Keeping the Loyalists Loyal in Post-Revolutionary Nova Scotia: The Preaching and Writing of Reverend Jacob Bailey

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The Reverend Jacob Bailey was a key figure in the early Anglican Church in Nova Scotia, as well as one of the first Loyalists to come to Nova Scotia from New England. Along with the first Bishop of Nova Scotia, Charles Inglis, Bailey was a formative influence in the Anglican Church; he was also a poet and a satirist, a supporter of the Crown, and an opponent of the revolutionary influences that spread through the Thirteen Colonies and less successfully in the Maritime provinces.

Much has been written about Bailey – his personal story offers many insights into the Loyalist experience. His manuscripts were widely scattered, thus new Bailey materials still come to light. His surviving writings reveal a strong defender of both the faith and the Crown. Arguably, in the context of eighteenth-century America, the two could not be separated. While the revolution on one level may have seemed to be all about taxation, democracy, and an emerging colonial bourgeois society, it was also about continued ideological conflict in that part of post-Reformation Christendom that had not remained under the authority of Rome. The tensions between the vision of an Established Church headed by the sovereign and the competing Protestant faiths that came to predominate in the Thirteen Colonies were both cause and effect of the clash between classes and interests that resulted in the birth of the United States. At the same time, the exodus of Tory Anglicans that the revolution

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caused had a unique influence on the birth of Canada.

This article focuses on manuscripts that Bailey wrote in Nova Scotia rather than his pre-revolutionary writings. These manuscripts comprise various sermons and an unpublished fragment, called "The Journey of Twelve Hours," that is in many ways both whimsical and illuminating. A close examination of Bailey's post-revolutionary writings illustrates contemporary political and economic issues and demonstrates Bailey's influence on the history of Nova Scotia.

Reverend Jacob Bailey, often known as the "Frontier Missionary," was the first Church of England clergyman to settle in the Annapolis area of Nova Scotia. The town of Annapolis Royal, built near Champlain's original Port Royal habitation, was the capital of Nova Scotia until the founding of Halifax in 1749.

Bailey was born in 1731. He was a Harvard graduate who served in Pownalborough, Maine, in the years immediately before the American Revolution. His father, David Bailey, was a farmer in Rowley, Massachusetts,¹ but his son Jacob was destined for an academic future. His family was Congregationalist – local pastor Jebadiah Jewett saw Bailey's academic potential and prepared him for Harvard.² After graduation he worked as a schoolmaster in Gloucester, Massachusetts,³ for several years before marrying one of his students, Sally Weeks, who was from a prestigious New England Family.⁴ He later converted to the Church of England and was ordained in London in 1760.⁵

Bailey fled to Nova Scotia after he was labeled a Tory and persecuted in his parish of Pownalborough.⁶ He had refused to read the Declaration of Independence at the end of his church services because it conflicted with his allegiance to King George III. A motion by the congregation to erect a "Liberty Pole" in front of the church was defeated; however his relations with the rebels in his congregation continued to deteriorate.⁷ He fled with his possibly pregnant wife and his son in 1779. Arriving in Halifax, he made contact with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, which was looking for missionaries to expand further into Nova Scotia. He arrived in Annapolis Royal in 1781 after a brief tenure in the adjacent parish of Saint Edward's, Clementsport. He then became the first rector appointed to the parish of Annapolis.⁸

Thus Bailey was a Loyalist perhaps before the term existed and certainly before the greater influx of Loyalist settlement in 1783. In addition to being an active clergyman, he was also a prolific writer: his legacy includes letters, journals, sermons, poetry, and unpublished fiction. His core values as a monarchist and an anglophile are revealed in his writings. He sent a strong message to colonists regarding the importance of loyalty to the crown, membership in the established Church, and the dangers of republican ideas.

Bailey has long been an object of interest to scholars of colonial history and English literature. Through his letters, sermons, and other written records, he has provided a unique perspective on eighteenth and early-nineteenth century society, and on the historical events surrounding the post-revolutionary society that shaped the history of Canada. An enigmatic character, he has been the subject of several late-nineteenth-century published works, including William Bartlet's *Jacob Bailey: The Frontier Missionary*, several graduate theses, and two more recently published works, and he is frequently referred to in studies of Loyalist literature and history.

His early arrival placed him in a good position to assist the Loyalists who sought refuge in Nova Scotia several years after his posting to Annapolis. The arrival of the Loyalists was a watershed in Nova Scotia history; their settlement helped secure Nova Scotia as a colony. At least 35,000 arrived in Nova Scotia between 1782 and 1784.⁹ Planters from New England and Protestant groups from mainland Europe had largely resettled the Annapolis Royal area after it lost its Acadian population following the 1755 expulsion.

The influx of new settlers helped to secure Nova Scotia as a British colony. Following the revolution, the British government was anxious, in the words of Margaret Conrad, to "strengthen the authority of the Crown and to create a rigid class system in the colonies. The Church of England, the established church in Great Britain, was selected to play an important role in achieving these goals."¹⁰ When the first Bishop of Nova Scotia, Charles Inglis, was appointed in 1787, with Bailey and his other clergy, they made a concerted effort to oppose what they identified as "evangelical enthusiasm and 'leveling' tendencies."¹¹

As an Anglican missionary in Nova Scotia, Bailey's opposition did not only come from the various more or less godless inhabitants of a garrison town that was also a local trade centre and a seaport. Like Roger Viets in Digby – and Bishop Inglis at the province/colony level – he was competing against other flavours of Christianity. This most notably included the German-influenced faith of the foreign Protestants and the various sects among the Planter population. In the spectrum of Protestant faiths that existed in North America at the time, John Wesley's reformed version of Anglicanism was considered moderate. Sects such as the Quakers, that supported pacifism, were seen as misguided at best and subversive at worst.

The "New Lights" and Methodists appear to have been among Bailey's strongest competitors. These were the forerunners of today's "charismatic evangelicals," with an ideology based more on individual salvation than on the unbroken tradition of an Established Church, and with rituals such as adult river baptism, outdoor preaching, and a disregard for apostolic tradition and episcopal authority. Bailey was also concerned with marriages solemnized by non-licensed ministers, the words of itinerant preachers, and the rise of so-called "enthusiasm."

These various nonconformist sects were viewed with suspicion in the post-revolutionary political environment. If Anglicanism was a basis for loyalty to the Crown, more radical Protestantism was associated with the dangerous republicanism that had swept through the Thirteen Colonies. Thus it was essential to keep the people loyal through regular attendance at an Established Church, where the importance of hierarchy and social order could be reinforced from the pulpit.

At the other end of the Annapolis Basin, Bailey developed a convivial relationship with Reverend Roger Viets, who was appointed to Trinity Parish, Digby, in 1786.¹² They both enjoyed writing poetry and held similar Loyalist ideologies: "the values which the Loyalist elite had sought to protect ... [a vision of] the world ... ordered, stable, hierarchical and conservative. At the very heart of it is the Anglican Church, a symbol of God and the Crown."¹³

In 2001, the Annapolis Heritage Society in Annapolis Royal received an acquisition of a box of Bailey's papers. The donors – George Woodbury and his family, descendants of Bailey – recognized Bailey's Annapolis Royal connection. The bequest included letters, sermons, unpublished literary scripts, and diaries not considered in earlier studies of Bailey. The manuscripts offer insights into the life of a Church of England missionary in a frontier town, divided between newcomers and old settlers. They also offer a glimpse into other aspects of eighteenth-century English and North American society. Bailey's documents include a unique collection of post-revolutionary sermons and other writings, in particular an unfinished manuscript entitled "A Journey of Twelve Hours" that he wrote while in Annapolis Royal. Many studies focus on his pre-revolutionary life, but his contribution to society in post-revolutionary Nova Scotia has perhaps not been as adequately explored.

Based on known accounts it would appear that Bailey enjoyed writing in various formats. His literary and theological work has received mixed reviews. Louie Miner, the author of "Our Rude Forefathers: American Political Verse, 1783-1788," commented that "Bailey's verse is facile . . . although it is not particularly distinctive, he continued to write satirically of Americans and their political affairs after his retirement to N.S."¹⁴ Judith Fingard, in *The Anglican Design in Loyalist Nova Scotia*, describes him as "an indefatigable dabbler in prose and poetry."¹⁵ A nineteenth-century biographer, Charles Allen, noted that, "I regret I find his sermons ... very dull when compared with his miscellaneous writings, which are very entertaining, and often sparkle with wit and humour."¹⁶ Bailey's pre-revolutionary critic and colleague, Reverend Samuel Parker of Boston, advised Bailey to lengthen his sermons, stating that it would only take fifteen minutes for him to deliver them when his congregation expected thirty minutes.¹⁷ Gwen Davies, in Consolation to Distress: Loyalists Literary Activity in the Maritimes, credits Bailey with being "prolific in output . . . and . . . enduring in reputation."¹⁸

So why study sermons of the eighteenth century? Laura M. Stevens argued in her article, "Why read Sermons? What Americanists can learn from the Sermons of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts," that the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel anniversary sermons delivered from 1701 on offer insights into many aspects of colonial society, including aspects of the American Revolution. According to Nancy Rhoden, author of *Revolutionary Anglicanism: the colonial Church of England during the American Revolution*, "as educators and authors, Anglican ministers often acquired respect and social understanding, [and] enjoyed friendships with elites . . . the office of clergyman did confer a degree of respectability."¹⁹

So why have their exhortations been dismissed by so many historians? Bailey's earliest biographer expressed frustration with interpreting Bailey's sermons – he wrote: "It is difficult to express an opinion respecting them. Besides those which have entirely perished might have been totally different subjects from those which have been preserved."²⁰ This is a fair point – as we know, the surviving documents alone are not always an absolute indication of anything. However, when new documents are discovered, all the more reason to celebrate and examine them.

Bartlet and Allen had perhaps not realized the influence of Bailey's sermons in the parish of Annapolis. Jeremy Gregory, author of "The social

life of the Book of Common Prayer," argues that eighteenth-century social history "[has been] caught in a secular framework . . . [failing to notice the] importance of sermon culture."²¹ Gregory notes that the eighteenth-century parishioner "preferred a service with a sermon."²²

Bailey's sermons have received very little comment and analysis. We know that he preached to a fairly large congregation in St. Luke's, Annapolis Royal – 190 people on the average on Sunday mornings. It was a number that many Anglican clergy in Atlantic Canada might welcome in their regular Sunday morning congregations today. It also seems probable that this congregation would include key figures from the town and the military garrison.

Ross Hebb, author of *The Church of England in Loyalist New Brunswick, 1783-1825,* suggests that, on "special public occasions" in particular, Church of England clergy were "expected to extol the virtues of the British Constitution."²³ Sermons were therefore "a... unique blend of religious duty and political loyalty."²⁴ Bailey's sermons not only delivered what the bishop and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel wanted him to extol; they also followed the Anglican tradition of relating the sermon to the readings appointed by the Lectionary for the week of the liturgical season, and to the local community's experience. This would have included the recent experience of the Loyalists, which was of course also Bailey's own.

For the weary Loyalists this was likely what Davies describes as a "consolation to their [post-revolutionary] distress." Unfortunately, we cannot date all of the sermons written by Bailey in Annapolis. We have references in letters, a few on microfilm in the Nova Scotia Archives, and a handful that arrived in the "Woodbury Box." Bailey had tried to have the sermons that he had left behind in New England returned to him. Parker wrote to him in 1774: "I opened the chest containing the papers . . . Among the jumbled heap some that look like sermons, but much defaced, torn and abused . . . and I have picked out some that look most entire."²⁵ Based on correspondence, it would appear that many of his pre-revolutionary sermons had been damaged or lost, perhaps at the hands of the rebels following his hasty departure.

It must have been devastating to him to lose so much work. It would take several years to develop a sermon for every Sunday, based on the selected cycle of appointed readings. According to Hebb: "missionaries regarded their works as reasoned and re-usable."²⁶ From the content of sermons and surviving manuscript examples that exist, it seems that Bailey aimed to extol traditional Church of England virtues, as well as to respond to the spiritual needs of the Loyalists.

According to church records, Bailey's efforts were effective. When Bishop Inglis visited for a month in 1791, 123 congregants were confirmed, "among them a man aged 91 and several New Lights and Methodists."²⁷ This demonstrated an impressive dedication from his congregation. A visit to Digby at around the same time confirmed only 51.²⁸

The records available do not completely describe the needs of Bailey's congregation beyond the routine of divine worship, baptisms, confirmations, weddings, and burials. It is also difficult to imagine Bailey's oratorical style in delivering his messages. However, it appears that he was successful, so he must have been doing something on which modern rectors can only speculate.

He reported success in his parish when he wrote to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in 1787: "the Dissenters are so reconciled to the Church, that they frequently invite me to officiate among them, and to baptize their children. . . . the inhabitants of Annapolis town have cheerfully subscribed to give me twenty pounds per annum."²⁹ It would appear by all accounts that his message was appealing to those who heard him.

Overcoming suffering was a common theme in his exhortations. For example, in August 1783, he preached about the Biblical Joseph: "a blooming youth just escaped the tender age of childhood was hurried away by his envious and treacherous brethren from the . . . endearments of an affectionate parent to a foreign land!"³⁰ Later he continued with: "but observe what favours providence has in reserve for the virtues for those they may be envied and hated among their ungenerous Kindred and neighbours and even persecuted and banished with unrelenting malice yet among strangers."³¹ No doubt this was an Old Testament story with which the Loyalists would feel some spiritual connection. The theme of parental authority was also a common one – reinforcing the role of hierarchy, and offering a direct allegory to the Crown.

Bailey had aspirations for publishing his sermons. Dr. Peters of London wrote to Bailey in 1782: "I received your eight sermons with pleasure and read them." He advised Bailey of the cost: "printing is two hundred and fifty [pounds] in the size of Sterne."³² Of course, Laurence Sterne was an Anglican clergyman best known for his novels *Tristam Shandy* and *Sentimental Journal* and for his widely published and circulated sermons. By Church of England standards, Sterne was evidently a benchmark for Bailey's peers. However, it does not appear that Bailey was able to pay $\pounds 250$ for publication or that any publisher was willing to publish them under other arrangements.

Bailey was influential in teaching the youth of Annapolis Royal. Before entering the ministry he had been a schoolmaster and therefore had some experience in teaching. He is believed to have been instrumental in securing grants from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel for a schoolmaster for Annapolis Royal.³³ On Wednesdays he catechized the children to prepare them for confirmation. He also wrote stories to teach them the morals that he believed they should learn.

One of the most interesting manuscripts in the Woodbury collection is Bailey's "A Journey of Twelve Hours" – a surviving fragment of what is claimed to be the first volume of a larger work. The opening chapters describe a river journey, while addressing a number of political and social issues. It is undated, although clearly from his Annapolis Royal years. It is admittedly somewhat rambling compared to his sermons, which might perhaps suggest that it was written later in life. Given Bailey's interest in moral teaching, it is possible that the incomplete "A Journey of Twelve Hours" was intended for eventual publication as a sort of moral story.

Set in Annapolis Royal, the story involves a group of people, named in a typical eighteenth-century satirical fashion – Bailey himself, Miss Kitty Prim, Miss Nancy Giggle, Miss Polly Chatter, Miss Charlotte Decorum, Mr. Samuel Loiter, Mr. Tom Thoughtless, Mr. Jeremiah Prognosticus, and – unnamed – a young officer, a widow of forty-six, and an ancient bachelor. From King's Wharf (on the Annapolis Royal waterfront), this social set embarks on a sail up Allen's River.

For those unfamiliar with the hydrography, this is a tributary of the Annapolis River to the south of the town of Annapolis Royal that meanders through a marsh for about five kilometers before reaching the site of a mill, where the stream rises sharply into the so-called "South Mountain." Not a great expedition, but a modest day sail, although we do not know the type of boat that carried this group of eleven. Neither, unfortunately, do we know whether the first names of the characters are real or imagined, or indeed how much of the story is fiction.

Bailey begins with quite a long introduction explaining the purpose of his work, noting that he intends not to write any prologue or apology. He proclaims early on that he "shall not attempt a servile imitation of Whitfield and Wesley's fame." It is a unique manuscript that reflects Bailey's beliefs and sentiments. The major themes of the journal include his abhorrence of tax avoidance through the common practice of smuggling; irritating female traits; the problems associated with religious "enthusiasm"; and the philosophies of the Enlightenment. His various characters present and refute opinions in a sort of debate as the boat moves upriver.

With regards to smuggling, one of his characters, "Mr. Thoughtless," rages against that accursed sin of smuggling. There is not a harbour, a creek or inlet but what has been the vile instrument of this pernicious practice. And even this royal wharf erected at a prodigious expense by government, has frequently in a dark and stormy night favoured a wicked confederacy to cheat the king.³⁴

Smuggling, of course, was an aspect of the reestablishment of trade relations with the New England states after the revolution. The paying of taxes was one of the sparks that ignited the revolution, and was probably no more appreciated by Nova Scotian merchants. But, in Bailey's view, taxes supported the army, the navy, and the Crown. At the same time, the traffic between Nova Scotia and New England enabled the spread of New Light religion and subversive political doctrines.

With the notions of the Enlightenment, Bailey is even less subtle. He begins in his introduction by stating that the public

of late have been extremely partial to their favourites, who are generally enthusiasts, democrats and infidels. For instance, had *Common Sense, The Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason* been written by a pious Bishop or learned statesman or sober judge and instead of applauding their performances they would have been regarded with a sneer for contempt. And those who could have patience to pursue them after all of their demonstrations, would doubtless have suspected there might be some truth in the Bible.³⁵

Bailey's reference to three of Thomas Paine's contemporary works – *Common Sense, The Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason* – suggests that he was more of a supporter of Thomas Hobbes or of Robert Filmer. When he writes, "Let us no longer disgrace the Christian profession but either only embrace the tenets of Voltaire and Paine,"³⁶ he seems to suggest that Christianity and the revolutionary doctrines that came out of the Enlight-enment are mutually exclusive.

An odd episode in the text involves "Miss Giggle" and the loss overboard of her umbrella. This is taken by "Mr. Jeremiah [clearly a Biblical reference] Prognosticus" as a portent of disaster: "he could not forbear thinking it an omen of some mischief, which was to happen either to herself or some of the company." Here it is Bailey himself who replies: "I offered that I could not regard this trifling event in so serious a light – I have often let my snuff box and gloves fall into the water, without being able to recover them as you have done with your umbrella."³⁷ As a result of his intervention

The clouds of dejection were in a moment dispelled – every countenance began to brighten, and returning joy sparkled in every eye. The face of Miss Giggle recovered all its lustre and she began to smile to laugh and titter, at everything which was spoken whether it proceed from the mouth of wisdom or the lips of folly.³⁸

It is not obvious what the moral lesson is here, other than a condemnation of the Puritanism that characterized the New Lights and that is exemplified by "Jeremiah." Indeed, Bailey goes on to ask, rhetorically, "Why should a young lady be insensible to any advantage or perfection which her creator has given her above her companions?"³⁹

One can sense that Bailey's concerns regarding "enthusiasm" are expressed through the conversation among the ladies on the trip. He clearly sees them as susceptible to the charms of itinerant preachers. For example "Miss Chatter" states enthusiastically that

that learned, pious and godly Mr. C-p-r was present to pray. How many wonderful things has this . . . blessed man performed by his powerful prayers . . . the most miraculous affair after all was the conversion of two stubborn hardened old sinners both in less than [a] week . . . When shall we hear of such amazing conversions at church – indeed we may challenge all the ministers of the established church to produce a single convert."⁴⁰

"Mr. C-p-r" (Mr. Cooper?) was presumably one of the itinerant New Light preachers, and Bailey's competition. Fortunately, Bailey has "Miss Charlotte Decorum" respond in the Church's defense:

These Methodist . . . preachers though not remarkable for their learning, I believe to be very cunning fellows. They never venture to mention smuggling and cheating in their catalogue of sins . . . Infidelity and rebellion is wholly omitted[.] For if these great offences were clearly exposed in all their dreadful consequences, they would

be in danger of losing their hearers."41

Unfortunately, Bailey's manuscript ends a few pages later. We have only about three thousand words of what was clearly intended to be a *magnum* opus, addressing a wide range of favourite topics.

So, what of Bailey's historical legacy? His efforts were rewarded with a plaque in the nave of St Luke's Church in Annapolis Royal, dedicated to the memory of "The Frontier Missionary." It is interesting to consider how our perception of "the frontier" has changed since Bailey's day.

Bailey died in 1808. He did not live to see the renewed war for control of North America in which his only son died, at Fort Chippewa in 1815. He died before the defeat of the radical Enlightenment at Waterloo and the more progressive evolution towards constitutional monarchy that followed. He also died before the construction of the current Saint Luke's Church in Annapolis Royal in 1810.

In his own mind, Bailey was a gifted writer and satirist, although the publishing industry did not seem to recognize this. He had influential friends and was well regarded within colonial society. In return, he served as one of colonial society's most ardent supporters.

However, Bailey's legacy goes beyond a plaque on a church wall. While Anglicanism never became the numerically superior religion in Nova Scotia, Anglicans were strongly and perhaps disproportionately represented in its institutions and its political establishment. Like Roger Viets in Digby, Bailey's focus was in the town, while the New Light preachers roamed the countryside. For this reason, Anglicanism flourished among the townsfolk and perhaps stemmed the flow of radical liberalism that infected the merchant classes of Boston and other New England towns. For this reason also, there are clearly more Baptists than Anglicans in southwest Nova Scotia today. Thus Bishop Inglis' vision for Nova Scotia was perhaps only partly realized, but it left a lasting legacy nonetheless.

The insights that we get into aspects of life in Nova Scotia are compelling – the smuggling trade with New England and the spread of radical political and religious views, set against a context of accelerating social change. It is important to realize that the spread of rebellion to the Maritimes was not considered just a remote possibility. Bailey and Inglis' mandate was not just to minister to the needs of the new Loyalist arrivals, but to inoculate the population and to keep them loyal. Compared to Upper Canada, Nova Scotia was not on the frontline of the War of 1812. The celebrated victory of *HMS Shannon* over the American privateer *Chesapeake* is widely credited with having persuaded the citizens of Halifax that support for Britain was not a lost cause. In 1867, Nova Scotia joined Confederation, but not without a strong anti-Confederation movement. Smuggling with New England enjoyed a highly lucrative revival during Prohibition. Even today, it is as common in Halifax to find multi-generational Boston Bruins fans as it is to find Montreal Canadians fans. Nonetheless, Nova Scotia remains loyal, and some credit for this must go to the Anglican missionaries such as Jacob Bailey.

Endnotes

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- 38. "A Journey of twelve hours," 39-40.
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