to the fore.[86] Mark Noll explains that it was easy for Americans to take

---

[82] Baseler, 208-211.
[83] Richard Morris, *The Forging of the Union* (New York: Harper Row Publishers, 1987),134-136.
[84] Baseler, 210.
[85] Wood, 414.
[86] Noll, 90-91.

the experience of the "national drama" and incorporate "it into the history of redemption."[87] Surrounded by behaviors of foppery, which appeared as evidence of just how far Americans had deviated from virtue and faced with limited prosperity, Americans started to ask how they could redeem themselves.[88]

Encouraging Loyalist reintegration represented one attempt at redemption by some Americans. If Zabdiel Adams, writing in 1783, found outside dangers as the main source of subversion to the new Republic, writers in 1786 recognized members already inside the community as sources of friction. In this context, for some, promotion of Loyalists return served as a way to redeem the virtue of those already inside the polity. This was, of course, not a position that everyone shared. There were still Americans who considered Loyalists as "pests" to the land who would always remain "bad eggs" in the civic custard.[89]

For those who did not share Adams's position, however, Christian-republicanism played an important role in explaining why Loyalists should be brought back into the community. The public debate over return was especially prolific in Massachusetts in late 1785 and early 1786. Public opinions printed during this time were in reaction to the 1786 repeal by the Massachusetts General Court of all anti-Loyalist laws. For those who argued for Loyalist return, two themes often arise. First, there was a reinforcement that America was made up of individuals that, collectively, do have particular tendencies towards mercy and justice, and that individuals are

---

[87] Ibid., 91.
[88] According to the piece "Hard Times. A Fragment," *Columbian Magazine,* September 1786, 31 is was not uncommon for Americans to bemoan the fact that "hard times" were a pressing concern even as most lived beyond their means as could be seen through the excessive attention paid to fashion. The author concludes that while times were hard, "extravagance is a very bad mode of remedying them." In another case, "To the Former, Present, and Future Prospects of America," *Columbian Magazine,* October 1786, in a public commencement speech, the orator reminded listeners that for America to build on the success of the Revolution, its citizens had to work at being virtuous. Neglected of virtue would check "the noble, patriotic desire of serving mankind," 85.
[89] Anonymous, "The Custard: A Modern Simile," *Massachusetts Centinel*, 22 November 1786, 76.

failing to exhibit those traits. In short, America *was* a special country, but it needed encouragement to live up to its moral potential. Second, there was a strong emphasis on the role of religion as the motivating factor to encourage return. Religion was necessary to explain the consequences of what would happen if Americans failed to live up to their moral potential. Only when Americans acted on this moral sensibility would God bestow the prosperity it sought.

The first theme, a reinforcement of America's special character, comes across clearly in a report on June 18, 1785. The Independent Gazetter reported that a boat of refugees, coming from Nova Scotia, landed in New York in hopes of being allowed to return. The author also mentioned that the state law forbade any such action by refugees. According to this law, the refugees' act of return was an act of treason against the United States. Although the author implicitly acknowledged the reason why they were banned from the U.S in the first place—they were after all traitors—he does not suggest that they be imprisoned, returned home, or penalized severely. Rather, he highlights the refugees' characterization of America. They returned because "notwithstanding the penalty of the law, they had rather trust the mercy of the country they have so grossly injured, than remain any longer in that horrid place [they were coming from Nova Scotia], where meager want and oppression stalks unrivalled."[90] The author takes great pains to point out that the special character of America and its citizens, as a place and people of mercy, is obvious to even those who have been exiled from its land. In this description, America is a nation of individuals who believe in mercy and actively practice this mercy.

The unstated conclusion, then, is that if all others can see America's tendency to grant mercy, Americans themselves should be more aware of this and act on it. This newspaper report reflects much of the same tension that the author of "The Custard" struggles with in his poem. In

---

[90] Anonymous, "New York, June 14," *The Independent Gazetter*, 18 June 1785, 2.

both, there is a clear recognition that refugees are a group of miserable, suspicious people, and the categorization of refugee marks them as needing special treatment. Unlike the author of "The Custard," however, the author of this New York report makes an explicit link between the way refugees are treated and America's special virtues. Because Americans possessed such a special character they could not turn their backs on even the most miserable class of people, even if they were political dissenters.

In public debates over refugee return, other authors also pick up on America's special traits, but they carry this theme further to highlight the consequences of refusing to model America's virtues. They consistently utilize the Christian-republican framework to make explicit links between the current state of the nation and the behavior of its virtuous, or less-than-virtuous, citizens. On January 18, 1786, a public opinion piece printed in the *Pennsylvania Evening Herald* strategically lays out the Christian-republic framework. The article begins with an admonishment that "if times do not alter we shall all be ruined." For the author, "luxury and effeminacy were never more prevalent, than at this day." Luxury and effeminacy resulted from "men who live beyond the limits of their income." Additionally, any man dressing in "silk stocking and lace ruffles will ruin the country" as will women who wear "balloon gauzes, balloon ribbons, and hoops." He does offer some correctives to a nation that "has gone to pot" which includes public officers serving their country "gratis" when "public finances are distressed," and that everyone bear each other's misfortune with "christian patience."[91]

For our purposes, what is most important in this piece is how the author links the state of the nation with how Americans treat the question of refugee return and his proposed solution. After listing all the ways in which the country has failed, he ends with what seems like the

[91] Anonymous, "Public Opinions," *Pennsylvania Evening Herald*, 18 January 1786, 205.

ultimate in moral failure – refusing to allow refugees to return. He states that "justice, honour, and public faith on the question on the admission of the refugees, is opposed by prejudice, selfish views and national dishonor."[92] Here we see that the self-interest of some Americans is strangling the ability of others to display their inherent virtues of justice and honor. Hope is not lost, however, according to this author. If the individuals of the nation are to redeem themselves, they must follow the path that their religious teachings outline. In this context, mercy plays a critical role. To make clear his point, he references Shakespeare's "Measure for Measure" to describe the moral state of America's Christians. Using Isabella's words, he reminds Americans that they were "forfeit once," but having "the best vantage" they found the "remedy." In this case, the remedy was forgiveness, justice, and mercy of religion. After establishing the mercy they have received, he asks them "How would you be, If he which is the top of judgment, should but judge you as you are? Oh! think on that, and mercy then will breathe within your lips, like man new made."[93] Americans must revisit their religious origins, remembering the grace and mercy they once received, and they must then extend that same mercy and grace to others. In renewing their faith, they renew themselves and, in the process, their nation. There is no mistaking the solution for the problem of the fractured nation. Americans must redeem themselves and express that redemption through their actions towards others if they are to revitalize the nation.[94] As the debates around refugee return show, religion, and its attending duties of meting out justice and mercy, was a recurring theme. Facing a precarious economic context and surrounded by increasing numbers of citizens who exhibited less-than-virtuous behavior, Americans turned to the familiar framework of Christian-republicanism for a solution.

---

[92] Ibid., 205.
[93] Ibid., 205.
[94] Anonymous, "From the Massachusetts Centinel, PUBLIC OPINIONS," *Pennsylvania Evening Herald,* 18 January 1786, 205

This framework allowed Americans a means to redeem themselves and their nation. Using Loyalists as a specific instance where they could practice redemption offered a concrete way for people to reclaim the promised prosperity of America.

Conclusion:

In the immediate aftermath of the War, Americans charted a course in determining how to respond to distressed groups seeking aid at the border. When faced with people who wanted to enter the United States, Americans scrutinized important aspects of those newcomer's lives in order to judge how they might fit into the body politic. Two of the most important aspects that underwent consideration were religion, both the refugees' and the Americans' religion, and political leanings. The Catholicism of Canadian refugees, for example, might have given momentary pause, but their virtuous display during the War helped ease these anxieties. Canadian allegiance to the republican cause outweighed any religious deficiency they may have possessed. In contrast, in 1783 Loyalists discovered that their political beliefs were, perhaps, one of the worst crimes to have been committed. As a result, they, and the political ideology they held, were no so easily forgiven. When confronted with two ideologies that prompted anxiety, it was apparent that to Americans, in the end, what mattered most was a refugee's political ideology.

But Loyalist exclusion did not hold long. By 1786, anti-Loyalist state laws had been dropped and Loyalists were settling back into communities and their homes. The return of Loyalists in such a short time span begs the question of what precipitated the shift from exclusion to inclusion. Loyalists were accepted back into the community as a result of Americans acting on self-interest. The altruism so often associated with humanitarian acts, such as providing aid and benevolence to distressed groups, was a chimera when it came to the fates

of refugees in the early republic. Americans were more distressed at the financial state of their country than they were at the miserable conditions of refugees. An inability to move forward on the international front and take advantage of trading networks preoccupied many Americans as they struggled to answer the question of what caused the current state of affairs. The answer lay in American virtue. Americans failed to lead virtuous lives causing God to withhold blessings and prosperity. They had to find a way to redeem themselves and their nation, and Loyalist treatment presented one opportunity.

In seeking to understand what they owed, or what their moral obligation was to distressed populations, Americans distorted the question of humanitarianism. Humanitarianism became more about what Americans owed to themselves and could do for themselves. In the end, Loyalist reintegration was the result of a calculated move to ensure American prosperity rather than a full embrace of humanitarian ideals. The ambivalence and self-interest seen in the early republic were not simply anomalies of that time period. Indeed, they had a lasting effect on the ways in which Americans thought about the many different humanitarian emergencies that they would come to confront as their engagement with the world took on increasing complexity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources:

Adams, Zabdiel. *The evil designs of men made subservient by God to the public good; particularly illustrated in the rise, progress and conclusions of the American war. A sermon preached at Lexington, on the nineteenth of April, 1783; being the anniversary of the commencement of the war between Britain and America, which broke out in that town on the 19th of April 1775*. Boston: Benjamin Edes & Sons, in Cornhill, 1783.

Andre, John. *The Cow Chace; A Poem in Three Cantos.* Albany: J. Munsell, 1866.

Anonymous. "News and Opinion." The Boston Evening Post and The General Advisor. 10 May 1783: 3.

Anonymous. "Political Opinion." Independent Ledger and the American Advertiser. 5 January 1784: 3.

Anonymous. "New York, June 14." The Independent Gazetter. 18 June 1785: 2.

Anonymous. "Public Opinions." The Pennsylvania Evening Herald. 18 January 1786: 205.

Anonymous. "Messieurs Edes." Boston Gazette. 1 September 1786: 2.

Anonymous. "The Custard: A Modern Simile." Massachusetts Centinel. 22 November 1786: 76.

Anonymous. "Hard Times. A Fragment." Columbian Magazine. September 1786 : 31.

Anonymous. "To the Former, Present, and Future Prospects of America." Columbian Magazine. October 1786: 83-86.

Brutus. "On the Return of Refugees." Independent Chronicle. 17 November 1785: 1.

Fitzpatrick, John C (ed). *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799, Volume 27, June 11, 1783- November 28, 1784.* Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1931.

The Papers of John Jay. Columbia University Libraries Digital Program.

The Papers of the War Department. George Mason University.

Taylor, James C. *The Adams Papers Digital Edition*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008.

Worthington, C. Ford, ed. *Journals of the Continental Congress*. Washington, DC: 1904 -1937

Secondary Sources:

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

Baseler, Marilyn. *"Asylum for Mankind:" America 1607-1800*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.

Beneke, Chris. "Not by Force or Violence": Religious Violence, Anti-Catholicism, and Rights of Conscience in the Early National United States." *Journal of Church and State* vol. 54, no. 1 (2012): 5-32.

Bon Tempo. *Americans at the Gate: the United States and Refugees During the Cold War.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Bonomi, Patricia. *Under the Cope of Heaven; Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Bosniak, Linda. "The Citizenship of Aliens." *Social Text* vol. 16, no. 3 (1998): 29-36.

Calhoon, Robert. *The Loyalists in Revolutionary America, 1760-1781*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973.

_____. and Timothy M. Barnes. "The Reintegration of the Loyalists and the Disaffected."*Tory Insurgents: The Loyalist Perception and Other Essays.* Ed. Robert Calhoon, et al. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2010. 350-370.

Cullather, Nick. *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Dower, John. *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1986.

Everest, Allan. *Moses Hazen and the Canadian Refugees in the American Revolution*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 1976.

Feldman, Leonard. "Redistribution, Recognition, and the State," *Political Theory* vol. 30, no. 5 (2002):410-440.

Guisinger, Alexandra and Alastair Smith. "Honest Threats: The Interaction of Reputation and Political institutions in International Crises," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* vol. 46, no. 2 (2002): 175-200.

Haines, David. *Safe Haven?: A History of Refugees in America.* Sterling: Kumarian Press, 2010.

Herring, George. *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Hoganson, Kristen. *Fighting For American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

Hunt, Michael. *Ideology and US Foreign Policy.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.

Hyndman, Jennifer Hyndman. *Managing Displacement: Refugees and the Politics of Humanitarianism.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

Jassanoff, Maya. *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World.* New York: Alfred A.Knopf, 2011.

Kerber, Linda K. "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment—An American Perspective," *American Quarterly* vol. 28, no. 2 (1976): 187-205.

Klepp, Susan. *Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility, and Family Limitation in America, 1760-1820.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

Latham, Michael. *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and Nation Building in the Kennedy Era.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

Lewis, Jan. "The Republican Wife: Virtue and Seduction in the Early Republic." *William and Mary Quarterly* vol. 44, no. 4 (1987): 689-721.

Loescher, Gil. *Calculated Kindness: Refugees and America's Half-Open Door, 1945 to the Present.* New York: Free Press, 1986.

Moore, Christopher. *The Loyalists: Revolution, Exile, Settlement.* Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1984.

Morris, Richard B. *The Forging of the Union, 1781-1789.* New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1987.

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

Potter, Janice. *The Liberty We Seek: Loyalist Ideology in Colonial New York and Massachusetts*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983.

Preston, Andrew. *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American war and Diplomacy*. New York and Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012.

_____. “Bridging the Gap between the Sacred and the Secular in American Foreign Relations.” *Diplomatic History* vol. 30, no. 5 (2006): 783-812.

Renda, Mary. *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

Ritcheson, Charles. *Aftermath of Revolution; British policy towards the United States, 1783-1795*. Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1969.

Rosenberg, Emily. “A Call to Revolution: a roundtable on early US Foreign Relations.” *Diplomatic History* vol. 22, no. 1 (1998): 63-71.

Sandoz, Ellis. *Republicanism, Religion, and the Soul of America*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006.

Stout, Harry Miller. “Religion, Communications, and the Ideological Origins of the American Revolution.” *William and Mary Quarterly* vol. 34, no. 4 (1977): 519-541.

Suri, Jeremi. *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente Protest.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Tansman, Roberta Jacobs. *The Treaty and the Tories: The Ideological Reaction to the Return of the Loyalists, 1783-1787*.Diss.Cornell University, 1974.

Tiedemann, Joseph S. “Loyalists and Conflict Resolution in Post-Revolutionary New York: Queens County as a Test Case.” *New York History* vol. 68, no. 1 (1987): 27-43.

White, Ashli. *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010.

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

Zolberg, Aristide, Astri Suhrke, and Sergio Aguayo. *Escape from Violence: Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in the Developing World.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.