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The Middle Colonies: Embryo of the New Political Order

DID SUCH A REGION as the "middle colonies" ever really exist, other than for the convenience of historians? Can any kind of logical unity be claimed for the provinces of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, or were they simply "what was left over between New England and the South"?[1] Does the term "middle-colony culture" carry any real meaning? For the other two sections of the mainland colonies, such questions can generally evoke a dependable similarity of response. For all the qualifications and exceptions, there remain certain peculiar configurations of "southern" and "New England" features that are generally recognized and taken as real. The colonial South may mean a great many things, but central among them are

This essay is not in the form a historiographical study normally takes, being more an effort to discern the central character of a region, as revealed in early writings about it, than a discussion of the writers themselves. The diversity and variety of life in the middle colonies has tended to discourage modern writers from dealing with the section as a unit. The author of the present essay, however, believes that it was this very diversity that created a style of politics distinctive of the region, one which in certain ways more closely resembled modern political practices than did that of either the southern or New England colonies. Each of the early historians herein mentioned had some inkling of this. But they would have needed the perspective of time, and to see the political innovations of the nineteenth century, before they could have been expected to grasp the full significance of what they were witnessing.

1. Frederick B. Tolles, "Historians of the Middle Colonies," in *The Reinterpretation of Early American History*, ed. by Ray Allen Billington (New York, 1968), 65. Delaware will be treated as part of Pennsylvania in this essay.

somehow plantation agriculture, slavery, and a patrician gentry; as for colonial New England, the Congregational Church and township government can serve as common notation for a wide range of elements. And both regions, of course, were indisputably English. But for the middle colonies, a collective personality and a distinguishing unity are not so obvious. They may be there, but they do not naturally suggest themselves—as do those of the South and New England—through free association.

For instance, the middle region can certainly not be defined by its Englishness. In no other part of the colonies was there such a diversity of cultures and nationalities, the English often being outnumbered by Dutch, German, Scotch-Irish, French, or Swedes. Nor does religion provide a unifying theme. No single creed could dominate in a society where Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed, Anglican, Quaker, and German Reformed churches all contended for influence, and where a variety of small pietistic sects flourished in the unregulated atmosphere that resulted from the stand-off. Economic interests were equally varied, as the twin blessings of rich soil and deep natural harbors led to the development of agricultural and commercial enterprises of relatively equal importance. Furs, grains, meats, and dairy and wood products were all exported from the mid-Atlantic region, thereby stimulating the rapid growth of the ports of Philadelphia and New York, as well as the development of numerous specialized trades connected with the increasingly commercial character of those two cities. Nor were the middle colonies defined by any special geographical unity, segmented as the region was by rivers and mountain ranges. So were the others, to be sure; but in the middle colonies these natural divisions were reinforced by the tendency of ethnic and religious groups to settle with their own kind in well-defined pockets. The swarming of German pietists to Lancaster County in Pennsylvania is one example; the concentration of Dutch in the upper Hudson Valley is another. The result was a localism, or subsectionalism, that was often rooted in cultural distinctions, and that added even further to the atomized character of middle-colony society. It may well be, in short, that if the middle colonies did have a special style and character

of their own, it could only have been as a consequence of this very diversity.

One way to take the measure of these provinces is to reexamine what contemporaries had to say about them. A number of eighteenth-century observers wrote histories of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. These accounts were often highly personal and parochial; sometimes they were undisguised polemics. But if they fall short of modern historical standards, they nonetheless contain certain common and recurrent themes that have much to tell us about middle-colony ways. They all tell of a pluralistic and competitive people who fought to obtain, and then to protect, the liberties and privileges each group valued most. They reveal a bewildering variety of individual and group interests, each contended for with a remarkable persistence. There were endless squabbles and bickerings; parallel with them went bargains, compromises, and accommodations. No single group or belief could dominate, and in discovering this, a heterogeneous people learned not necessarily to "cherish" their differences—which is a great deal to ask of any society—but at least to tolerate and live with them. Contention was inevitable, and bound to be more or less chronic; the question seems to have been one not of stopping it but of carrying it on in ways that would not tear the society to pieces.

The process whereby this occurred cannot adequately be covered by the "melting pot" metaphor. Nor does the formation of a "composite nationality"—to use Turner's phrase[2]—seem the most accurate way to note the result. It is not so much a social phenomenon as a political one. Reread, the old chronicles suggest that the principal contribution of the middle colonies was not—as with the South and New England—to our cultural heritage, but to the formation of our political habits.

A brief accounting of the diverse elements present in the middle colonies will suggest the complex character of that society. In no other part of the English colonies did the mélange of nationalities approach

2. Everett E. Edwards, comp., *The Early Writings of Frederick Jackson Turner* (Madison, Wis., 1938), 79.

that found in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. William Smith, Jr., perhaps the best-known contemporary historian of New York Colony, asserted in 1757 that the inhabitants of the province were "a mixed people, but mostly descended from the original Dutch planters." The Dutch were indeed numerous in the Hudson Valley counties; at the end of the seventeenth century they constituted from two-thirds to more than nine-tenths of the white population there. Even by the late colonial era, the Dutch language predominated over English in many areas.[3] In the seaboard sections, however, the Dutch were soon equaled and then outnumbered by other nationalities—English mainly, supplemented by smaller infusions of French Huguenots, Germans, and Scotch-Irish.[4] This mixture was further enhanced by the presence of smaller enclaves of Jews, Swedes, Highland Scots, occasional Irish, and a larger number of blacks than could be found in any of the other northern colonies. By the Revolution, people of English stock may have constituted almost 50 percent of the population of New York, but other elements, particularly the Dutch, maintained a strong influence over the culture and politics of the colony.[5]

Pennsylvania's ethnic variety was also wide, with the principal groups being somewhat more equally balanced than in New York. The English and Germans each made up about one-third of the population by the late colonial period; the remaining third consisted of many Scotch-Irish, a number of Welsh, and a scattering of Highland Scots, Dutch, French, and Swedes. People of English stock tended to con-

3. William Smith, Jr., *The History of the Province of New-York,* ed. by Michael Kammen, I (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), 203. Smith noted that Dutch was "still so much used in some counties, that the sheriffs find it difficult to obtain persons, sufficiently acquainted with the English tongue, to serve as jurors in the courts of law." *Ibid.,* 226. Orange, Ulster, and Dutchess counties had from 66 to 75 percent Dutch population; 93 percent of Albany County's people were of Dutch descent. American Council of Learned Societies Report of Committee on Linguistic and National Stocks in the Population of the United States, *Annual Report* of the American Historical Association for the Year 1931 (Washington, D.C., 1932), 120.

4. A major exception was Kings County, which was 88 percent Dutch in 1698 and remained the southern stronghold of that group. Staten Island contained strong elements of both Dutch and French Huguenots. American Council of Learned Societies, *Report,* 120; Smith, *History of New-York,* I, 220.

5. American Council of Learned Societies, *Report,* 124; Maldwyn A. Jones, *American Immigration* (Chicago, 1960), 16–17, 20.

centrate more heavily in those lower counties which later became the state of Delaware, constituting perhaps as much as 60 percent of the population there. Swedes also were more numerous in that section, being a cultural remnant of that brief period in the seventeenth century when the region at the mouth of the Delaware was known as New Sweden.[6] The Germans were diffused throughout the colony, settling most densely—according to Pennsylvania's leading eighteenth-century historian, Robert Proud—in the counties of Lancaster, York, Berks, and Northampton.[7]

Such a potpourri of cultures and languages did not always make for a harmonious coexistence. Some early Pennsylvania historians saw the large influx of Germans in the eighteenth century as a distinct threat to English ways. The Reverend William Smith expressed such a view in his 1755 treatise, *A Brief State of the Province of Pennsylvania.* It had become essential "to open the Eyes of the *Germans* to their true Interests," declared Smith. "Faithful Protestant Ministers, and School-masters, should be sent and supported among them . . . to teach them sound Principles of Government, and instruct their Children in the *English* Tongue, and the Value of those Privileges to which they are born among us." Until that was done, Smith recommended that the province "suspend the Right of Voting for Members of Assembly, from the *Germans.*"[8] Robert Proud also commented on the flood of Germans entering Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century, noting that they constituted "near one-third, at least, of the inhabitants." In the summer of 1749, twenty-five ships filled with Germans had arrived, adding some "twelve thousand souls . . . and in some years near as many annually from Ireland."[9]

New Jersey, too, became the home of a heterogeneous people, the

6. American Council of Learned Societies, *Report,* 124; Jones, *American Immigration,* ch. 1. In the census of 1790, the English made up 60 percent and the Swedes 8.9 percent of the population of Delaware.

7. Robert Proud, *The History of Pennsylvania in North America . . .,* II (Philadelphia, 1797–98), 273. Proud noted that Cumberland County was settled mostly by Scotch-Irish, "who abound through the whole Province" (274). A detailed discussion of Pennsylvania's cultural pluralism will be found in Frederick B. Tolles, "The Culture of Early Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography,* LXXXI (1957), 119–137.

8. (London, 1755), 33–34, 40.

9. Proud, *History of Pennsylvania,* II, 273.

earliest settlers in that colony being mainly Dutch and a few Scandinavians. To these were soon added—according to the eighteenth-century New Jersey historian Samuel Smith—New Englanders and "the Scotch, of whom there came a great many, such settlers as came from England, those of the Dutch that remained, and those from the neighboring colonies."[10] By the Revolution, citizens of English ancestry composed slightly less than half the population. The rest were made up of a large contingent of Dutch, substantial numbers of Germans, Highland Scots, and Scotch-Irish, and smaller elements of French and Swedes.[11]

The great variety of national strains that were attracted to the middle English colonies gave rise to another striking feature of the region's character—its religious diversity. Pennsylvania represents the best example: after it was established in part as a haven for the outcast Quaker sect, Pennsylvania's reputation for religious tolerance attracted other persecuted dissidents. These "plain people," as they were called—part of the flotsam thrown up in the wake of the Protestant Reformation and the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—were seeking both religious freedom and economic opportunity. Such groups as the Mennonites, Amish, Dunkers, Schwenkfelders, and later the Moravians added a picturesqueness to Pennsylvania's religious heterodoxy, but since most of these small sects preferred to remain apart their impact on political and social life was limited. The most influential religious groups in Pennsylvania, besides the Quakers, were the large congregations of Presbyterians, German Reformed, Lutherans, and Anglicans. There were, in addition, a few Roman Catholics and a few Jews.[12]

In rural New York, as in Pennsylvania, religious patterns reflected

10. Samuel Smith, *The History of the Colony of Nova-Caesaria, or New-Jersey* (Burlington, N.J., 1765, 1877), 62.

11. American Council of Learned Societies, *Report,* 124.

12. In 1776 there were, according to one count, 106 German Reformed congregations, 68 Presbyterian, 63 Lutheran, 61 Quaker, 33 Episcopalian, 27 Baptist, 14 Moravian, 13 Mennonite, 13 Dunker, 9 Catholic, and 1 Dutch Reformed. W. W. Sweet, *Religion in Colonial America* (New York, 1942), 163, 210–229.

the ethnic makeup of the community. Thus, in the upper Hudson Valley the Dutch Reformed Church predominated. In the town of Kingston in Ulster County, where the citizens were mainly of Dutch extraction, the Dutch Reformed congregation met in "a large stone church," while the Anglicans were "so inconsiderable that their church is only a mean log-house." The Anglican church at Albany, "the only one in this large county," was made of stone, but the congregation was "small, almost all the inhabitants resorting to the Dutch church." Suffolk County was settled by New Englanders, and "except [for] one small episcopal congregation, consists entirely of English presbyterians."[13] And so it went in all the rural counties of New York. New York City's religious picture, however, was another matter. The variety of affiliations was listed by William Smith, Jr., in 1757, and reflects the cosmopolitan nature of that capital town. There were two Anglican churches (Trinity and St. George's), one Dutch Reformed, one Presbyterian, two Lutheran, one small Huguenot congregation, one Quaker meeting, and one Moravian church. Smith noted also that "the anabaptists assemble at a small meeting house, but have as yet no regular settled congregation. The jews, who are not inconsiderable for their numbers, worship in a synagogue erected in a very private part of the town, plain without, but very neat within."[14] It is difficult to determine the strength of the several congregations in the city. Because of the semiofficial status of the Anglican Church, as well as the political and social prominence of many of its parishioners, Anglican influence was greater than mere numbers would imply. The Dutch Reformed was another influential church, and in the later colonial years the Presbyterians were increasing in numbers and power. Religious rivalries often found expression in New York City politics; the King's College controversy of the 1750's, for example, was described by the New York historian Thomas Jones as something close to a Presbyterian conspiracy.[15]

13. Smith, *History of New-York,* I, 212, 215, 221.

14. *Ibid.,* 203–208.

15. Thomas Jones, *History of New York During the Revolutionary War,* I (New York, 1879), 12–16. Another example of the connection between re-

That the religious spectrum in New Jersey was equally comprehensive is shown by an informal county-by-county church census taken by Samuel Smith in 1765. The numbers of active congregations were found to be: Presbyterian, 55; Quaker, 39; Episcopalian, 21; Dutch Reformed, 21; Baptist, 19; Dutch Lutheran, 4; Seventh Day Baptists, 2; German Reformed, 2; and one each for the Swedish Lutheran, Moravian, Lutheran, Anabaptist, Separatist, and Rogereens churches.[16] The Quakers had settled very early in New Jersey and, having greatly increased in numbers, especially in West Jersey, came to have a marked influence on all aspects of the colony's affairs. Their importance was further strengthened by the ties they developed with other Quakers of the region, especially those in Pennsylvania. Similar bonds were formed by middle-colony Presbyterians, as William Smith of New York, himself a staunch Presbyterian, tells us. Members of that church "inhabiting New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, and the three Delaware counties, are regularly formed, after the manner of the church of Scotland, into consistories or kirk sessions, presbyteries and synods, and will probably soon join in erecting a general assembly."[17] The increasing sense of solidarity within religious sects strengthened their ability to bring pressure on government for desired reforms—such as the right of Quakers to affirm rather than take oaths, or the Presbyterians' insistence on recognition and full religious liberty in New York City. Moreover, as William Smith, Jr., explains, whenever the Anglicans tried to claim a privileged position based on their official status at home, "the presbyterians, independents, congregationalists, anabaptists, quakers, and all those among us, who in England would fall under the general denomination of dissenters, are warm in the negative."[18]

ligion and politics can be found in the New York Assembly election of 1769, when the "Anglican party" squared off against the "Presbyterian party." Patricia U. Bonomi, *A Factious People: Politics and Society in Colonial New York* (New York, 1971), 248–254.

16. Smith, *History of New-Jersey*, ch. 24.

17. Smith, *History of New-York*, I, 234; Rufus M. Jones, *The Quakers in the American Colonies*, 2d ed. (New York, 1966), 377, 391–393.

18. Smith, *History of New-York*, I, 235.

That such jars and jealousies would be a regular feature of middle-colony life was made inevitable by the region's ethnic and religious multiplicity. Few visitors failed to comment on this. Dr. Alexander Hamilton, whose "Itinerarium" took him to Philadelphia in 1744, recorded that he "dined att a tavern with a very mixed company of different nations and religions." Among the twenty-five men at table were "Scots, English, Dutch, Germans, and Irish; there were Roman Catholics, Church men, Presbyterians, Quakers, Newlightmen, Methodists, Seventh day men, Moravians, Anabaptists, and one Jew."[19]

Ethnic and religious divisions were not the only forces that served to fragment mid-Atlantic society. The sectionalism that was present to some degree in all the mainland colonies found perhaps its sharpest expression in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. From its beginnings New Jersey was a somewhat artificial domain, composed as it was of the two separate proprietaries of East and West Jersey. Each half of the province had its own unofficial capital, and each was oriented outward to a neighboring colony. West Jersey, a Quaker stronghold that looked to Burlington as its chief seat, faced south and west to the Delaware River and Pennsylvania. Because the section bordering the Atlantic Ocean consisted of "a great extent of salt meadows, swamps and marshes," adjoined by "barrens or poor land, [which] generally continues from the sea up into the province thirty miles or more," settlement occurred mainly along the Delaware River, while trade, following the natural drainage of creeks and streams, flowed toward the port at Philadelphia.[20] East Jersey, on the other hand, settled principally by Dutch, Scots, and English, considered its governmental seat to be Perth Amboy. Throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, East Jersey leaders dreamed of developing "Amboy" into a commercial port. As Samuel Smith explains, the location was ideal, "lying open to Sandy-Hook, whence vessels may arrive almost any weather in one tide . . . and find a

19. Carl Bridenbaugh, ed., *Gentleman's Progress: The Itinerarium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton, 1744* (Chapel Hill, 1948), 20.

20. Smith, *History of New-Jersey*, 487; John E. Pomfret, *The Province of West New Jersey, 1609–1702* (Princeton, 1956), 118.

safe commodious harbour, capacious enough to contain many large ships. . . ." Yet East Jerseymen found the project "up-hill work," largely because New Yorkers resented any effort to develop a competing port and used all their connections in London to discourage it. The result was "a fatality attending almost every attempt for trade in the province," and a dependence on the port of New York that threatened, at times, to reduce East Jersey to the position of a minor satellite.[21]

The divisive influence of these geographic and economic forces was such that the two Jersies retained fairly separate identities throughout much of the colonial era. Moreover, the split was institutionalized in politics, for it became the rule to hold sessions of the New Jersey legislature alternately in each sectional "capital." When Governor Robert Hunter, caught in a factional broil with West Jersey leaders in 1716, defied tradition and called the Assembly to meet in Perth Amboy when it was Burlington's turn, the West Jersey legislators flatly refused to attend.[22]

The province of New York had two major sections, the division being in part a reflection of localized economic interests. The upriver-Albany region was centered on the fur trade in the early years; but by the eighteenth century the production of grains and other foods had taken precedence and made the Hudson Valley one of the major staple-producing centers of colonial America. To the south, the counties bordering the roadways of New York harbor were bound together by a common concern with the export trade. By the mid-eighteenth century, according to William Smith, Jr., flour was being exported in the amount of "80,000 barrels per annum," and it was in the seaboard merchants' interest to maintain the high quality of the product. Thus, "to preserve the credit of this important branch of our staple, we have

21. Smith, *History of New-Jersey*, 489–490; John E. Pomfret, *The Province of East New Jersey, 1609–1702* (Princeton, 1962), ch. 9. The story of New York's resistance to the port at Perth Amboy and its efforts to force all ships to enter and clear only at New York is related in Pomfret, *East New Jersey*, 311–324.

22. Smith, *History of New-Jersey*, 405–409; Donald L. Kemmerer, *Path to Freedom: The Struggle for Self-Government in Colonial New Jersey, 1703–1776* (Princeton, 1940), 101–104.

a good law, appointing officers to inspect and brand every cask before its exportation." The centralization of inspection procedures, as well as various metropolitan efforts to place controls on other Hudson Valley products, led to resentment and strong feelings of sectional competition.[23] A geographical form of sectionalism was reflected in the division of Orange County, on the west bank of the Hudson, by a range of mountains. As Smith notes: "On the north side the lands are very broken but fertile, and inhabited by Scotch, Irish, and English presbyterians. . . . The people on the south side of the mountains are all Dutch." As for Dutchess County, the "inhabitants on the banks of the [Hudson] river are Dutch, but those more easterly Englishmen, and for the most part, emigrants from Connecticut and Long Island."[24]

The sharpest sectional division of Pennsylvania's early years was that which pitted Quaker leaders in the counties around Philadelphia against the older settlers of Swedish, Dutch, and English origins in the three "lower counties" of New Castle, Kent, and Sussex. William Penn in 1685 decried the growth of factions produced by that split in his well-known letter to the Pennsylvania Council: "For the love of God, me and the poor country, be not so governmentish, so noisy and open in your dissatisfactions." Yet by 1690 tension had reached such a pitch that the lower counties actually seceded from the central government, forcing Penn to appoint a deputy governor for that section in order to maintain some degree of authority over it. In 1701, according to Robert Proud, friction between the two sections had come to occupy so much attention that "not much other public business of importance appears to have been transacted in the affairs of government." In order to break the stalemate, Penn finally agreed to grant

23. Smith, *History of New-York*, I, 229; Bonomi, *A Factious People*, 101–102, 177–178. A third center of specialized economic interest was Suffolk County at the eastern end of Long Island, where proximity to New England caused most "East End" products to be "carried to markets in Boston and Rhode-Island." The imperial government's efforts to enforce exclusive customs jurisdiction for New York City created hostility between the two seaboard sections until 1721, when a customs inspector was located at Montauk Point and direct trade allowed. Smith, *History of New-York*, I, 221; Bonomi, *A Factious People*, 82n., 100.

24. Smith, *History of New-York*, I, 211, 216.

the lower counties their own separate legislature.[25] An east-west tension developed in the later years, as problems arose between the central government and the frontier settlers, many of whom were of Scotch-Irish and German descent. Demands for greater protection from marauding Indians and more equal representation in the provincial assembly led to such challenges as the march of the Paxton Boys in 1763 and the growth of a popular faction that would assume a leading role at the time of the Revolution.[26] Thus sectionalism and sectional fragmentation took many forms in the middle colonies, particularly where economic and ethnic interests became identified with a regional center.

All the eighteenth-century chroniclers describe middle-colony politics as turbulent and competitive, qualities which they saw as direct reflections of the society's very pluralism. Robert Proud declared that Pennsylvania "appears to have been never entirely without a discontented and murmuring party in it," and he noted an "increase of party" as more and more "persons of very different principles and manners" from those of the original settlers arrived in the course of the eighteenth century. Others observed that the citizens of Pennsylvania were "factious, contentious," and "the People at Variance, and distrustful of each other!"[27] Samuel Smith of New Jersey, for all his Quaker benevolence, could not close his eyes to the party quarrels that beset his colony in the eighteenth century. Indeed, Smith himself was denied

25. Penn to Council, Aug. 19, 1685, quoted in Gary B. Nash, *Quakers and Politics, Pennsylvania, 1681–1726* (Princeton, 1968), 49; Proud, *History of Pennsylvania*, I, 454–455. See also Nash, *Quakers and Politics*, 67–70, 131–133, 236. The "lower counties" later split off entirely from Pennsylvania to become the state of Delaware.

26. Theodore Thayer, *Pennsylvania Politics and the Growth of Democracy, 1740–1776* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1953), chs. 7, 13. Not all historians are agreed on the sectional nature of the later division. See David Hawke, *In the Midst of a Revolution* (Philadelphia, 1961), 62–63; Joseph E. Illick, "The Writing of Colonial Pennsylvania History," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XCIV (1970), 18–22.

27. Proud, *History of Pennsylvania*, II, 228–229; [Rev.] William Smith, *A Brief State of the Province of Pennsylvania* (London, 1755; New York, 1865), 15, 26.

a seat on the New Jersey Council in 1751 when he was charged with being "a Wellwisher to the [land] Rioters and his Family active in that Faction."[28] William Smith, Jr., of New York was also directly involved in the political contests of his time. Though Smith tried to preserve some measure of detachment in his *History*, a barely controlled passion vibrates through his account of the almost continuous squabbles that kept New York politics in turmoil from the late seventeenth century to the Revolution. Thomas Jones, New York's other major historian, made no effort at all to be objective. The introductory section of his work is a philippic against the "Presbyterian" or "republican" faction, which in his view embroiled New York in continuous party debate throughout the pre-Revolutionary era.[29]

Perhaps the most revealing passages of these early histories, however, are those that describe how middle-colony political leaders learned to manipulate interest groups to achieve particular political ends. At election time they might be found shamelessly currying favor with one group or stirring up prejudices against another. Candidates realized very early, for example, that they could gain credit with the Quakers by upholding their privilege of affirmation—an issue of some consequence since it involved the Quakers' right to vote, to hold office, and to sit on juries. In New Jersey, a party that controlled the provincial Council in the early eighteenth century had for years denied the right of affirmation—which was a good way of excluding certain Quaker rivals from office. When an opposition group of Assembly leaders finally took up the Quakers' cause, achieving success in 1713 when Governor Hunter signed a bill confirming the right, the New Jersey Friends naturally became solid adherents of the faction that had supported their interests.[30] Affirmation was a political issue in New

28. Lords of Trade to Gov. Jonathan Belcher, March 27, 1751, *New Jersey Archives*, 1st ser., VII, 586, quoted in Carl E. Prince, "Samuel Smith's *History of Nova-Caesaria*," *The Colonial Legacy*, ed. by Lawrence H. Leder, II (New York, 1971), 168. Though Smith later won appointment to the Council, his alienation from the Crown and strong support for the Revolution may in part be accounted for by the earlier rebuff. *Ibid.*, 169.

29. Jones, *History of New York During the Revolutionary War*, I, ch. 1.

30. Smith, *History of New-Jersey*, 306–308, 334, 372–373, 393, 402–403; Kemmerer, *Path to Freedom*, 50–51.

York as well. Of Frederick Philipse, one of the candidates in the 1729 Assembly election in Westchester, it was reported that the "Quakers to a man will vote against" him. "Some of the Principals of them on Long Island have been over and acquainted their brethren how much Phillipse is in [Lieutenant Governor] George Clarkes Interest who intends to abridge them of their Priviledges."[31] Even in Pennsylvania the Quakers needed to maintain their vigilance. In the 1720's a controversy arose over the Friends' keeping their heads covered in courts of law. The Philadelphia Meeting "appointed a committee to wait on the Governor," to press for continuation of the privilege. The governor, Sir William Keith, supported the Quakers, and as a result was "very popular" among them.[32]

An even balder example of group manipulation occurred in New York in connection with an Assembly election in 1737. In a brawling contest that apparently stimulated new peaks of participation, Adolph Philipse, a wealthy New York City merchant, won his seat by a mere 15 votes. So close an election was always vulnerable to challenge, and in this case Philipse's opponent, Cornelius Van Horne, demanded a scrutiny of the votes by the Assembly. Speaking for Van Horne, William Smith (father of the New York historian) raised the question "whether Jews were qualified for electors, some of them having voted for Mr. Philipse." Smith, whose Christian fervor seems to have been somewhat heightened by the occasion, "so pathetically described the bloody tragedy at Mount Calvary that a member cried out with agony and in tears, beseeching him to desist, and declaring his conviction. Many others wept; and the unfortunate Israelites were content to lose their votes, could they escape with their lives."[33]

The Quakers themselves were not above manipulating ethnic blocs.

31. Lewis Morris, Jr., to James Alexander, Morrisania, Jan., 1729, Rutherfurd Collection, I, 105, New-York Historical Society. In the 1733 Westchester County election for assemblyman, the sheriff tried to effect the defeat of Lewis Morris, Sr., by refusing to accept 38 Quaker votes cast for him by affirmation. The Morrisites denounced this as "a violent attempt on the Liberties of the People," thereby winning the praise and support of Quakers throughout the colony. Bonomi, *A Factious People*, 115.

32. Proud, *History of Pennsylvania*, II, 196–201.

33. Smith, *History of New-York*, II, 33–34.

They managed to retain political influence in Pennsylvania, despite their proportionately decreasing numbers, both through purposeful organization and by the forming of alliances with the Germans. The Quakers, according to one critic, "entered into Cabals in their yearly Meeting, which is convened just before the Election, and being composed of Deputies from all the monthly Meetings in the Province, is the finest Scheme that could possibly be projected, for conducting political Intrigues, under the Mask of Religion." Employing a printer named Christopher Sauer, whose German-language newspaper was "universally read and believed by the Germans in this Province," the Quaker party had apparently convinced the Germans in 1754 that both their liberties and their tax rates were in danger if the governor's party won a majority in the forthcoming Assembly election. "In consequence of this, the *Germans,* who had hitherto continued peaceful, without meddling in Elections, came down in Shoals, and carried all before them. Near 1800 of them voted in the County of *Philadelphia,* which threw the Balance on the Side of the *Quakers,* though their Opponents, in that grand Struggle, voted near 500 more than ever lost an Election before." In 1764, however, the Germans deserted the "Quaker" party, then led by Benjamin Franklin, and sided instead with the "Proprietary party." Franklin himself was defeated by 26 votes, a loss he ascribed to the proprietary party's tactics: "They carried (would you think it!) above 1000 Dutch [German] from me, by printing part of my Paper . . . where I speak of the Palatine *Boors herding* together, which they explain'd that I call'd them a *Herd* of *Hogs.*"[34]

Nor was such opportunism unique to Pennsylvania. In the upper Hudson Valley, political offices were largely monopolized by the Dutch until the mid-1740's when the population became more diverse

34. Smith, *Brief State of Province of Pennsylvania*, 28–30. Nor was this the first time the German vote had come to the notice of politicians. See Thayer, *Pennsylvania Politics*, 17–19, 37. For Franklin's remark see his letter to Richard Jackson, Philadelphia, Sept. 25, 1764, *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. by Leonard Labaree, XI (New Haven, 1959-), 397. See also Norman S. Cohen, "The Philadelphia Election Riots of 1742," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XCII (1968), 306–319; and Philip Gleason, "A Scurrilous Colonial Election and Franklin's Reputation," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., XVIII (1961), 68–84.

and new groups began to challenge the original settlers' predominance. New York governors looking to reduce the power of entrenched Dutch leaders did so by appointing New Englanders or Englishmen to office. Thus they played off one part of the community against the other, with consequences both for ethnic self-awareness and for group tensions. In Dutch strongholds such as Albany, Schenectady, and Kingston, suspicion of newcomers, "whom the Dutch look on as intruders into their patrimony," was a major factor in both local and provincial political alignments.[35] Similar rivalries appeared in New Jersey, where Scotch, Quaker, and Anglican factions were added to the east-west division already mentioned.[36]

Pressures from economic and sectional interests, as well as from ethnic and religious ones, contributed to the growing responsiveness of political leaders. Men engaged in the Philadelphia shipbuilding trades, including an association known as the White Oaks, constituted at times a significant weight in that city's political balance. The White Oaks played an important role, and may have provided the margin of victory for the Quaker party, in the election of October, 1766. By the 1770 election, the tide had shifted the other way. "We are all in Confusion," wrote Joseph Galloway to Benjamin Franklin, "the White Oaks and Mechanicks or many of them have left the old Ticket and 'tis feared will go over to the Presbyterians"—as indeed they did. One historian has recently suggested that this turnabout was prompted by economic self-interest. The White Oaks favored nonimportation as retaliation against the Townshend Acts because it reduced foreign competition with their own products, and by the same token they very much disliked Galloway's equivocal stand on the issue.[37] Instances of

35. Cadwallader Colden to Gov. Clinton, copy, New York, Aug. 8, 1751, *The Letters and Papers of Cadwallader Colden* (New-York Historical Society, *Collections*, LIII [New York, 1921]), IV, 273; Bonomi, *A Factious People*, 26–28, 48–52.

36. For factions in New Jersey see Smith, *History of New-Jersey*, 302ff., ch. 20; Kemmerer, *Path to Freedom*, 48–50, 53–55, 79–81.

37. James H. Hutson, "An Investigation of the Inarticulate: Philadelphia's White Oaks," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., XXVIII (1971), 22. A question has been raised about what economic level the White Oaks actually represented in Philadelphia's shipbuilding industry. See the discussion among

group awareness in the crafts and trades, and readiness to exert various kinds of pressure on behalf of group interests, appear again and again in the pages of Richard B. Morris's *Government and Labor in Early America*.[38] Such groups, in New York City as in Philadelphia, took active roles in the political contests of the 1760's and 1770's.[39]

In the course of time, a body of political practice grew up throughout the American colonies which contained elements special enough to distinguish it from the practice of any other country in the world. There were, nonetheless, wide internal variations. And it may not be too much to suggest that there was a direct connection between that pluralism and diversity of interest just noted, present to a more advanced degree in the middle colonies than in the others, and a peculiar mode of political partisanship, also more highly developed in the middle colonies than anywhere else.

One of the welcome contributions of recent years to American colonial history has been a body of scholarship which examines provincial politics in its larger Anglo-American setting.[40] The sheer

Jesse Lemisch, John K. Alexander, Simeon J. Crowther, and James H. Hutson in *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., XXIX (1972), 109–142. For the purposes of this essay, the important point is that the White Oaks were a cohesive group that could, on occasion, act as a concerted force in Philadelphia affairs.

38. (New York, 1946), especially 136–166.

39. Carl Lotus Becker, *The History of Political Parties in the Province of New York, 1760–1776* (Madison, Wis., 1909), 120–128; Staughton Lynd, "The Mechanics in New York City Politics, 1774–1788," *Labor History*, V (1964), 225–246; Bonomi, *A Factious People*, 254–255; Roger J. Champagne, "Liberty Boys and Mechanics of New York City, 1764–1774," *Labor History*, VIII (1967), 115–135.

40. Bernard Bailyn, *The Origins of American Politics* (New York, 1968); Jack P. Greene, *The Quest for Power: The Lower Houses of Assembly in the Southern Royal Colonies, 1689–1776* (Chapel Hill, 1963); Stanley N. Katz, "The Origins of American Constitutional Thought," *Perspectives in American History*, III (1969), 474–490; J. R. Pole, *Political Representation in England and the Origins of the American Republic* (New York, 1966); Jack P. Greene, "Political Mimesis: A Consideration of the Historical and Cultural Roots of Legislative Behavior in the British Colonies in the Eighteenth Century, with A Comment by Bernard Bailyn, and A Reply by Jack P. Greene," *American Historical Review*, LXXV (1969), 337–367; Paul Lucas, "A Note on the Comparative Study of the Structure of Politics in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain

broadening of vision which this work has effected is immensely beneficial. But now that it is well on its way to full absorption into the historiography of early America, there may be reason to look at the ground once more from a provincial—perhaps even parochial—point of view. There were regional variations. Yet this hardly means that the politics of each individual colony was so idiosyncratic that generalizations cannot be made; quite the contrary. The details of local squabbles may constitute more of a pattern than we thought. Quite beyond the broad principles which governed political responses throughout the colonies as a whole, local and regional conditions, as well as variations in them, may tell us a great deal about the critical ways in which Anglo-American practice developed into a purely American practice.

Whatever the differences among students of Anglo-American politics, there are certain broad areas of accord. All agree, for example, that the one thing eighteenth-century political man feared most—in the colonies and elsewhere—was the tendency of power to encroach on liberty. "The antinomy of power and liberty was accepted as the central fact of politics, and with it the belief that power was aggressive, liberty passive, and that the duty of free men was to protect the latter and constrain the former."[41] Whether the threat came from an overpowerful executive, a corrupt ministry, or a self-serving faction, the remedy was always the same. Militant power had to be checked, controlled, balanced, and headed off, for if the internal equilibrium of the state were upset the way would be open to anarchy, chaos, and eventually to the loss of all liberty when a tyrant arose to restore order. Most eighteenth-century Englishmen believed that in their own government they had found the best of all formulas for preserving both order and liberty. Their mixed constitution blended in near-perfect proportions the three basic interests of the state—monarchy, aristocracy, and commons—with the aristocracy so poised as always to preserve the balance between the other two. While this ideal balance may have existed more in theory than in reality, the reverential regard

and Its American Colonies," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., XXVIII (1971), 301–309.

41. Bailyn, *Origins of American Politics*, 56.

in which the British constitution was held nonetheless "colored all aspects of political and constitutional thought."[42]

The colonists, being Englishmen, were thoroughly familiar with these ideas, and in the early years they seemed to believe they were reproducing that happy combination in their own provincial governors, councils, and assemblies. In time, however, it became apparent that with no provincial nobility to supply the critical equipoise between governor and assembly, something was missing from the model of the mixed constitution. Thus, uniquely local circumstances—a social structure that contained no institutionally defined aristocracy—gave particular impetus to a colonial politics that was balanced between two centers of power, executive and legislative, rather than the traditional three. Moreover, the ambiguities that developed in the relationship between England and her colonies during the age of Walpole meant a shifting and ill-defined connection throughout most of the eighteenth century. Provincial suspicions of encroaching power could have lively play in such an atmosphere, and the colonists could imagine that their anomalous constitutional position exposed them to the most capricious shifts of the political winds at home. They sent agents to lobby in London for whatever enhanced their constitutional footing, while business associates and family connections were forever looking out for a variety of colonial interests.[43] And the symbol of prerogative power which the provincials saw as most immediate and potentially encroaching was, of course, the colonial governor. Thus, with the arrival of each new governor they found themselves, almost by instinct, developing their own checks on that power. The forms such checks would take were determined largely by local conditions and institu-

42. *Ibid.*, 23. See also Jack P. Greene's discussion of these ideas in "Changing Interpretations of Early American Politics," *The Reinterpretation of Early American History*, ed. by Ray Allen Billington (New York, 1968), especially 173–175. For an interesting examination of the mixed constitutional system, see the pamphlet by New York royal officeholder Archibald Kennedy, *An Essay on the Government of the Colonies* (New York, 1752).

43. Michael Kammen, *A Rope of Sand: The Colonial Agents, British Politics and the American Revolution* (Ithaca, 1968); Stanley N. Katz, *Newcastle's New York: Anglo-American Politics, 1732–1753* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968).

tions, and therefore they evolved a little differently in the southern, the New England, and the middle colonies.

The southern colonies, whose patrician gentry came as close to being an "aristocracy" as any group in America, also came closest to achieving the English constitutional ideal. With the lower houses of assembly as their main theater of activity in the eighteenth century, the southern elites, each bound together by a homogeneity of interests and outlook, formed consolidated units of power that could be brought to bear in government. At times they might speak for the people, defending provincial liberties and privileges. At other times, when the governors made reasonable requests of them, the lower houses would support the executive. In either case, the southern assemblies maintained sufficient internal cohesion and authority to act as a truly independent force in government.[44] Thus the mixed constitutional form came nearest to being approximated in the southern colonies. This may be one way of explaining the relative tranquillity of that section's politics, for the colonial South had found a way to limit power that was not only effective but that operated within the approved boundaries of the theoretical ideal.

The New England colonies were also concerned with the checking of power; they, like the others, had had direct experience with its abuses in the seventeenth century. Yet the New England legislatures, while often showing a talent for orderly procedures, rarely developed the same sense of internal solidarity that is evident in the South. This may be accounted for in part by the greater complexity of northern society. Despite the relative homogeneity of the New England population, it nonetheless reflected a broader range of cultural, economic, and sectional viewpoints, and these were not easily subordinated to the goal of legislative unity. Although this made their assemblies less de-

44. Outstanding recent studies of southern colonial politics include Greene, *Quest for Power;* M. Eugene Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina: A Political History, 1663–1763* (Chapel Hill, 1966); Charles S. Sydnor, *Gentlemen Freeholders* (Chapel Hill, 1952); Robert M. Weir, "'The Harmony We Were Famous For': An Interpretation of Pre-Revolutionary South Carolina Politics," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3d ser., XXVI (1969), 473–501. North Carolina may represent an exception to the southern pattern discerned here, as group conflict was spirited throughout that colony in the eighteenth century.

pendable as a check and counterweight, New Englanders were not without resources when it came to resisting their governors. For New England's political structure harbored a built-in mechanism for obstructing higher authority of any sort—its townships—and it was upon these that assembly representation was based and to which annually elected representatives were responsible.[45] The decentralized character of power in Massachusetts distressed the administration of more than one royal official. Thomas Hutchinson observed in the 1760's that holding "each representative to vote according to the opinion of his town is unconstitutional and contradicts the very idea of a parliament. . . ." Earlier, Governor Shirley had tried to deny "representation to newly created townships in order to preserve his precarious majority in the House." One recent historian has called the Massachusetts House of Representatives a mere "congress of communities," and a "creature of the towns."[46]

In a number of cases, New England towns simply ignored their central governments, either refusing to send deputies to the lower houses or disregarding laws that were contrary to local practices and preferences. Such, it seems, was the situation in New Hampshire, where elected representatives "customarily felt more responsible to their local constituents than to imperial interests. . . ."[47] In any case,

45. At times the townships feared that governors might succeed in corrupting some ambitious legislators by showering them with honors and offices. "In such a situation . . . the legislature could no longer be trusted to safeguard the constitution. That responsibility then fell directly upon the people, who were urged to bind their representatives by positive and inflexible instructions to prevent them from selling their constituents' liberty for pelf or position." Jack P. Greene, "Political Mimesis," 358. For more on the "attorneyship" form of representation and the instructing of legislators, see Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 164ff.; Michael Zuckerman, *Peaceable Kingdoms: New England Towns in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1970), 21–24.

46. Hutchinson to William Bollan, Nov. 22, 1766, quoted in J. R. Pole, *Political Representation,* 53; Bailyn, *Origins of American Politics,* 117; Zuckerman, *Peaceable Kingdoms,* 20.

47. Jere R. Daniell, *Experiment in Republicanism: New Hampshire Politics and the American Revolution, 1741–1794* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), 22. One eighteenth-century observer described Rhode Island government as "downright democracy" and anarchy. David Lovejoy suggests that local issues were indeed important in Rhode Island, but he also sees two fairly well-defined factions

it is well known that when local power was challenged head on—as it was so dramatically in Massachusetts by the 1774 "Intolerable Acts" which in effect suspended the town meetings—the final showdown between power and liberty was at hand.

Thus it was that the southern and New England colonies fashioned at least partial checks on executive power, checks that became associated with their assemblies and their institutions of local government. But what restraints were placed on power in the middle colonies? Neither of the mechanisms just noted seems to have been present there, and for reasons that may have much to do with the "character" of that region as set forth earlier. The eighteenth-century histories make it abundantly clear that competition and conflict were the dominant impulses in the public life of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. The diversity of cultures, the clash of opinions, and the emerging legitimacy of group self-interest as a motivating force in politics[48] seem to have inhibited the growth of cohesive provincial elites. It is hard to think of a time in the pre-Revolutionary history of those colonies when the political leadership drew together as a unified force to resist executive power. Nor were institutions of local

contending for power in the immediate pre-Revolutionary era. David S. Lovejoy, *Rhode Island Politics and the American Revolution, 1760–1776* (Providence, 1958), 2–3, 14–15. The role of localism in Connecticut politics is also difficult to assess, for no one has examined the colony from that point of view. The most comprehensive studies of colonial Connecticut are Richard L. Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690–1765* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), and Oscar Zeichner, *Connecticut's Years of Controversy, 1750–1776* (Williamsburg, 1949).

The sectional characteristics I have thus far associated with southern and New England politics should be regarded more as tendencies or probable orientations than as rigid typologies. I have already suggested that North Carolina may represent an exception to the southern pattern, and similar exceptions may be found among the New England colonies. Rhode Island, for example, seems at times to conform more closely to what I shall describe as the middle-colony norm than to that of New England. Still, the sectional paradigm offered here may, it is hoped, be of some value in highlighting the most obvious differences among the colonies, and thus of suggesting another way of thinking about early American politics.

48. On the matter of self-interest as a theme in colonial politics, see Bernard Friedman, "The Shaping of the Radical Consciousness in Provincial New York," *Journal of American History*, LVI (1970), 781–801; Bonomi, *A Factious People*, 281–283.

government sufficiently strong and articulate to constitute an effective rein on central authority.[49]

Since they had so little practice in pulling together, it is hardly surprising that middle-colony leaders should find themselves at odds on most political issues.[50] Nor is it difficult to understand why governors so regularly exploited these divisions within the province as they strove to organize sufficient power to rule their factious subjects. "A Governor is no sooner appointed," declared Archibald Kennedy of New York, "than the first Question is, Into whose Hands shall I throw myself? the Answer is ready, Into whose but such as can best manage the Assembly. Hence Prime Ministers and Courtiers are established; and, of Course, Anticourtiers. Hence Parties are formed. . . . And what is all this for? . . . [but] to shew how dexterously the one Side can manage the Assembly for [the governor] and the other against him?"[51] In Pennsylvania and New Jersey too, groups of "rival gentleman leaders" ranged themselves on the "court" or "country" side of all the major issues.[52] It was in this way that middle-colony politics became an incessant grapple between a governor's party and an opposition, between—one might almost say—a set of "ins" and a set of "outs." The arrival of each new governor brought a fresh opportunity to rebalance the political scales, as contending elites jostled each other for patronage and preference.

This movement in and out of power came to be more and more

49. Though instruction of representatives and the petitioning of legislatures were not unknown in the middle colonies, these assertions of local interest were made no more than spasmodically; they did not occur on a regular basis.

50. Discussing Philadelphia politics, David Hawke says, "Rarely did an event occur that overrode racial, religious, and economic differences and united the people to act as one." *Midst of a Revolution*, 87.

51. [Archibald Kennedy], *An Essay on the Government of the Colonies* (New York, 1752), 34. As early as 1702, Robert Livingston of New York noted that the people of that colony "are not unanimous, and doe not stick to one another." Governors capitalized on this by "Striking in with one Party and they assist him to destroy the other. . . ." Quoted in Lawrence H. Leder, "The Politics of Upheaval in New York, 1689–1709," *New-York Historical Society Quarterly*, XLIV (1960), 426.

52. William S. Hanna, *Benjamin Franklin and Pennsylvania Politics* (Stanford, 1964), 52; Kemmerer, *Path to Freedom*, 48–53; Richard P. McCormick, *New Jersey from Colony to State* (Princeton, 1964), 63–72.

regularized in the middle colonies during the eighteenth century. Nor would it be quite right to think of this polarization as necessarily occurring about issues of class, family, principle, or even interest. It could conceivably be any one of these, or several, or all: but never quite directly, because the thing always at stake was power—or rather access to power. And the struggle for that access was, in turn, peculiarly shaped in its tone and character by the pluralism, heterogeneity, and diversity of the society itself.

The sources of strength in the governor's faction were clear enough. The governor's own powers, though under erosion in the course of the eighteenth century,[53] still made his office and person a nucleus of attraction for the ambitious. For the opposition, on the other hand, it was not so simple. Their platform was the assembly; it was from there that they did what they could to strike back, concert measures, and undermine the governor's support. Yet they could seldom count on an assembly which moved as a unit, as was the case in the southern colonies; it was not the assembly as a whole that they were organizing but a faction within it. Access to the assembly itself, moreover, depended on an electorate whose temper and inclinations could never be taken for granted. Thus, candidates found themselves going to the people, appealing to their interests, playing on their prejudices, and dramatizing any threats, real or suspected, to their rights and liberties. It was thus that politicians of the middle colonies developed the arts of what they themselves termed "political management": the building of "coalitions," the courting of self-interest groups, the balancing of "tickets," and the fashioning of propaganda.[54]

53. Bailyn, *Origins of American Politics,* 66–80; Hanna, *Benjamin Franklin,* 20; Katz, *Newcastle's New York,* 44.

54. A 1764 Pennsylvania election pamphlet declared: "As there are two Parties, we find that each of them, to gain your Votes and Interest, profess a zealous Concern for the preservation of the Rights and Privileges of the good People of this Province." *To the FREEHOLDERS and other ELECTORS for the City and County of Philadelphia, and Counties of Chester and Bucks* [1764], *Papers of Benjamin Franklin,* XI, 377. Pennsylvanians voted either Old Party or New Party "Tickets" in 1764, and New Yorkers chose between two full slates of candidates in 1769. In 1776, one Frederick Kuhl was placed on a Pennsylvania ticket "to attract the German vote." Hanna, *Benjamin Franklin,* ch. 10; Bonomi, *A Factious People,* 251–252; Hawke, *Midst of a Revolution,* 26.

Another way to think about this polarizing process, this ongoing division of "ins" and "outs," is to view it as a preliminary stage in the development of political parties. And it was without question in the middle colonies that notions about parties received their most advanced and elaborate testing. This is hardly to say that "parties," of the systematic sort now known, existed in colonial America. These would not develop until at least the late 1820's, although it is worth noting that when they did, they had their first flowering in the middle-Atlantic region.[55] But what *was* happening in the eighteenth century is not without interest. The incidence of faction and party in middle-colony political life is too obtrusive to be ignored, nor did men ignore it then. In their efforts to reconcile what they saw all about them with a theoretical frame that defined parties as "symptoms of disease in the body politic,"[56] middle-colony leaders were forced to think about the unthinkable.

Thus, in 1734, at the height of the Morris-Cosby-Zenger episode in New York, an essay appeared in the *New-York Gazette* that asserted the inevitability of "*Parties, Cabals* and *Intrigues*" in government. The writer goes on: "Some Opposition, tho' it proceed not entirely from a public Spirit, is not only necessary in free Governments, but of great Service to the Public. Parties are a Check upon one another, and by keeping the Ambition of one another within Bounds, serve to maintain the public Liberty . . . and instead of clogging, [party] regulates and keeps in their just and proper Motion the Wheels of Government."[57]

That the colonists upon occasion explored the possible benefits of parties has been noted before, though it has generally been assumed

55. Michael Wallace, "Changing Concepts of Party in the United States: New York, 1815–1828," *American Historical Review* (1968), LXXIV, 453–491. Discussing the controversy over ratification of the U.S. Constitution, Richard Hofstadter notes that in New York and Pennsylvania the issue "became involved with well-developed struggles between leading political factions, struggles which in Pennsylvania were so systematic and continuous as to foreshadow the two-party system." *The Progressive Historians* (New York, 1969), 241; Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System* (Berkeley, 1970), 45. In *Federalist* Number Fifty, James Madison mentions "the parties which pre-existed in the State" of Pennsylvania.

56. Bailyn, *Origins of American Politics,* 125.

57. March 11–18, 1733/34. This major essay on parties covers three columns in the *Gazette.*

that such thoughts "trailed away" too fast to represent more than random conjectures.[58] Yet it is possible that this early probing of the two-party idea may not have been quite so ephemeral as we have supposed. The comment of 1734 noted above, for example, was part of an extended inquiry into the whole question of organized opposition to constituted authority. John Peter Zenger's paper, the *New-York Weekly Journal,* had been founded to provide a voice for the Morrisite opposition to Governor William Cosby, and the *Journal* and the *New-York Gazette* were the vehicles for a debate that lasted over many months. In the course of that debate, the Morrisites wrote a number of essays supporting their right to resist what they saw as executive tyranny, "especially in an Age of Liberty in which *the slavish Doctrine of passive Obedience* is out of Fashion." While unjust criticism of those in power continued to be seen as destructive of the common good, "JUST CLAMOUR [one writer claimed] is the Right of all Freemen to make, when Cause is given for it." A correspondent to the *Journal* asked "leave to call my self a Party Man," noting that he would have been so labeled anyway for defending Zenger's paper.[59] In the course of this debate, the frequency with which the words "Opposition" and "Party" appear in a positive context gives more than a hint that attitudes were undergoing some sort of alteration.[60]

The thought did not end there. A Pennsylvanian averred in 1738 that "there can be no liberty without faction; for the latter cannot be suppressed without introducing slavery in the place of the former." And in 1739, an essayist saw positive benefits in having two newspapers with different viewpoints in New York City, as they represented

58. Bailyn, *Origins of American Politics,* 127.

59. *New-York Weekly Journal,* Jan. 21, Feb. 4, Feb. 18, 1733/34. See also the issues of April 1 and May 20, 1734, and the *New-York Gazette* for Mar. 18–25, April 8–15, and April 15–22, 1734; as well as James Alexander, *A Brief Narrative of the Case and Trial of John Peter Zenger . . .,* ed. by Stanley N. Katz (Cambridge, Mass., 1963).

60. Colonial Americans "were becoming conscious of the healthy plurality of interests and sects that prevailed among them, and were growing increasingly aware of the necessity for mutual tolerance that this imposed—two elements of consciousness that provided the intellectual and moral prerequisites of an understanding of the party system." Hofstadter, *Idea of a Party System,* 35.

"Weight[s], in the opposite Scale of the Balance of Parties . . . [and] will tend to keep the Ballance even. . . . [Thus] Injuries on either Side are either prevented or redressed. . . . [and] we find the Province and City has flourished . . . each [party] being such a Check and Ballance to the other, that neither dared to do oppressive Things. . . ." Again, in 1749, parties were depicted by one "Tuphonicus" "as so many Spies upon one another," which defended "the Public against the Incroachments of Power and Tyranny." The writer noted, to be sure, that "Party Spirit" in New York had lately grown "wild," and that this could lead to anarchy and loss of liberty. Two weeks later, nonetheless, we learn that "Tuphonicus is, and ever will be a Friend to Party, as long as Party keeps itself within Bounds, and answers the Purpose for which it ought to be supported." Similar comments continue to appear in middle-colony newspapers and pamphlets down to the start of the Revolution.[61]

In considering why these notions about opposition should have found their most advanced expression in colonial America, we might listen to the words of the Reverend William Smith of Pennsylvania. The year was 1764, and Benjamin Franklin and the "Quaker party" were attempting to have Pennsylvania's proprietary charter replaced by a royal charter. To demonstrate that the Assembly did not unanimously support a royal charter, Smith and other "Proprietary party" men had drawn up a "Protest" against the plan. Franklin disapproved of such a mode of dissent, noting that this was not the way things

61. *Pennsylvania Gazette,* Mar. 21–30, 1737/8; *New-York Weekly Journal,* Mar. 12, 1738/39; *New-York Gazette Revived in the Weekly Post-Boy,* Jan. 9, Jan. 29, 1748/49. In 1752, New York printer James Parker pleaded with the two parties in New York City not to hold him responsible for the aspersions cast by their opponents, for if a printer "will not print for both Sides, he must shut up Shop, and starve." Moreover, Parker stated, "all *Englishmen* have a Right to speak their Sentiments . . . if one Side only is to be served, then adieu to . . . Liberty. . . ." *New-York Gazette Revived in the Weekly Post-Boy,* Feb. 24, 1752. See also William Livingston and Others, *The Independent Reflector, or Weekly Essays on Sundry Important Subjects More Particularly adapted to the Province of New-York,* ed. by Milton M. Klein (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), 147–148, 195, 208–209, 261; *Pennsylvania Journal,* Supplement, Sept. 27, 1764; *New-York Gazette; or, The Weekly Post-Boy,* Feb. 29, 1768; *New-York Journal; or, The General Advertiser,* Mar. 3, 1768.

were done in the House of Commons. In response, Smith pointed out that "when cases and emergencies arise which are new and unprecedented in their nature, a new and unprecedented mode of proceeding against them, may become indispensably necessary." Those who disagreed with majority policies should consider it "both a publick and private duty . . . to oppose them by every means in their power." The broad acceptance that such a view had gained by the end of the colonial era is reflected by a passage in Robert Proud's history—hardly a radical work—which declared that it was "the extreme alone of party design, which, in reality, is so pernicious to human society; while its moderate exertion excites a stricter attention to men's real interests, and under proper management and direction, becomes subservient to the more effectual security of the public good."[62] Thus "party" had become a recognized device, in the middle colonies at least, for safeguarding liberty against the encroachments of power.

Resistance to the policies of Crown and Parliament in the 1770's gave the practice of organized opposition another long push in the direction of legitimacy. But once the war began, this emergent tendency was again subordinated to the more orthodox and familiar side of the question, that which stressed the viciousness of faction and party. Dissent and opposition were, of course, now seen as treasonable, and were everywhere suppressed—as they probably had to be if the Revolution were to succeed. Nor did the early years of the Republic bring an immediate loosening of the idea that faction should not be allowed to produce any fissures in the newly created arrangements of government. The leaders of new nations, fashioned as such nations usually are in revolutionary circumstances, do not as a rule believe they can afford the luxury of an opposition. Those of the United States—the first extended republic in history, whose survival nobody could predict with much assurance—were no exception. Yet all of this tends to obscure, rather than illuminate, the extent to which the idea of party had been tested already in America.

62. [William Smith], *An Answer to Mr. Franklin's Remarks, on a Late Protest* (Philadelphia, 1764), *Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, XI, 489; Proud, *History of Pennsylvania*, I, 479–480.

For the Republic was barely a dozen years old when, as Richard Hofstadter has pointed out,[63] there occurred an extraordinary event in the history of the party idea. The inauguration of Thomas Jefferson on March 4, 1801, and with it the peaceful transfer of power from one party to another, would have been a phenomenon hardly conceivable in a society that did not already possess a substantial fund of experience in political accommodation. That experience had its beginnings well back in the colonial phase of America's history.

It is, moreover, in the middle colonies of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania that we can see this development at its clearest. It was there that the techniques of political management and party building first took on those more genial, and even gamelike, aspects which would in turn make politics something less than a life-and-death struggle. Robert Proud perceived that though Pennsylvania's "parties were very free with each other's conduct, yet, they are said mostly to have kept within the rules of decency and order. . . ." David Hawke, a recent scholar, also referring to Pennsylvania, has written that by 1776 "the tradition had already developed that regardless of the bitterness of any campaign, regardless of how wide the split between contending factions, the results of any election were accepted by both sides. This did not mean that the loser ceased to oppose. It did mean he carried on his opposition within the accepted political framework and did not threaten, because he had lost, to overthrow the government."[64] In such circumstances, whether a Franklin or a Galloway could have looked so different from an Allen or a Dickinson may be mostly a question of degree—and the same might be said of a Philipse or a DeLancey, on the one hand, and a Morris or a Livingston on the other.[65] The public had accustomed itself to seeing all such men move

63. *Idea of a Party System*, 128.

64. Proud, *History of Pennsylvania*, I, 484; Hawke, *Midst of a Revolution*, 130. Richard Hofstadter calls this "comity." "The basic humanity of the opposition is not forgotten; civility is not abandoned . . . [;] an awareness that the opposition will someday be the government is always present." *The Progressive Historians*, 454.

65. The best brief summary of factional groupings in New Jersey is in McCormick, *New Jersey from Colony to State*, ch. 4.

in and out of power with a certain regularity. The question of access to power, then, and the activities that went with it, may tell us as much as ideology, or interest, or indeed anything else, about why men and groups behaved as they did. Even the question of whether or not a man became a Loyalist had a great deal more to do with the groupings of provincial politics than we once thought—and it is surely not by mere chance that the incidence of loyalism was higher in the middle colonies than in either of the other sections.[66] But the main thing, to repeat, was movement in and out of power: this and its eventual consequences for an ethic of party competition was the true innovative element in middle-colony politics.

Thus the transition in 1801 from an Adams to a Jefferson, though a wrench in more ways than one, meant something less than total upheaval. Things not dissimilar had occurred before. And when the legitimacy of the party idea was fully established, as it came to be in the 1820's and 1830's, it flourished first and best in the middle-Atlantic region, where the soil had been long prepared. Middle-colony politicians of the eighteenth century—and perhaps a few early historians—might have found some sly satisfaction in this.

66. William H. Nelson, *The American Tory* (New York, 1961), 87ff.