

The Pietist Chaplains of the American Revolution

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During the mid-to-late eighteenth century, both the Moravians and the Francke Institutes, Halle Pietism's flagship enterprises, sponsored ecclesial endeavors and communities in North America.¹ The Moravians tried briefly to take root in Georgia, then shifted to Pennsylvania where they flourished, later expanding to North Carolina. The first effort of the Halle Pietists was an experiment in communitarian living in Ebenezer, Georgia, in the 1730s; the second was a synodal experiment, the Pennsylvania Ministerium, begun by Lutherans in the mid-Atlantic colonies in the 1740s. The Moravians and Pietists were, therefore, in the American colonies during the Revolutionary War. The Moravians adopted neutrality, though their settlements were used as prison garrisons.² Among Halle Pietists, some were elected to public office on behalf of the patriots.³ Many fought.⁴

¹ Mark Granquist, *Lutherans in America: A New History* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 87–110.

² Harry M. Ward, *Between the Lines: Banditti of the American Revolution* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 6.

³ E.g., John Adam Treutlen (1733–1782), an elder in the Halle-sponsored Lutheran community of Ebenezer, Georgia, was elected governor of the patriot assembly of Georgia. George F. Jones, *The Salzburger Saga: Religious Exiles and Other Germans Along the Savannah* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 126.

⁴ German militia units mustered in Philadelphia assembled on Sunday mornings in two columns, paraded down the street, and then separated, one column to the Reformed church, the other to the Lutheran church. A.G. Roeber, *Palatines, Liberty and Property: German Lutherans in Colonial British America* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 306.

Some fled to Canada.⁵ And on both sides of the war, Halle Pietists served the combatants as military chaplains to German-speaking regiments.⁶

This article first describes the outlook on patriotism among the clergy in the Pennsylvania Ministerium, with particular focus on the opinions of its founder, the Halle missionary Henry Melchior Muhlenberg. It then tells the stories of three Lutheran chaplains connected to Halle Pietism: Christian Streit (1749–1812), who took a call to a patriot regiment and received a testimonial from the Pennsylvania Ministerium in the first denominational endorsement for a military chaplaincy in American history;⁷ Frederick V. Melsheimer (1749–1811), who deserted his German auxiliary regiment in order to marry a Moravian and seek admittance into the Pennsylvania Ministerium;⁸ and Christopher Triebner (1740–1815), a Halle missionary to Georgia, who became a loyalist and a chaplain to German auxiliaries (commonly called Hessians).⁹ Each is a unique story of faith, conscience, and duty.

In the centuries since the American Revolution, chaplains in the United States and Europe have evolved from civilian contractors to commissioned officers. Both then and now the balance between military duty and the pastor's conscience toward God has at times been difficult to maintain. Perhaps present dialogues on clergy ethics may find it instructive that

⁵ E.g., Bernard Hausihl, pastor of one of two Lutheran congregations in New York City, took a Lutheran pulpit in Nova Scotia in 1783 as part of the British government's program to resettle the loyalists at the end of the war. Charles H. Glatfelter, *Pastors and People: German Lutheran and Reformed Churches in the Pennsylvania Field, 1717–1793, Volume 2: The History* (Breinigsville, PA: The Pennsylvania German Society, 1981), 395.

⁶ Approximately thirty Reformed and Lutheran chaplains served the German auxiliaries. In my studies I have not yet discovered a comprehensive list but have found several sources useful for correcting each other: Bruce E. Burgoyne, trans. and ed., *Hessian Chaplains: Their Diaries and Duties* (Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, 2007), xi–xvii; Max von Eelking, *Memoirs, and Letters and Journals, of Major General Riedesel during His Residence in America*, vol. 2, ed. and trans. William Leete Stone (1868; repr. Lexington, KY: Forgotten Books, 2013), 265–73; Parker C. Thompson, *The United States Army Chaplaincy, Volume 1: From Its European Antecedents to 1791* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1978), 166. According to Thompson, a total of 218 chaplains served the patriots, the majority of whom were church pastors who followed their local militia unit on a thirty-day term of service; 111 served in the Continental Army with various lengths of enlistment.

⁷ Thompson, *The United States Army Chaplaincy*, 130.

⁸ Melsheimer is the chief subject of my doctoral dissertation, "Switching Sides: A Hessian Chaplain in the Pennsylvania Ministerium" (Chicago, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 2015). This article adapts material found in the dissertation, especially pp. 1–120.

⁹ Jones, *The Salzburger Saga*, 130. Triebner is not treated in depth in *Switching Sides*.

during the American Revolution the three Lutheran Pietist chaplains of this study responded to the ethics of partisanship in three different ways. This study concludes with suggestions for how the Evangelical Covenant Church, which locates itself in spiritual and intellectual continuity with Halle Pietism and Zinzendorf's Moravianism, may find resources in these historical precedents.

The Non-Partisan Lutheran Clergy

It is not surprising that Lutheran Pietists took part in the American Revolutionary War. The question is why there was not more involvement, especially among the clergy. The answer lies in the Lutheran understanding of the clerical office. In times of civil unrest, a population commonly will split three ways: those fighting to change the establishment (in the case of the American Revolution, the patriots), those fighting to preserve the establishment (the loyalists), and those trying to stay out of the conflict, either for lack of a strong personal interest in the outcome or out of personal convictions regarding the tasks to which one should devote one's life. This third position is neutrality, and it is often the position of the majority.

During the American Revolutionary War, Germans comprised 10 percent of the European population in the thirteen colonies, while close to 90 percent was English speaking.¹⁰ Throughout the war, a large number of English-speaking clergy from Reformed backgrounds openly supported the patriot cause and enlisted as patriot chaplains. The wedding of pulpit and patriotism has dominated the narrative imagination of American evangelicals ever since.¹¹ Thomas Allen (1743–1810) was a Congregationalist pastor who served the militia of Pittsfield, Massachusetts. This militia joined itself to the force that gathered under the command of General John Stark (1728–1822) and fought the Battle of Bennington in what is now Vermont, where 2,000 patriots opposed 750 Canadians, loyalists, Native warriors, and dismounted German auxiliary dragoons. On August 16, as the patriots were about to press their attack, Allen went ahead of the regiment and regaled the dragoons to lay down their arms. When he was shot at, he returned to his line and led the charge of the Pittsfield militia against the breastworks.¹²

¹⁰ Michael Stephenson, *Patriot Battles: How the War of Independence Was Fought* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 30.

¹¹ This theme was reinforced recently by Thomas Kidd, *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

¹² Thompson, *The United States Army Chaplaincy*, 162.

For Lutherans, however, Article Twenty-eight of the Augsburg Confession held that pastors were not to take part in rebellions against their own sovereign governments.¹³ In lands where representative assemblies played a governing role, this was interpreted to mean that Lutheran clergy were to be “politically” neutral: they were to remain disinterested in the partisan contests for power in the assemblies but always loyal to the sovereign authority itself. This non-partisan approach is modeled by Henry Melchior Muhlenberg (1711–1787), the Halle missionary who founded the Pennsylvania Ministerium in 1748.

In 1759 Muhlenberg held a thanksgiving service in honor of the victory of the British over the French on the Plains of Abraham in Quebec;¹⁴ it was appropriate for him in his clerical office to celebrate his sovereign’s victory over a foreign power. In 1764 he expressed his sympathy for the Paxton Boys, a violent mob marching on Philadelphia to demand the aid of the provincial government in defending the frontier during Pontiac’s War.¹⁵ It was the duty of the sword of government to provide protection for its citizens, even if the Quaker-led government had little stomach for military organization and campaigns. Yet the following year, Muhlenberg refused to join himself to a petition proposed by Benjamin Franklin to end the proprietary rule of the Penn family and make Pennsylvania a “crown” colony.¹⁶ As this was a matter of internal partisanship, it was not part of Muhlenberg’s office to get involved. When war erupted in 1775, Muhlenberg continued to include prayers to the king in his liturgy until 1776, when Pennsylvania declared itself independent of the king and parliament. Muhlenberg stopped praying for the king because he was neutral: he could not actively oppose that jurisdiction that effectively governed with the sword, providing order and protection; in Pennsylvania that meant the patriots.¹⁷

¹³ “The Augsburg Confession,” in *The Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 90–91.

¹⁴ Henry Muhlenberg, *The Journals of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert and John W. Doberstein (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1942), 419.

¹⁵ Henry Muhlenberg, *The Journals of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg*, vol. 2, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert and John W. Doberstein (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1945), 18–24.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 190–92.

¹⁷ Henry Muhlenberg, *The Journals of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg*, vol. 3, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert and John W. Doberstein (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958), 103.

This last decision got him in trouble. On June 1, 1776, Francke Institutes director Gottlieb Anastasius Freylinghausen (1719–1785) addressed a letter to Muhlenberg that was meant to be an encyclical to pass throughout the Pennsylvania Ministerium.¹⁸ In it Freylinghausen praised two of Muhlenberg’s colleagues, Justus Henry Helmuth (1745–1825) and John Christopher Kunze (1744–1807), for confirming their neutrality in letters to Halle dating to August 1775. The Halle director expected Muhlenberg to do the same from then on.¹⁹ Freylinghausen further enjoined the synod’s pastors to encourage their parishioners to stay out of the war. If the German Lutherans put repentance first and sought God, they would be protected from war’s alarms and suffer nothing more than God measured out for their spiritual improvement.²⁰

The Francke Institutes used Hessians to deliver their mail to the Americas: this letter was sent with a flotilla of German auxiliary reinforcements in April 1777.²¹ The letter finally reached Pennsylvania with the invading royalist army under General William Howe (1729–1814). After defeating the Continental Army at Germantown and Brandywine, the royalists occupied Philadelphia. It appears that Freylinghausen’s letter was read aloud by a German auxiliary officer. Kunze, pastor in the city, reported to Muhlenberg, then living in semi-retirement in Trappe, Pennsylvania, that the royalist “officers were unhappy” with him because it was felt that he had “not lived up to Professor Freylinghausen’s expectations.”²² There were rumors that the royalists would arrest him. This prompted Muhlenberg to write two lengthy defenses of his neutrality to distance himself from the patriots.²³ Muhlenberg also couriered the synod’s mail for Halle by means of Hessian soldiers and the British royal navy.²⁴

While many Lutheran Pietists in Pennsylvania and Georgia shared Thomas Allen’s zeal for the cause, the issue for their clergy concerned vocation. The ministry of Christ was the highest calling, and Article

¹⁸ G.A. Freylinghausen, “Brief an H. Mühlenberg, June 1, 1776,” in Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg, *Die Korrespondenz Heinrich Melchior Mühlenbergs*, vol. 4, ed. Kurt Aland (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 730–32.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ William Pasche, “Brief von Kensington an Herrn Inspektor Fabricius zu Halle, 15ten Junii 17(79),” M4 C19:11, 35. Franckesche Stiftungen archives, Halle an der Saale, Germany.

²² Muhlenberg, *Journals*, vol. 3, 101.

²³ Ibid., 101–104.

²⁴ Ibid., 52.

Twenty-eight stated that it was not to be mixed with the public or military office under any circumstances, much less in a partisan rebellion. Those Pennsylvania Ministerium pastors who chose to involve themselves life-and-limb with the patriots resigned their ordinations in order to do so. While few chose that path, those few included two of Henry Muhlenberg's own sons, Peter and Frederick.

Frederick Muhlenberg (1750–1801) did not make this choice until he decided to enter political life full time in 1780.²⁵ He had been sent from Pennsylvania to boarding school at the Francke Institutes in 1764 and had graduated from Halle University. But already in January 1776, Peter Muhlenberg (1746–1807) accepted a commission as a colonel in a Virginia regiment. For his farewell sermon to his church and to the ordained ministry, he preached on “a time for war” (Ecclesiastes 3:8). At the end of the sermon, he removed his robe to show his uniform underneath. Over three hundred men signed up for his regiment that day.²⁶ After taking part in the successful defense of Charleston, South Carolina, Muhlenberg was promoted to brigadier general and joined George Washington's staff.

In the second of his treatises on neutrality, Henry Muhlenberg addressed the issue of his son Peter, the patriot general. As his son was now an adult, the father could not be held accountable for his choices.²⁷ But in fact Henry's neutrality was only public. His home in Trappe was near Valley Forge, the winter camp where Peter was stationed. This likely prevented the senior Muhlenberg's arrest, and Peter was an overnight guest during Christmas.²⁸ Henry Muhlenberg's *Journals* are clear that while he never adopted the triumphalism of the patriot cause, he sympathized with it, as he had sympathized with the Paxton Boys in the 1760s. In his view, King George III had not measured up to the wisdom of his father, George II, but instead, like Solomon's son Rehoboam, was choosing to chastise his subjects with scorpions (1 Kings 12:6–14).²⁹

²⁵ After holding various offices, Frederick Muhlenberg ran for Congress and was appointed the first speaker of the House of Representatives under the constitution of the new United States. Henry Melchior Muhlenberg Richards, *The Pennsylvania German in the American Revolutionary War: Pennsylvania German Society, Proceedings and Addresses*, vol. 17 (Lancaster, PA: 1908), 431.

²⁶ Roeber, *Palatines, Liberty and Property*, 306.

²⁷ Muhlenberg, *Journals*, vol. 3, 125.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 116.

²⁹ Muhlenberg, *Journals*, vol. 2, 724–25.

Although vigorous in protesting his neutrality, Muhlenberg omitted an important detail concerning the regiment that his son commanded. He had written a certificate of endorsement for the regiment's chaplain, Christian Streit. By doing so, Henry Muhlenberg broke new ground in the relationship between church denominations and clergy in the military.

Christian Streit: The First Endorsement

The story of Christian Streit illustrates the general posture of the Pennsylvania Ministerium in that he was the only pastor in the synod to serve in a military chaplaincy. Streit's father, an immigrant from the German territories of the Palatinate, had been an elder of a Lutheran congregation in Raritan, New Jersey, and had become a friend of Henry Muhlenberg. Under the tutelage of Pennsylvania Ministerium clergy, Christian Streit and Peter Muhlenberg rotated with each other as catechists in a circuit of New Jersey congregations.³⁰ Streit was ordained in 1770³¹ and served in his first call in Easton, Pennsylvania, until 1776.

When Peter Muhlenberg, serving in Woodstock, Virginia, chose to receive the commission to command the Eighth Virginia Regiment of the Continental Army, Streit petitioned to join him as the regiment's chaplain. He served two tours of chaplaincy, first with the Eighth Virginia in 1776–1777 and later with the Ninth Virginia in 1780; in the interval he served the Lutheran congregation in Charleston. In his second tour, he was captured by the British and was not exchanged until 1782.³²

It is curious that in 1776 Henry Muhlenberg did not hesitate to satisfy Streit's request for a certificate of endorsement on behalf of the Pennsylvania Ministerium, "the first denominational endorsement known to have been given a clergyman in his process of changing from civilian to military status!"³³ Lutheran governments in the eighteenth century clearly understood that military chaplaincy was an appropriate vocational path for clergy. The standing army was loyal to the sovereign power of the state and not beholden to any partisan faction in a representative assembly. Streit, however, was enlisting as a chaplain for rebel combatants in a civil

³⁰ Ibid., 449.

³¹ A. Spaeth, H.E. Jacobs, G.F. Spieker, eds. and trans., *Documentary History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Pennsylvania, 1748–1821* (Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, 1898), 124.

³² Muhlenberg, *Journals*, vol. 3, 488.

³³ Thompson, *The United States Army Chaplaincy*, 130.

war, in order to aid, abet, and give spiritual succor to partisans opposed to the sovereign power. It is no wonder that while Henry Muhlenberg emphasized his legal and spiritual distance from his son the patriot officer, he made no mention of his own supportive role in vetting a chaplain for partisan rebels.

The certificate is a testimonial from Henry Muhlenberg as synod president that Streit was in good ministerial standing. A copy of the English-language endorsement is reprinted in Henry Muhlenberg's *Journals* as follows:

Whereas Bearer of these the Revd Mr. Christian Stright has received and accepted a call to be Chaplain for the Eighth Regiment of Regulars for the State of Virginia, and on his journey to move there; these are therefore to certify, that the said Revd Gentleman is a regularly ordained Minister of the Gospel, sound in Protestant Principles and sober in life; desirous and virtuous to promote the Glory of God and Welfare of the State, and therefore recommended to all Friends and Well-wishers of Religion and State.³⁴

Muhlenberg signed himself “Senior Minister and President of the German Lutheran Ministry in the State of Pennsylvania.”³⁵ The Pennsylvania Ministerium was, in Lutheran terms, the civilian consistory that had seen to Streit’s ordination. For Lutheran clergy, such testimonials were considered a requirement for any call. The issue was not whether Peter would receive him but whether Streit, on making the trip from Pennsylvania to Virginia, would be able to present himself to local patriot “committees of safety” and be passed through on his journey.

Two conclusions emerge from Streit’s story. First, it indicates that Muhlenberg believed the “Welfare of the State” was in the hands of the patriots and not King George III. The testimonial is dated August 23, 1776, which is nearly three months after Francke Institutes director Freylinghausen wrote his letter of admonishment but still over a year before Muhlenberg and his colleagues knew about the letter. Perhaps Muhlenberg’s outlook would have changed had he known how the Francke Institutes themselves would weigh in. The second conclusion derives from Streit’s being the only Pennsylvania Ministerium pastor to be so

³⁴ Muhlenberg, *Journals*, vol. 2, 736.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

credentialed: on the whole, the Lutheran clergy held themselves neutral as they understood to be their duty, and as Freylinghausen reminded them to do from behind his desk at the Francke Institutes in Europe.

Melsheimer: Discovering Pennsylvania Pietism

Meanwhile, dozens of Lutheran clergy did their duty for the regiments on the royalist side. The Declaration of Independence has forever excoriated German auxiliaries as “mercenaries” hired out to bring destruction to American people.³⁶ In fact these auxiliaries were standing armies acting on the orders of their sovereign states. Most were served by Lutheran or Reformed chaplains, and part of unit discipline under fire was that the troops sang hymns as they took the field.³⁷ It is, furthermore, a myth that these Hessians deserted in large numbers when they breathed the air of American freedom. Desertion rates were lower among auxiliaries serving in North America than they were among armies within Europe.³⁸ Thus the story of Chaplain Melsheimer is truly exceptional.

Frederick Valentine Melsheimer was born in the German duchy of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel in 1749. His mother came from a merchant’s family; his father was superintendent of the Duke’s forests. Frederick Melsheimer attended Helmstedt University beginning in late 1768 and described his theological training as being according to “strict” orthodox rules.³⁹ After graduating in his early twenties, he tutored the children of wealthy patrons for several years. At the age of twenty-six, Melsheimer was offered the chaplaincy of the dragoon regiment of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel.⁴⁰ After the civilian consistory interviewed and ordained him in February 1776, he was called by the regiment’s commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Baum (c. 1727–1777).

Melsheimer knew before receiving the call that the regiment was being

³⁶ As stated in the Declaration, the German auxiliaries were “foreign Mercenaries” sent by George III “to compleat the works of Death, Desolation, and Tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty and Perfidy, scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages....”

³⁷ Burgoyne, *Hessian Chaplains*, vi–x.

³⁸ Rodney Atwood, *The Hessians: Mercenaries from Hessen-Kassel in the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 204.

³⁹ F.V. Melsheimer, “A Candid and Unbiased Account of the Reputation, Life, and Customs of the Moravian Brethren” (*Freymuthig, und unparteiische Untersuchung der Ehre, des Lebens, und der Gewohnheiten der Mohrischen Brüder!*), 1789, PPEJ 1647. Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA.

⁴⁰ Dragoons are mounted infantry. Standard equipment included the smooth-bore carbine, a shouldered fire-arm with a shorter barrel than a musket.

deployed. Duke Karl I (1713–1780) had been the first to conclude a treaty with Great Britain for the provision of auxiliary troops to serve in North America.⁴¹ Melsheimer kept a travel journal of his observations of life at sea and in North America, which he immediately sent back for publication. He completed two volumes covering eight months of 1776.⁴² From this early writing, it appears his years at Helmstedt were unfruitful for spiritual formation. In the first volume, he makes no mention of his chaplaincy; in the second volume, he mentions his role only in passing; and in neither does he describe any of his duties. This contrasts with his colleagues in the auxiliaries, Lutheran and Reformed alike, who give numerous precise details of their clerical activities.⁴³

After September 1776, Melsheimer did not publish any more journals, and whether he kept a diary is unknown. His movements can be traced by the memoirs of others and by documents of the Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel Corps, which came under the overall command of British General John Burgoyne (1722–1792).⁴⁴ Melsheimer rode along on Burgoyne's invasion of New York from Quebec in 1777. When Burgoyne detached the Braunschweig dragoon regiment to raid Bennington for horses and cattle, Melsheimer joined the regiment on the expedition.

At some point during the campaign, Melsheimer began to have a troubled conscience about military life and values. In a letter to Johann Ettwein, director of the Moravian community of Bethlehem, Melsheimer describes the sharp contrast between the demands of Christ and military duty, "as different as heaven is from earth."⁴⁵ Among the irreconcilable army duties listed by Melsheimer is *Raub*, that is, plunder, of which a German army chaplain was entitled to the same share as a lieutenant.⁴⁶ The specific mission of the dragoons on the raid of Bennington was to

⁴¹ Michael Stephenson, *Patriot Battles: How the War of Independence Was Fought* (New York: Harper, 2007), 49.

⁴² F.V. Melsheimer, *Voyage of the Brunswick Auxiliaries from Wolfenbüttel to Quebec*, ed. and trans. William L. Stone (Montreal: Morning Chronicle Steam Printing Establishment, 1891).

⁴³ See Burgoyne, *Hessian Chaplains*.

⁴⁴ An excellent source is the journal of dragoon company surgeon Julius Wasmus, who was billeted with Melsheimer in Brimfield. Julius Wasmus, *An Eye-Witness Account of the American Revolution and New England Life: The Journal of J.F. Wasmus, German Company Surgeon, 1776–1783*, trans. Helga Doblin, ed. Mary C. Lynn (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1990).

⁴⁵ F.V. Melsheimer, "Letter to Ettwein, April 26, 1779," Johann Ettwein Papers #400, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA.

⁴⁶ Burgoyne, *Hessian Chaplains*, vii.

plunder New York's upstate population of their cattle and horses.⁴⁷ This challenge to his conscience, compounded by the disasters of war that shortly followed, became for Melsheimer a spiritually-defining crisis of the type described by Halle Pietism's founder August Hermann Francke.⁴⁸ In Melsheimer's case, this spiritual crisis led to the breakthrough of an ethical awakening. When he began to write again in 1779, testifying to Ettwein of his spiritual journey, we find a different kind of person from the one revealed in his travel diaries of 1776.⁴⁹

The disasters that compounded Melsheimer's crisis of conscience followed rapidly on each other. The dragoon-led detachment encountered a patriot force ten miles short of Bennington. August 14 was spent in skirmishing. On August 15, due to the wet weather, the armies did not move against each other, but the royalists took the opportunity to raise breastworks and dig in. On August 16 at 1:00 p.m., General Stark ordered the patriots forward. The Battle of Bennington was sharply fought and was a decisive victory for the patriots.⁵⁰ Melsheimer was shot through the right arm during the fight. Baum, his commanding officer, was mortally wounded while leading a final desperate bayonet charge.⁵¹ Most of the dragoons were captured, Melsheimer among them.

Conditions for prisoners of war varied, and Melsheimer was better off than many.⁵² He was paroled, meaning he had a great deal of freedom on his own cognizance, and he was billeted with a dragoon company surgeon in a home in Brimfield, Massachusetts, for one year.⁵³ The family, with fifteen children, were generous hosts.⁵⁴ However the main body of the regiment was several miles away, and Melsheimer lacked the opportunity to perform his call.⁵⁵

⁴⁷ Richard M. Ketchum, *Saratoga: Turning Point of America's Revolutionary War* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1997), 291.

⁴⁸ August Hermann Francke, "From the Autobiography," in *Pietists: Selected Writings*, ed. Peter C. Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 104–105.

⁴⁹ F.V. Melsheimer, "Letter to Ettwein, April 26, 1779," Johann Ettwein Papers #400, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA.

⁵⁰ For a detailed account of the expedition and Battle of Bennington, see Ketchum, *Saratoga*, 285–328.

⁵¹ Wasmus, *An Eye-witness Account*, 73; Ketchum, *Saratoga*, 313.

⁵² The combination of inadequate nutrition and eighteenth-century hygiene caused diseases to be rampant wherever soldiers were quartered close together, whether on active duty or as prisoners of war. Stephenson, *Patriot Battles*, 162–76.

⁵³ Wasmus, *An Eye-witness Account*, 77.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 89.

After the year in Brimfield, he was sent to Newport, Rhode Island, crossing behind royalist lines with other dragoon officers to await their exchange. The main body of the dragoons, meanwhile, were marched off to prison quarters in Virginia. Melsheimer was still paroled, and, although he shared in the provisions of the German auxiliaries from Ansbach-Bayreuth, he was not on active duty. On arriving in Newport, he sent a letter to the consistory of Wolfenbüttel seeking release from his call to the regiment; he never received an answer. During the winter of 1778/9, the exchange negotiations collapsed. The supreme commander of royalist forces, General Sir Henry Clinton (1730–1795), declared that the patriots would have to attend to their royalist prisoners as this was the duty of all armies, hoping this would force the patriots to deal in better faith.⁵⁶

The dragoon officers and Melsheimer were sent back to the patriots, who settled them in the Moravian single men's dormitory in Nazareth, Pennsylvania, near Bethlehem. Growing up hearing scandalous rumors of these closed, sectarian communities, Melsheimer chose to be billeted apart and lived with a farmer whom he soon found much meaner-spirited than his hosts in Brimfield. It was not long before Bethlehem's local reputation and the esteem of its director, Ettwein, made Melsheimer curious about the town of Bethlehem itself.⁵⁷ When Melsheimer was finally permitted to visit the Moravian settlement, he was given the tour by Ettwein personally. He was so impressed that he was "determined to remain in Bethlehem."⁵⁸ The patriot commissary arranged it, and Melsheimer was placed in the home of Samuel Mau.⁵⁹ Samuel's daughter, Maria Agnes Mau (1760–1841) had already been admitted to the dormitory of the "Single Woman's Choir," but over the course of the spring of 1779 she and Melsheimer became engaged.

Thus Melsheimer had experienced firsthand, in Brimfield and Bethlehem, the lifestyles of godly Americans and had fallen in love. Unlike Brimfield, the Moravian religious community was predominantly German in language and culture and combined a high degree of structure and order with an orientation toward non-violence. Melsheimer's praise

⁵⁶ Frederick Adolph Riedesel, *Memoirs, and Letters and Journals, of Major General Riedesel during His Residence in America*, vol. 1, ed. Max von Eelking, trans. William L. Stone (Albany, NY: J. Munsell, 1868), 44.

⁵⁷ Melsheimer, "An Unbiased Account."

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Melsheimer, "Letter to Ettwein, April 26, 1779."

for the Moravians of Bethlehem is effusive.⁶⁰

His relationship to the dragoon officers continued to sour during the spring of 1779. Melsheimer argued that his letter to the consistory constituted his resignation. His patron who had called him was dead, and the regiment he was called to serve was scattered over the country, the greater part of it in Virginia. How then was his office as chaplain to the dragoons still valid?⁶¹ The handful of officers with him did not take his point of view.⁶²

On April 4 Melsheimer was allowed to lead an Easter service in one of the chapels in Bethlehem.⁶³ On April 26 he wrote a letter to Ettwein seeking permission to marry Maria Agnes Mau.⁶⁴ On May 6 he was, in a sense, court-martialed by the handful of dragoon officers with him in Bethlehem; as he tells it, he was mostly subjected to insults.⁶⁵ On May 10 his permission to marry Maria Agnes was entered into the Bethlehem diary.⁶⁶ On May 11, according to Braunschweig military records, Melsheimer “deserted” his regiment.⁶⁷ In late May he preached his first sermon in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, where the parish’s founding pastor had just died. On June 3 he and Maria Agnes were married.⁶⁸

In the Moravian community, Melsheimer had discovered one form of Pennsylvania German Pietism. Although impressed by Bethlehem and in love with Maria Agnes, he never forsook his Lutheran ordination. He used his time in Bethlehem to network with a second form of Pennsylvania Pietism, the Pennsylvania Ministerium planted by the Halle missionaries. Given the acrimony between the two Pietisms both in Europe and in America in the eighteenth century, this is somewhat ironic. In this way Melsheimer anticipates Pietists of today who intentionally claim spiritual forebears in both Halle and Herrnhut, in both Francke and Zinzendorf.

Melsheimer attended the annual convention of the synod in October

⁶⁰ Melsheimer, “An Unbiased Account.”

⁶¹ Melsheimer, “Letter to Ettwein, April 26, 1779.”

⁶² Melsheimer, “Letter to Ettwein, May 11, 1779,” Johann Ettwein Papers #401, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA.

⁶³ *The Bethlehem Diary*, 1778–79, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA.

⁶⁴ Melsheimer, “Letter to Ettwein, April 26, 1779.”

⁶⁵ Melsheimer, “Letter to Ettwein, May 11, 1779.”

⁶⁶ *Bethlehem Diary*, 1778–79.

⁶⁷ Eelking, *Memoirs*, 268.

⁶⁸ P. C. Croll, “Bicentennial History, Hill Church of Lebanon County, Pennsylvania,” in *Sestercentennial History, Hill Lutheran Church (Berg Kirche) 1733–1983* (Lebanon County, PA: Lebanon County Historical Society, 1983), 19.

of 1779 in Tulpehocken, where he applied for admittance.⁶⁹ The synod was, however, officially neutral, their position confirmed by their missionary director and benefactor in Halle. It was impossible to endorse for their pulpits a German auxiliaries chaplain accused of desertion. The endorsement for Streit had come before Freylinghausen's letter reached America; had the letter reached America first, Muhlenberg might have desisted. In any event, the endorsement for Streit did not set a precedent on which Melsheimer's case could rest. Admitting a deserter would diminish the dignity of military chaplaincy as a valid Lutheran call and thus threaten the Pennsylvania Ministerium's relationships with consistories throughout Germany, including the Francke Institutes. Melsheimer was welcomed as a "friend" whose "merits we appreciate," but he could not be rostered in the Pennsylvania Ministerium without a letter of discharge from his regiment.⁷⁰

No discharge was ever processed. The issue was resolved only with the victory of the patriots and the departure of all royalist forces in November 1783. At the synod's annual convention in 1785, Melsheimer once again applied for admittance. He had now served with them six years and attained a reputation as a preacher-in-demand. His application was taken up as the first item of business, and the vote of acceptance was unanimous.⁷¹ He then signed his name to the Constitution of 1781/2,⁷² a document that systematized several of Philipp Jacob Spener's six points for a renewed Lutheran Church.⁷³

Melsheimer went on to a distinguished career in the United States. He served in executive leadership for the synod⁷⁴ and brought the parish of Hanover, Pennsylvania, through successive building programs of a parsonage and a stone church.⁷⁵ Publishing articles and books in both science and theology, he became a member of the American Philosophical Society in 1795.

⁶⁹ Spaeth et al., *Documentary History*, 156.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 199.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 169.

⁷³ The Constitution of 1781/2 codified spiritual formation and evidence of sanctification in the clergy: "Every minister professes that he holds the Word of God and our Symbolical Books in doctrine and life" (Ch. 6, Sec. 2); "No minister is allowed to conform himself to the world in his walk and conversation" (Ch. 6, Sec. 5). *Ibid.*, 175.

⁷⁴ Melsheimer served as secretary of the synod 1788–1790. *Ibid.*, 219–29.

⁷⁵ Frederick S. Weiser, *The Lutheran Church on the Conawego at Hanover* (Hanover, PA: St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, 1993), 35–36.

Triebner: The Halle Hessian

The third Pietist chaplain of the Revolutionary War is Christopher Frederick Triebner, a bona fide Halle Pietist whose choice was opposite than Christian Streit's and who moved in the opposite direction from Frederick Melsheimer. After teaching at the Francke Institutes, Triebner was sent as a missionary to the Lutheran Pietist community of Ebenezer, Georgia, arriving in 1769. Triebner's story is summarized in the final chapter of George Fenwick Jones's *The Salzburger Saga*.⁷⁶ Triebner is a major figure in Muhlenberg's *Journals* and in Kurt Aland's German compilation, *Die Korrespondenz Heinrich Melchior Mühlenbergs*.⁷⁷ In his writings, Muhlenberg does not paint a flattering picture of Triebner, as his relationship with him soured from early on.

Ebenezer was established in 1734 as a community of Protestants that had been exiled from the Catholic state of Salzburg, an Alpine realm ruled directly by an archbishop. Most Salzburgers were sponsored by the king of Prussia to settle Prussia's frontiers in eastern Europe.⁷⁸ The Francke Institutes in Halle, a city in Prussia, negotiated with the king of England for the settlement of a few hundred in the new colony being created on North America's Atlantic seaboard. Although death rates were high for immigrants to the southern colonies, reaching 50 percent for newcomers in their first year, the community thrived as subsequent transports brought new settlers.⁷⁹

By the end of the 1750s, three Halle pastors were serving the Ebenezer community, reaching a sustainable clergy-parish ratio in large contrast to the underserved Lutherans in Pennsylvania. In the mid-1760s, two of these pastors died.⁸⁰ As sponsors of the community, the directors of Halle Pietism finally settled on sending Christopher Triebner to Ebenezer despite their concerns about his significant liabilities, particularly that he was "selfish."⁸¹ Even so, they did not make clear the hierarchy of Ebenezer's

⁷⁶ Jones, *The Salzburger Saga*, 121–28.

⁷⁷ Muhlenberg, *Journals*, vol. 2, 596–677.

⁷⁸ Mack Walker, "The Salzburger Migration to Prussia: Causes and Choices," in *In Search of Peace and Prosperity: New German Settlements in Eighteenth Century Europe and America*, ed. Hartmut Lehmann, Hermann Wellenreuther, and Renate Wilson (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 74.

⁷⁹ James Van Horn Melton, *Religion, Community, and Slavery on the Colonial Southern Frontier* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). On the Pietist vision, see pp. 98–137; on death rates, pp. 154–56.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 260–64.

⁸¹ Jones, *The Salzburger Saga*, 121.

pastors. Though by far the junior associate by both age and experience, Triebner instead insinuated himself in the senior role, leading at once to conflicts with the long-serving pastor Christian Rabenhorst (d. 1776).

Triebner's ploy was to call into question the arrangements Rabenhorst had made to alienate the mill on his glebe land from the cooperative economy. The arrangements had been approved by the former pastors, both of whom were now deceased.⁸² Triebner played on the deep-seated suspicions and resentments in the community, particularly those who had been its early settlers and were committed to the communitarian vision of its founding. This fostered an atmosphere of mistrust, which finally led to schism when the two pastors excommunicated each other. At this point the European directors implored Henry Muhlenberg to travel to Georgia to reconcile the parties.⁸³ Muhlenberg arrived in the fall of 1774 and stayed until the following spring.

Triebner cooperated with the compromises Muhlenberg imposed.⁸⁴ Having made fast friends with Rabenhorst, Muhlenberg faithfully made his reports to Europe and returned to Pennsylvania just as war was breaking out. Shortly after, the conflict took new turns, as Triebner was accused of adultery. Refusing orders from Europe to stand trial, he was removed from the pulpit in Ebenezer.⁸⁵ But there was another twist: Rabenhorst died in late 1776, leaving no trained clergy in call in Ebenezer. Furthermore, one of Rabenhorst's major allies, John Adam Treutlen (1733–1782), was elected the first patriot governor of Georgia. Triebner avowed himself as a loyalist and refused to swear allegiance to Treutlen's government. Standing on this principle, he was arrested. "[E]ventually he was forced, at swordpoint, to abjure his oath to the king."⁸⁶

In late 1778, British regulars, loyalist units from New York, and German auxiliaries, all under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell, invaded Georgia and occupied Savannah. They were welcomed by Triebner as liberators. On January 1, 1779, the royalists extended their control to include Ebenezer, with Triebner acting for them as a

⁸² *Ibid.*, 122.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 125. A more thorough discussion of the charges awaits another project. However, Triebner's chief accuser was his opponent John Treutlen; the woman involved pleaded Triebner's innocence and accused another man of sexual assault. No one in power, in Georgia or in Halle, took her point of view into account when putting Triebner under suspension.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 126.

guide on the trail.⁸⁷ On January 3, Triebner was reinstalled by the British commanding officer at Jerusalem Church. The church book of Ebenezer, kept by Triebner from 1779 into 1782, shows that he had a busy ministry of baptisms and burials; however, no marriages are recorded in the record book after 1778.⁸⁸ The war's fortunes, however, turned against the royalists. After the defeat at Yorktown in 1781, the royalists departed Ebenezer, and Triebner went with them. He enlisted as a chaplain with Hessel-Cassel's Knoblauch Garrison regiment. These German soldiers were stationed in Savannah until 1782 and then in St. Augustine, Florida. Triebner's call was confirmed by the regiment's executive officer, Colonel von Porbeck.

The British had suspended offensive operations, and the outcome of the war was a foregone conclusion. Perhaps Triebner felt he had few options. Since he was alienated from Ebenezer in Georgia and estranged from Muhlenberg in Pennsylvania, he might look to the non-affiliated Lutherans of Virginia and the Carolinas as one prospect, but victorious patriots in those congregations could hardly be expected to receive him. Canada might have been an option had he not already befriended the Hessian officers who had expressed an evident need for his ministry.

The list of Hesse-Cassel's regiments with chaplains reproduced by Bruce E. Burgoyne shows that the garrison regiment was served by the Reformed chaplain Johann Conrad Grimmel (1753–1789).⁸⁹ Although most of the Hesse-Cassel auxiliaries were Reformed, the corps included thousands of Lutherans in its ranks. The diaries of other German auxiliary chaplains show that while in New York Lutheran and Reformed chaplains frequently exchanged themselves to each other's regiments to perform communion and liturgies for the other's minority religious populations.⁹⁰ Colonel von Porbeck, executive officer of the garrison in Savannah, found it to his advantage to retain Triebner as a Lutheran.

Triebner's call to the chaplaincy was likely on the terms of the other chaplains of Hesse-Cassel, with an expense allowance in addition to the

⁸⁷ Archibald Campbell, *Journal of Lieut. Colol. Archibald Campbell* (Darien, GA: Richmond County Historical Society, 1981), 33–34.

⁸⁸ *Ebenezer Record Book*, 1754–1781, ed. and trans. George F. Jones and Sheryl Exley (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1991). For birth registry and baptisms, see pp. 74–83; burials, pp. 140–41; marriages, p. 104.

⁸⁹ Burgoyne, *Hessian Chaplains*, xiv.

⁹⁰ Philipp Waldeck, *Eighteenth Century America: A Hessian Report on the People, the Land, the War*, ed. and trans. Bruce E. Burgoyne (Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, 2008), 56–63.

salary, and the assignment of an enlisted man as a personal servant or assistant.⁹¹ For regiments on garrison duty, the churches of the city were used for worship services. Attendance at Sunday service was required for the Hesse-Cassel troops,⁹² thus Triebner had a dependable congregation filling a church building every Sunday and ministered to their needs during the week. A diary kept by Gottlieb Johannes Braunsdorf, a Lutheran colleague stationed thousands of miles north in Quebec, shows that for a garrisoned regiment there was a steady rate of civilian pregnancies, marriages to the soldiers, and baptisms of the infants—frequently in that order.⁹³ Deaths by natural causes diminished after acclimation in Canada; however, in Georgia and Florida the diseases endemic to the warm climates had von Porbeck himself comment that life-expectancy was only forty years.⁹⁴ Lutheran chaplain Philipp Waldeck of the Waldeck Battalion, while stationed in Pensacola, Florida, noted in his diary, “I fear we will lose many men. Every regiment that comes here dies out in a few years and we will not be an exception. We have already experienced it.”⁹⁵ Meanwhile in Canada, the incidents of attempts to desert and of suicide increased with the length of deployment, especially after the Battle of Yorktown.⁹⁶ Even with the cessation of combat operations, it is quite likely that Triebner, together with Grimmel, had his hands full with funerals. Despair at the length and futility of the deployment finally overtook Waldeck several months before the Battle of Yorktown. His journal entry of December 31, 1780, reads: “Another year is at an end and if it will be the last one in Florida, we need not know. It is all immaterial. All is in vain.”⁹⁷ If this was typical of the morale of the German auxiliary chaplains in the southern theater, it provides us fresh insight into Triebner’s usefulness to Porbeck as a fresh face and attitude to present to the troops.

⁹¹ Burgoyne, *Hessian Chaplains*, vii.

⁹² *Ibid.*, ix.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 115–31.

⁹⁴ Atwood, *The Hessians*, 168–69.

⁹⁵ Waldeck, *Eighteenth Century America*, 170.

⁹⁶ Chaplain Johannes Braunsdorf kept a death register in which he notes the causes of death in the Anhalt-Zerbst regiment and its civilian followers. The regiment was garrisoned in Quebec City from their arrival in 1778 through the duration of the war. On surviving the first year, the overall drop in the death rate is steep for the acclimated soldiers; however, incidents of unnatural death increase, and suicide rates climb through to the end of the deployment in 1783. See Burgoyne, *Hessian Chaplains*, 66–109.

⁹⁷ Waldeck, *Eighteenth Century America*, 172.

At the war's conclusion Triebner wrote to Ebenezer, asking if he might return to them. Their reply was that he was welcome to come back if it was his desired to be hanged.⁹⁸ One German auxiliaries chaplain took a parish in Nova Scotia at the war's end,⁹⁹ but Triebner sailed for England instead and succeeded in London as a long-serving pastor until his own death. His published theological works rival Melsheimer's output, but Triebner wrote in English.¹⁰⁰

Muhlenberg's one-sided account of Triebner's behavior in Ebenezer tells only part of the story. If we read the hostile accounts with suspicion of their authors and empathy for Triebner, we find that a young pastor had risked an ocean crossing in the belief that he had been called to a particular pastoral office. Like Melsheimer, Triebner was frustrated that he could not execute his office as he had understood it. Like Melsheimer, he had an increasingly conflicted relationship with his first charges and was finally alienated from them. It is a tribute to Triebner's character that he repaid everything that had been loaned to him by the Francke Institutes for his missionary journey to Georgia, despite the gossip among his opponents.¹⁰¹

Of the Halle missionaries sent by the Francke Institutes to America, Triebner was the only one to serve as a chaplain in the Revolutionary War, and that was for the Hessians. He was not willing to be martyred for King George, but, like thousands of others under duress, he abjured his oath to the king only at sword point. Nevertheless he proved consistent in his loyalism, and he served out his chaplaincy to the end of the war in spite of the lost cause.

Conclusion

In highly charged partisan atmospheres, non-partisan neutrality is often misunderstood and unappreciated. It is more viscerally satisfying to embrace the story of Thomas Allen and imagine the evangelical pastor rushing the battlements of tyranny with sword in hand. As the Evangelical

⁹⁸ Jones, *The Salzburger Saga*, 130.

⁹⁹ Johann Conrad Döhla, *A Hessian Diary of the American Revolution*, ed. and trans. Bruce E. Burgoyne (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 234, n. 6. The memoir by Karl Bauer inflates the promise to 3,000 acres for officers to settle in Nova Scotia or Canada, Karl Bauer, *Journal of a Hessian Grenadier Battalion*, ed. and trans. Bruce E. Burgoyne (Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, 2005), 176.

¹⁰⁰ E.g., Christopher Frederic Triebner, *An Essay, to lay open the gospel in its original purity, by a twelvefold paraphrase on the first gospel promise...* (1788; reprint, the Bibliolife Network: Eighteenth Century Collections Online Print Edition).

¹⁰¹ Jones, *The Salzburger Saga*, 130.

Covenant Church had once cultivated ties with the Congregationalists, it can be argued that Allen belongs to its past, too; for the Covenant in the United States, a stronger case can be made for institutional succession from the Congregationalists than either Halle or Herrnhut. At the same time, an ethos came to be shaped within the Covenant that deliberately held the Congregationalists at arm's length and chose rather to remember its spiritual forebears in the pietisms of a German past. Within that Pietistic Lutheran past, the clerical office was esteemed as one that was (1) loyal to the sovereign state and (2) non-partisan in the politics of representative governments wherever those existed. These values were variously expressed as is shown by this study of three Lutheran military chaplains and their relationships to their communities of discipline and call.

Christian Streit, the pastor who became chaplain to the patriots, is the exception that proved the rule in the Pennsylvania Ministerium. Although predominantly patriotic in private, the Lutheran clergy in Pennsylvania were true to a public stance of neutrality to the end. Streit received an endorsement only for his first tour of military chaplaincy, before Freylinghausen's letter from the Francke Institute's was received, and Streit did not receive an endorsement for his second tour. When Frederick Melsheimer found the demands of military duty, especially to plunder civilians, irreconcilable to Christian duty, he experienced a pietistic ethical awakening. His journey from royalist to naturalized immigrant did not, therefore, land him with the ideologues of patriot partisanship; rather, he found among the Moravians of Bethlehem and the Pietists of the Pennsylvania Ministerium an opportunity to serve a non-violent call in a non-partisan fashion. Christopher Triebner, the only Francke Institutes missionary to serve a chaplaincy in the Revolutionary War, did so for the Hessians. In serving his king, Triebner is a more genuine reflection of the Lutheran Pietist ethos than is Christian Streit.

These three stories—of ardent patriotism, of a journey to non-partisanship, and of ardent loyalism—show how difficult it is even for clergy from within the same theological tradition to come to godly unity on partisan questions. Efforts to find compromise on partisan questions might therefore be misplaced. Rather, today's heirs to Pietism might consider reclaiming a framework of non-partisanship, that is, of political non-alignment, as we wrestle with and proclaim the ethical demands of justice, holiness, grace, duty, biblical hermeneutics, and conscience. Such a stance has been, is, and will be misunderstood when a society's

politics become rancorous and mutually alienating. In such seasons the posture of engaged neutrality might be more important than ever, with the understanding that such a stance does not avoid a cross; it lifts high the cross.

As we have seen in this study, it is possible that no three military chaplains, even within the same theological tradition, will agree on any given question of ethics and conscience. In some cases, a choice made by a military chaplain for conscience's sake may need to be given an unwavering endorsement by Covenant leadership even if such an endorsement appears partisan: Muhlenberg knew no other way to ratify Streit's call on behalf of the Pennsylvania Ministerium. In some cases there may be need for censure: Triebner was made to understand that he had permanently and irrevocably alienated his faith community by his choices, so he moved on to a different community and ministry. In some cases, the one that sticks most consistently to a non-partisan view of their service may be the one who is constrained to leave the military outright: this was Melsheimer's journey, and he found a home in the Pennsylvania Ministerium.

In all cases, the choices between duty and conscience, and between partisanship and vocation, do not come easily. As military duties have evolved, new rights are being claimed and enforced in the US armed forces that may well cause a crisis of conscience for Covenant chaplains. Hopefully the Covenant, by remaining grounded in its affirmations, can be the support its military clergy need as they navigate their duties and their call; hopefully the Covenant will offer a collegial reception when conscience requires that the uniform be resigned or retired.

To those of a partisan frame of mind, Francke Institutes director Freylinghausen's letter is little more than a string of pious phrases from an out of touch bureaucrat. Read from a premise that clergy should be neutral in the midst of partisan conflict, perhaps this missive from a Halle Pietist contains wisdom and hope for today: though conflicts and ethical dilemmas shift with the partisan tides, the church remains the rock of salvation for the repentant.