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-SAMPLE EXCERPT-

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THE CLERGYMEN OF LIBERTY

The Black Regiment

Undoubtedly, pastors played a crucial role in the American Revolution. They fought - giving courage and strength - not only from the pulpits but also on the battlefields, side by side the soldiers. For such a time, they were called and prepared; they did not shirk their duty in the spiritual or physical realm. Recognized on the battlefield by their black pastoral robes, they were known as the 'Black Regiment' by the British who were well aware of their great influence in the struggle for liberty.¹

Historian Daniel Dorchester describes some of these pastors: "Of Rev. John Craighead it is said that 'he fought and preached alternately.' Rev. Dr. Cooper was captain of a military company. Rev. John Blair Smith, president of Hampden-Sidney College, was captain of a company that rallied to support the retreating Americans after the battle of Cowpens. Rev. James Hall commanded a company that armed against Cornwallis. Rev. Wm. Graham rallied his own neighbors to dispute the passage of Rockfish Gap with Tarleton and his British dragoons."²



James Caldwell
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James Caldwell

James Caldwell was a minister as well as a Revolutionary War chaplain. The story is told that when his company ran out of wadding for their guns at the battle of Springfield, New Jersey, Caldwell dashed into a nearby church and grabbed as many [Isaac] Watts hymnals as he could carry. As he gave hymnals to the soldiers he shouted, "Put Watts into them, boys!"³ The soldiers received not only the necessary wadding but also great encouragement from the underlying symbolic message sent by using this strong source of spiritual truth in the battle.⁴

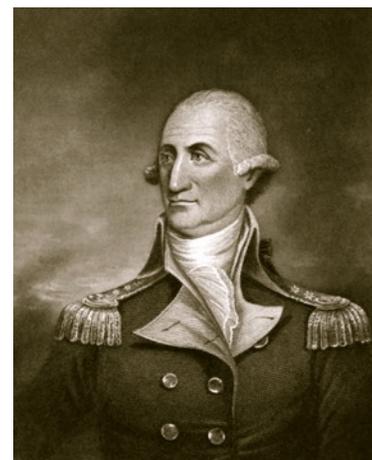
"While all classes of citizens entered heartily into the war, the clergy, as a body, were pre-eminent for their attachment to liberty, sharing in the patriotic and self-denying spirit of the struggle, encouraging and stimulating the hearts of the people. The pulpits of the land rang with the notes of freedom."⁵

Historian Daniel Dorchester

Peter Muhlenburg: Pastor & Patriot

In 1776 Peter Muhlenburg gripped the edges of his pulpit, paused, then told his congregation that in the language of Holy Writ, there was a time for all things, a time to preach and a time to pray, but those times had passed away. Then with a voice that filled the church, he boldly declared that there was a time to fight, and that time had now come!⁶

Pastor Muhlenburg pronounced the benediction and removed his clerical robe to reveal a military uniform underneath. As his congregation looked on, he resolutely descended the pulpit and ordered the drums at the church door to beat for recruits. Nearly 300 men joined him that day;³ they became the 8th Virginia Regiment fighting for liberty.⁷ In 1783, seven years after his stirring sermon, Pastor Muhlenburg was brevetted Major General.⁸



Peter Muhlenburg