FORGOTTEN FOUNDING FATHERS

WILLIAM THOMSON HANZSCHE

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

FORGOTTEN FOUNDING FATHERS

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

FORGOTTEN FOUNDING FATHERS

FRANCIS MAKEMIE
who formed the first intercolonial government and legally established the right to freedom of worship.

WILLIAM TENNENT
who made higher education available for all who wanted it.

JONATHAN DICKINSON
who launched a new kind of a church, an American church, free from European dominance, and established the principle of separation of Church and State.

DAVID BRAINERD
who wiped out race prejudice.

GILBERT TENNENT
who kept Christianity from dying of dry rot and put enthusiasm and meaning in the Christian way of life.

SAMUEL DAVIES
who struggled for the rights of the people in the things of the spirit against the encroachment of dictatorial overlords in church and state.

JOHN WITHERSPOON
who led the people of the colonies into freedom and independence and strongly influenced our Constitutional form of government.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

FORGOTTEN FOUNDING FATHERS

OF THE AMERICAN CHURCH AND STATE

BY

WILLIAM THOMSON HANZSCHE, M.A., D.D.

Author of: "The Presbyterians, a Staunch and Sturdy People"
President of the Board of Directors
"Presbyterian Life"
Minister: Prospect St. Church, Trenton, N. J.

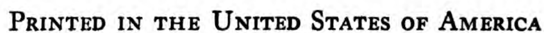
THE CHRISTOPHER PUBLISHING HOUSE
BOSTON, U. S. A.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Copyright 1954
By The Christopher Publishing House



Printed in the United States of America

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

APR 28 1954
BR
569
H3

CONTENTS

I Francis Makemie 11
II William Tennent 34
III Jonathan Dickinson 56
IV David Brainerd 89
V Gilbert Tennent 116
VI Samuel Davies 145
VII John Witherspoon 174

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Rev. William Tennent 34
Rev. Jonathan Dickinson 56
David Brainerd 89
Rev. Gilbert Tennent 116
The Type of Building of "The Log College" .. 139
A North-West Prospect of Nassau Hall 145
Rev. John Witherspoon, D.D. 174

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Forgotten Founding Fathers

Chapter I

FRANCIS MAKEMIE

When the Protestant Reformation first came to England in the 16th century it was primarily political in form; in England the divine right of the Pope was succeeded by the divine right of England's king. The king became head of the church and religion was an adjunct of government. So the English royal government insisted on regimentation of worship as a proof of loyalty. Dissenters were looked upon as fifth columnist enemies. The Church, in royal thinking, was the Anglican church.

With the growth of Puritanism (the effort to purify life with Christian living) in the early 17th century, the conflict became a civil war. Archbishop Laud tried to stamp out Puritanism and to return the English Church to Roman ways. He ordered that the Communion table be removed from the middle of the church, where, in principle, all sat around it, and be pushed Roman Catholic fashion up against the wall in the chancel as an altar, and guarded from the profane people by a rail—a violation of all Protestant tradition. He ordered all to bow to the altar. He ordered prayers for sports on Sunday afternoon. And all these orders had behind them the power of the government.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Meanwhile Charles, the king, had striven more and more to limit and deny the right of Parliament. To Charles only a king had power to rule. And a king was a king because he was born a king. When the Puritans resisted, Charles called out the army and precipitated the strife. Civil War ensued, the Puritans against an autocratic king. Cromwell and his Ironside won. The king was captured, tried and beheaded. On the scaffold his final words showed how impossible compromise was. "It is not for the people to have a share in government. That is nothing pertaining to them." Cromwell became Protector.

After Cromwell died, the pendulum swung to the other extreme. Cromwell's army laid down their arms, and it seemed as if Puritanism was defeated. Puritanism then turned to its truer work of building the kingdom of righteousness in the minds of men. At first under Charles 2nd and James 2nd, the doctrine of the divine right of kings grew with new zeal. An orgy of licentiousness enveloped England. 2,000 Presbyterian ministers were driven from English pulpits. Unbelievably bloody persecutions of Presbyterians broke out in Scotland. Propaganda stories which out Goebbeled Goebbels were circulated about the Puritans in America (some of which are still believed). But as soon as the orgy of the Restoration was over men began to discover that nothing of real worth in the work of the Puritans had gone. Civil liberty was established; and "the history of English progress since the Restoration has been the history of Puritanism."

It was during these difficult Restoration days that the American colonies were established. In America, meanwhile, Puritanism, partly because of its individ-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

ualism, and partly because of the scattered nature of the settlements in a new world, broke up into unorganized fragments, each existing face to face with God in the wilderness.

It was at this juncture of history that there came to the New World a far seeing Christian statesman and pioneer who gathered the unorganized fragments together to form the first organized intercolonial American church, utterly independent of the Old World, and broke the power of the British king to rule men's consciences.

Francis Makemie (sometimes spelt McKeamy in the Irish records) was born in County Donegal, Ireland, in 1658, the year Oliver Cromwell died, and John Bunyon, the tinker, began to preach around Bedford, England. Makemie's parents had fled to north Ireland from Scotland. Destined to grow up to manhood in the very period of the bloody persecutions of the Scotch Presbyterians by Charles 2nd and James 2nd, Francis Makemie studied at the University of Glasgow, Scotland's second oldest university, and dedicated himself to the sacred task of promoting the faith which was struggling for its very existence. When Makemie was only six years old Charles 2nd had forced the passage of a "Conventicle," forbidding five or more persons to meet in any house of worship unless the forms of the Church of England were followed. The Presbyterians sought the crags and caves of Scotland's lonely wilds to worship, while the King's dragoons ferreted them out to imprison, mutilate, or slay them. The right of Presbyterians to worship God as they saw fit was the one big issue in Makemie's young manhood.

Studying theology under a committee of three mini-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

sters, as was the custom, young Makemie was taken under the care of the Irish Presbytery of Laggan at the age of twenty-two. Under the notes of the meeting of Presbytery are the following:

"St. Johnstown, Jan. 28, 1680—Mr. Francis McKemy comes with a recommendation from Mr. Thomas Drummond to the meeting. Messrs. John Hart and Robert Rule are appointed to speak privately with him and inquire into his reading and progress in his studies."

"Decem. 29, 1680. —Colonel Stevens from Maryland beside Virginia . . . his desire of a godly minister is presented to us." A later minute shows the approval of Francis Makemie by Presbytery. Then bitter persecution broke out in Ireland, the leading ministers of the Presbytery were imprisoned by the leaders of the established church; and, for nine years, oppression by the government made a Presbytery meeting impossible. Somewhere in those trying times Francis Makemie was ordained to the ministry, either in the autumn of 1681 or the spring of 1682, and preached under the sword of persecution before sailing to answer Colonel Stevens' call to Maryland, and to meet the challenge of opportunity in the New World.

According to the records of some of his letters to Dr. Increase Mather of New England, Francis Makemie landed in Maryland early in 1683. His sailing ship, enroute, followed the usual custom, and stopped to change cargo at the Isle of Barbados. The natural beauty of the island, and the careless, self-satisfied clergy of the established church, mere government job

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

holders with no thought of the spiritual needs of the people, left a deep impress upon Makemie.

On his arrival in Maryland, Francis Makemie lost no time in making the acquaintanceship of Colonel William Stevens, who owned a vast plantation which he called "Rehoboth" (Genesis 26:22) Maryland. There had been other Presbyterian ministers in Virginia and Maryland ahead of Francis Makemie; Matthew Hill, Francis Doughty, Robert Maddus, and others whose names are not recorded, had come down from New England But Francis Makemie came in response to a special call at a special time.

Virginia was a royal Province. In all royal colonies the established Church was protected by strict laws, non conformists were forced to pay heavy taxes for the support of the established Church, and severe restrictions were placed on those who did not worship according to the forms of the Church of England. Maryland, however, was a Proprietary Government under the Calverts, and the proprietors themselves set the laws. Lord Baltimore had been born a Protestant and, despite his acceptance of the Roman Catholic faith, and against the vigorous and constant pressure and attack of the Jesuits, who insisted that the Catholic Church be above any law of the colonies, permitted a very wide degree of religious freedom. For 75% of his colonists were Protestants. (Jews and nonbelievers had no rights.) Many fine old families, large plantation owners and men of influence, had moved out of Virginia over into Somerset County, Maryland, where they could worship as they desired. When Makemie arrived, the harvest was ripe. The young Scotch-Irishman was a man of unusual refinement and

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

intelligence, and the churches he started in Maryland—Rehoboth, Snow Hill, Buckingham, Manokin (which had been a preaching point before his arrival), Wicomico (now in the town of Salisbury) and Pitts Creek (now in Pocomoke City), appealed to the best type of citizenry and were all organized in a comparatively few months after his arrival. By the Providence of God the Reverend Francis Makemie personified the finest traditions of the Scottish Kirk; his charming personality and his social graces made him acceptable everywhere; but he never let success or comfort turn him aside from his supreme mission—the establishment of the legal right of men to worship God as their consciences dictated.

The Reverend William Trail, active in the Irish Presbytery of Laggan, after eight months' imprisonment for worshipping contrary to the church of England's forms, followed Makemie to Maryland and was welcomed by him at Rehoboth. At the request of Francis Makemie, Trail became the minister of the Rehoboth Church, and thus permitted Makemie to devote himself to missionary pioneering. (Because of his health Trail returned in a few years to the old country.)

Makemie revived and reorganized a church of Presbyterians (dissenters) on Elizabeth River, Virginia, whose pastor, coming from Ireland, had died. He laid definite plans to visit the Presbyterians in South Carolina, but was not a skilled enough navigator to outlast five weeks of storm at sea, and finally went back again to the Elizabeth River area.

Through the next years Makemie prospered. He learned to become a master sailor, so that storms would

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

not throw him too much off course. And he felt a missionary call to go back to the Isle of Barbados and develop the Protestant Christian faith there. An exceedingly wealthy merchant in Virginia, near the Maryland line, when he heard of Makemie's plan to finance his preaching in the Barbados by trade, supplied him with a sloop and entered business partnership with him. Makemie's mission to the Barbados was highly successful, both materially and spiritually. On his return he acquired land in Accomack County, Virginia, married the daughter of the wealthy merchant who had gone in partnership with him in the Barbados trade venture, and increased greatly in prosperity and influence. He was in the Barbados prior to his marriage in 1687, and he was there again from 1696-98. In the court records of ownership Francis Makemie is honored with the title of "Gent," a title of honor given to landed proprietors and gentleman farmers. (Makemie never did accept a salary from his churches.) Certainly no man more richly deserved the title of "gentleman."

Francis Makemie was a thorough representative of the balanced, gentlemanly life which was true Puritanism. The Puritan was the liberal of his day, who saw in goodness infinite joy and in evil infinite woe. His great passion was a passion for freedom. On every subject but religion the Puritan was noted for his mildness; and no nation in Europe had as humane a criminal code as the colonies of the Puritan New World. True, there had been twenty witches put to death in Salem. But that was the only colony in America where the emotional outbreak occurred. But in Suffolk, England, two hundred witches were executed from 1645-47, and probably as many as thirty thousand were exe-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

cuted for witchcraft all told in England during that century. Official bulls of the Pope sanctioned witch hunting, and Roman Catholic Spain and Germany became the witch hunter's heaven.

To the Puritan religion was the consecration of the whole man; and he therefore believed in the good life in the highest sense of the term for himself and others. The stern rigor of living conditions on the American frontier divorced him from many of the effeminate graces of the European courts; but the Puritan had in him a tenacity of purpose and integrity of character which put strength into the fibre of America. The Puritan loved music and had no objection to dancing, if it were not mixed dancing. But in his church he did not want the people to sit and listen to singers perform; he wanted the congregation to do the singing themselves.

Even the Puritan so-called "Blue Laws" were a sweeping departure from continental "Blue Laws," and from the cruel atrocities of the bloody laws in that day in England and the continent. As early as 1448 when England was Roman Catholic, and over a hundred years later when the Church of England was in sovereign power, every man had to attend the official Church regularly or go to prison. For it was the prevalent view that religion could not exist on its own but had to be bulwarked by stern laws. Even as late as 1776 in London English people were compelled to attend Church on Sunday.

In America the true Puritan was against religion by law. He had to come to the New World to develop a civil life such as the laws of natural justice warranted and the laws of England did not permit. He wanted

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

to be left alone and unmolested as he worked out his experiment. When in certain New England Puritan colonies the Quakers denounced the puritan worship as an abomination the Quakers had to be dismissed. When Roger Williams by his extreme individualism, weakened the cause of civil independency by impairing its unity, Massachusetts Puritans had to expel him. But they testified to his virtue. And when Anglicans insisted on a return to the established church and an authoritative king, the Puritan rebelled against them.

The American Puritan was here to establish a way of life; he welcomed all who did not try to destroy it; he resisted all who did.

Years afterward Benjamin Franklin lauded the puritan way of life in his many sayings of which a typical one was: "Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise." Honesty, frugality, temperance, diligence, generosity, charity, neighborliness, hard work made the good life—in fact, it made the American way of life!

Love of plantation, and friends, and family, love of hospitality, and the challenge of honest trade and daily business—the full life of a truly Christian gentleman. —all this was exemplified in Francis Makemie, "Gent."

The English, Scotch and Irish colonists were exhilarated by the wonders of the Middle colonies of the New World. The unbreathed air of the wilderness was stimulating and sweet. Bred in the northern climates of fog and long hours of wintry darkness they were almost overstimulated by the sunshine and the warmth of the new land. They performed prodigies with ax, and saw and shovel. The little ships which

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

brought them across the ocean were amazingly well stocked with bricks, which made good ballasts in the deep keels for the lofty sails. To carry on their English customs the Chesapeake area colonists built their homes of brick, all of which had come across the sea. They did not have to go through the rough stages of semi-barbaric living in one room log huts as did many of their brethren who had settled on the frontiers. Nor did they have to depend Indian fashion on skins for clothing, or the skill of the hunter for all their food. There was always an emphasis on the niceties of culture in the settlements around the Chesapeake Bay.

The Scotch and English settlers could never quite overcome the wonder of American rivers. Accustomed to such tiny streams as the Thames above London, the Cam, the Afton, American rivers like the Hudson, the Delaware and the James amazed them. And the Chesapeake Bay was the wonder of them all! Its deep salt water "creeks," sometimes a mile wide, literally paved with oysters, and abounding with crabs and a variety of edible fish made the settlers think that it was, indeed, a new world. And the friendly Indians taught the white man to raise and use more new varieties of food than the white man had evolved in several thousand years. Maize, or Indian corn, sweet potatoes, lima beans, squash and innumerable other new vegetables and fruits, combined with turkey, wild duck and other wild birds and game to make living easy for the white man. The Indians even taught the white man how to lay dead fish around each newly planted seed of corn. And though the white man could not accept the Indians' explanation of the magical miracle of growth

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

which ensued, the red man's scheme most assuredly worked.

On the direct sea lane, far removed and protected from the frontiers where the French were constantly stirring up the Indians against the English the Chesapeake country was about the most ideal area of the New World.

The planters of the Tidewater Maryland and Virginia area soon developed a high stage of civilization and of prosperity. They sent their sons to England to be educated, copied English social mannerisms, imported furniture and musical instruments for their drawing rooms. Most of them had their private wharfs and fleets of small craft, and used the "creeks" and the Bay for highways.

Francis Makemie was the typical Puritan of the Chesapeake country. He had far more business acumen than most of them. For most of them were planters only, and their only ambition was to emulate and enjoy the English social life.

But neither money nor social prestige and enjoyment was the chief concern of Makemie. He never lost the primary values amid the secondary things. Despite the comforts of the environment, to him the chief concern was spiritual—the promotion of the Kingdom of God. Even when he was economically and socially successful, and life became comfortable and enjoyable, he always remembered his chief concern.

There is a natural parallellism between another great founding father of three generations later, George Washington, and Francis Makemie. Both loved their plantations and their boats and their

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

neighbors and their activities. But each put these enjoyable things in second place to follow a supreme call.

Makemie prepared a catechism to explain the Puritan Protestant faith in simple language which all could understand. The catechism had wide circulation, so much so that Increase Mather, Cotton Mather, and other New England divines called it "the work of a reverend and judicious minister" and urged its use in all New England families. And it received wide praise and welcome even among the Presbyterians of London.

About this time there came into Maryland and Virginia one of the strangest and most vicious characters of the church of that day—The Reverend George Keith. He apparently had been born a Presbyterian; he was then a Quaker, anxious to succeed George Fox; soon afterward he became an ardent Anglican and violently strove to have all dissenters in the colonies suppressed by law. Keith demanded that Makemie meet him in public debate. Makemie was no great orator and he knew the flamboyant political tricks of Keith. Makemie insisted that Keith put what he had to say into writing, so as to separate the truth from theatricals. Makemie's "Answer to Keith's Libels", printed in Boston in 1694, received the enthusiastic applause of the leading colonial ministers of the day. In that statement Makemie defines his ordination:

"Ere I received the imposition of hands in that Scriptural and orderly separation unto my holy and ministerial calling, I gave requiring satisfaction to godly, learned and discerning judicious men, of a work of grace and conversion wrought in my heart at fifteen

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

years of age, by and from the pains of a godly school-master who used no small dilligence in gaining tender souls to God's service and fear."

At his own expense and to further the cause of the church he served, Francis Makemie sailed to England in 1691 and brought a young nephew back with him to assist in the plantation work.

In August, 1692, Makemie visited the city of Philadelphia and preached a sermon in the old Barbados store, with which he was undoubtedly familiar. This was the first regular Presbyterian service, and the first Presbyterian sermon, in the city of Philadelphia. In that year, too, he undoubtedly went to Boston to preach. It was the year of the Salem witchcraft scare, which brought the name of his friend, Increase Mather, into disrepute.

Trouble arose in Maryland, too, for the Calverts lost their proprietary rights and Maryland became a crown province. Freedom of worship ceased, all citizens were compelled to pay taxes to support the Anglican Church, non-Anglicans were required to get a special license to preach, and severe restrictions were placed on non-Anglican worship, even in the area of Makemie's churches, where Presbyterians outnumbered Anglicans about twenty to one.

For two years, 1696 to 1698, Makemie toiled faithfully in the Isle of Barbados, developing and organizing churches, and more than financing himself by trade in the side. He returned for the death of his business partner and father-in-law, whose will left a thousand acres, an ocean going sloop, and much goods to "my son Makemie." Feeling that the will had been unjust to his mother-in-law, Makemie went to court

WHS P
Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

and broke the will to give her a full widow's share.

From the summer of 1704 to the fall of 1705 Makemie was again in England, at his own expense, seeking young ministers who would man the colonial Presbyterian churches, and directing the missionary interest of the Presbyterian and Congregational churches of the old country to the New World. He succeeded in bringing back to Maryland with him two very able young ministers, the Reverend John Hampton and the Reverend George McNish. Maryland's position as a royal colony now required all nonconformist ministers to receive a dissenter's license from the courts. Makemie had already been licensed in the Barbados; and it was assumed that a dissenter's license issued in any part of the British empire was acceptable everywhere. Robert Keith, now an ardent Anglican, and others, had worked vigorously to prohibit the licensing of nonconformists, and they did succeed in delaying the process many months; but Makemie's influence finally prevailed, and the royal governor granted the licenses in Annapolis in March, 1706. George McNish became pastor of the Manokin and Wicomico churches, and John Hampton of Snow Hill and Buckingham.

The legal and political pressures made the formation of some kind of intercolonial government for the Presbyterian Church an urgent issue. Francis Makemie called the Presbyterian ministers to meet in the new 1st Church just built in Philadelphia to perfect the organization of the first American Presbytery. Presbyterianism was then woefully weak in Philadelphia. But, nonetheless, under the vigorous effort being made by Queen Anne's government to force the estab-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

lished Anglican church on all the colonies, Philadelphia had become a sort of a battle ground. It was the largest and best known town in the colonies and it would greatly further the cause of the established church to claim Philadelphia as a centre. But Makemie was wise in the ways of the world. Though there were many more Presbyterians, and many more Presbyterian churches in his part of Maryland, he insisted on the organization of the first Presbytery in the weak little Philadelphia church. It was known as "The General Presbytery." This gave to Presbyterianism at once a metropolitan and an intercolonial flavor, and publicized the Presbyterian church, the first purely independent American intercolonial church, right where the Established Church was trying to make its inroads.

Makemie held to the Protestant definition of the Church given by John Robinson, pastor of the Pilgrim Fathers, when they were in Amsterdam, Holland, in his book published in 1610—"Justification of Separation from the Church of England." "This we hold and affirm, that a company, consisting though but two or three, separated from the world. . . . and gathered into the name of Christ by a covenant made to walk in all ways of God known unto them, is a church, and so hath the whole power of Christ . . . A company of faithful people thus convenanting together are a church, though they be without any officers among them, contrary to your Popish opinion. . . . This company being a church hath interest in all the holy things of Christ, within and among themselves, immediately under him the head, without any foreign aid and assistance."

Thus was there no need to send to any European

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

country for any official aid in the creation of an organized church. A few colonial ministers gathered together for that purpose had every right to organize an American independent church.

The minutes of that first meeting of "The General Presbytery" are lost. The date of the meeting was either December 1705, or more probably 1706. Jedidiah Andrews, the New England minister who was then pastor of the Philadelphia Church, and John Wilson, who had come from New England to the church at New Castle, Delaware, were the only two ministers who were not from the Makemie Churches —Francis Makemie, John Hampton, George McNish, were all from Maryland's Somerset County. For some unknown reason Josias Mackie of Elizabeth River, Virginia, another Makemie church, and John Boyd, another University of Glasgow man brought over by Makemie, were not present. The second business meeting, the first meeting of which we have a record, was held in Freehold, New Jersey, centre of another Presbyterian colonization, on December 27, 1706. Francis Makemie was Moderator, the first American moderator, and John Boyd was examined for ordination. The minutes properly begin with these words: "De Regimine ecclesiae," which mark the official beginning of the independent American church, proceeding with the ordination of its own ministers.

At the time of the organization meeting of the first Presbytery there were at least eight active Presbyterian churches in New Jersey; and because of the centering of the Presbytery in Philadelphia, the Jersey churches lost no time in becoming a part of the national organization. Due to Makemie's background, the first

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Presbyteries were according to the Irish type, a meeting of ministers only, in contrast to the English and Scotch type, where elders were also present.

By the organization of Presbytery and the consequent ordination of John Boyd at its second meeting, Francis Makemie developed a new American Presbyterianism, cut loose from any concept of the ministry as a hierarchy, a closed corporation, a self perpetuating body of a fictitious apostolic succession, and followed the New Testament model. At the same time the first American Presbytery had present no delegate from the home church across the sea; and no official representative of government. Completely challenging the accepted concept of the church as a mechanical succession of officialdom, or as an adjunct of government, ruled by government, Makemie led American Presbyterianism to its proper place in life—independent of Old World control and independent of government!

Meanwhile, with bricks brought over from England at his own expense, and built on his own land, Makemie replaced the old Rehoboth, Maryland, church with a model, beautiful church edifice (still standing.) Again Makemie had challenged the powers that be! The established Church authorities went to court to forbid the building of a dissenter church. The Anglican clergymen took it to the highest courts and eventually to the Lord Bishop of London. But there were twenty Presbyterians in the area to one Anglican, and the building was on Makemie's private property; so while the courts pondered and the Lord Bishop of London cogitated, Makemie went on building the church Eventually, Makemie, who never quit a just fight, won

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

out legally, and the Church edifice was not only completed but used for regular worship.

The visit with his brethren in New Jersey at the second meeting of Presbytery vividly reminded Makemie of a battle for religious liberty yet to be fought. New Jersey had been from the beginning the freest of all colonies, with the most liberal and advanced government known at that time. With William Penn controlling the south of the state and the Calvinists the north, and then Penn controlling all, the fullest kind of religious liberty was enjoyed. Even women voted; there was no imprisonment for debt; and "no men nor number of men on earth hath power to rule over men's consciences" was written in the Jersey law as early as 1677. But by 1702 New Jersey was made a royal colony and placed under the rule of the hated Lord Cornbury of New York.

Lord Cornbury was the spendthrift scion of a noble house, a cousin of Queen Anne, and a typical example of appointment by favoritism. The union of throne and Anglican altar was the accepted creed of English politics, and the Anglican church was used to buttress the civil authorities against their enemies in the New World. The chief message of the established church was the duty of unswerving and unquestioned loyalty to established institutions and authorities. The divine right of kings was an undisputed tenet of belief, and the greatest sin was resistance to authority. The emphasis on ritual created an indifference to morals; and its obeisance to nobility made the Anglican church the agency of officialdom.

Cornbury, who loved to have his picture painted dressed in women's clothes, was proud and arrogant,

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

dissolute and degenerate; but he was determined that only orthodox Anglicanism be permitted anywhere in his realm; and he was most high handed and tyrannical towards all dissenters. Under his hand, as Makemie discovered, many illegal acts had been performed against Presbyterians and Quakers in New Jersey and New York. New York became the place where dissenters were most bitterly treated.

And yet the dissenters were in the majority in New York at that time. In 1678 the previous governor of New York province wrote to Charles 2nd that there were in the province "religions of all sorts; one Church of England, several Presbyterians and Independents, Quakers, and Baptists of several sects, some Jews, but Presbyterians and Independents are most numerous and substantial." From 1678 on through 1700, as a result of the persecutions of Presbyterians in Scotland, a large number of them migrated to New Jersey and New York. So that the "dissenters" formed the majority of the population in Cornbury's day.

Makemie had heard of the bitter persecution by Cornbury of Samuel Bowne, a Quaker; he had also heard of the manner in which Lord Cornbury, urged by the ubiquitous George Keith, the Quaker turned Anglican, had deliberately taken over the beautiful church building of the Presbyterians at Jamaica and turned it over to the Established church, and of how the governor himself had ordered the Presbyterian Minister out of the manse, for his own personal accommodation, and then ordered the manse and farm sold at auction by the sheriff.

Makemie therefore deliberately went on to New York after the second meeting of Presbytery. He

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

took John Hampton with him. They held services in Newark first and then went over the river to New York. In New York City the Dutch church then had a membership of four hundred and fifty; the French Protestant Huguenot church had over two hundred families in its communion; and, in addition, there was a large group of Presbyterians in the town of about forty five hundred population. Makemie had one of the Presbyterian men of the city report to Lord Cornbury that he and his comrade, John Hampton, would like to meet him. Lord Cornbury invited "the two Presbyterian preachers from the south" around to dinner. Makemie did not ask for a license to preach for he had two, one granted in the Barbados, one granted by Virginia; and John Hampton had a license granted by the royal colony of Maryland. At the table Makemie let Lord Cornbury know who he was.

Later, Makemie was invited to preach at the Dutch church, but Lord Cornbury refused to let the Church open its doors to hear him. So he preached at the home of Mr. William Jackson, leaving the front doors open that it might be considered a public service. The following Sunday John Hampton preached at Newtown, Long Island, and announced that Mr. Makemie would preach there on the following Wednesday. John Hampton and Francis Makemie were arrested on Tuesday with a warrant which read:

"Whereas I am informed that one Mackennan and one Hampton two Presbyterian preachers who lately came to this city have taken upon themselves to preach in a private house without having obtained my license for so doing, which is directly contrary to the known laws of England; and being likewise informed that

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

they are gone into Long Island with intent there to spread their pernicious doctrine and principles to the disturbance of the church by law established, and of the government of this province; you are therefore hereby required and commended to take into your custody the bodies of the said Mackennan and Hampton, and them to bring with all convenient speed before me, at Fort Anne, in New York; and for so doing this shall be your sufficient warrant.

Given under my hand, at Fort Anne, this 21st day of January, 1707." CORNBURY

For a day and night Francis Makemie and John Hampton were kept prisoners in Jamaica. Then they were brought before Lord Cornbury, who arrogantly demanded: "How dare you take it upon you to preach in my government without my license?" Makemie immediately replied: "We have liberty from an act of Parliament in the first year of the reign of King William and Queen Mary, which gave us liberty and which law we have complied with." Cornbury insisted that England's law did not apply to the American plantations but only to England. Makemie showed him his American license to preach, granted in the American plantations. Cornbury was willing to compromise, insisted that if they give bond for good behaviour and promise never to preach in his government again, he would let them go. But that was not what Makemie came there for! He replied that he was willing to give a bond for his good behaviour, but he could not and would not agree not to preach. So Hampton and Makemie were illegally jailed. For eight weeks they endured the trying experiences of prison. Petitions

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

were sent in by citizens asking the cause of their imprisonment. The legality of the order sending them to prison without trial was repeatedly challenged. Public attention was drawn to the battle. On March 11 the Court ordered a writ of habeus corpus, and they were freed. John Hampton's name was dropped, but Makemie was ordered back again in June for trial. Meanwhile the news of the struggle for religious freedom spread all over the colonies, and every nonconformist church looked upon Makemie as their champion. When June came Makemie defended himself and his cause brilliantly. The jury declared him absolutely innocent of any offense. But innocent though he was Lord Cornbury (again illegally) forced him to pay the cost of his trial, his board as prisoner, and even the salary of the men who prosecuted him—a total of more than four hundred dollars, a considerable sum in those days. So great was the triumph of Makemie's case that his fame spread to England; and the next New York legislature passed laws making the repetition of such cases impossible. Dr. Cotton Mather wrote: "That excellent person—that brave man, Mr. Makemie—The non conformist religion have the blessing of God because of Francis Makemie." And freedom of worship was given its legal basis in New York and New Jersey, royal colonies; and the legal beginnings of freedom of worship were established for all royal colonies.

The following year Makemie spent most of his time enjoying his vast plantation on the lush and fruitful eastern shore of Maryland, with deep waters, abounding with fish, and woods filled with game; but he found time to write to the old country for more ministers

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

and to promote and further the enterprises of the growing Presbytery.

He wrote his long will in the summer of 1708, leaving his large estate to his wife and two daughters, the Rehoboth church building "to the Presbyterians forever," many of his fine gentleman's garments, including his beautifully woven plush Camlet coat and his new gold cane bought in Boston, to the pastor of the Church in Philadelphia.

But the greatest legacies of Francis Makemie were the gifts of the beginning of independent national organization for the Presbyterians and religious freedom for all denominations.

Francis Makemie, "Gent.", pioneer and statesman, left his beloved earthly plantation in late September 1708. It is fitting that above his neglected grave stands a simple granite monument bearing his figure; and from the eye level one can see the beloved Chesapeake Bay down the wide navigable nearby tributary.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

CHAPTER II

WILLIAM TENNENT

It was undoubtedly the reputation of Francis Makemie throughout the Protestant Church of north Ireland which influenced William Tennent, a priest of the Anglican Church there, to leave his denomination and come to the New World as a Presbyterian. Tennent was a profound scholar, and the arrogant attitude of church officialdom, especially when it was backed up by government force, always greatly disturbed him because it was historically so un-Christian. He was a student and not an administrator; a teacher more than a man of dynamic action; a man of the study more than a man of the world. A gentle, shy, truly meek Christian character, he was destined always to be misjudged and misunderstood, one of the forgotten men of history. Yet he had the true teacher's great gift of inspiring young men. And his unadvertised and unheralded service to the cause of education made him one of the great pioneers and founders of America.

William Tennent was born in 1673. He is supposed to have been born in north Ireland, but the records seemed to indicate that he was of Scotch birth and came to Ireland as a young man. He attended the University of Edinburgh and was licensed to preach in Scotland. The General Synod of Ulster received him as a probationer in 1701. The following year he married the daughter of a Presbyterian minister, and his

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

WILLIAM TENNENT

From a Profile in Possession of the Presbyterian Historical Society

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

son Gilbert, born in 1703, was baptised by a Presbyterian minister at Vinecash, Ireland. But, in 1704, William Tennent was ordained a deacon in the established church. Apparently he remained a priest of the Anglican church in Ireland for thirteen years. He became increasingly dissatisfied with the autocratic and dictatorial methods of that church, and particularly with the unfair treatment towards dissenters. And he turned again to his earlier Presbyterian training.

He was related, on his mother's side, to James Logan, the Scotch man who was secretary for William Penn's colony. (Logan was the most influential man in the colony. Chief Justice and President of the Council, his home was the centre of social life and culture. And he was held in high respect by the Indians and whites). Tennent wrote Logan about the possibilities of life in the colonies; and he received a favorable reply. So, in 1718, following the leadership of his fellow country man, Makemie, and counting on the influence of his relative, Logan, he set sail, with his wife and four sons and a daughter, for the New World. He was forty-five years of age at the time, and his five children varied in ages from Gilbert, aged fifteen, to Charles, aged eight. He had little money and no promises for the future. The long and difficult journey was quite an undertaking for man of forty-five with a family. At the age when most men settled down into a groove, William Tennent began his life's great adventure.

The journey across the Atlantic, in a cramped and crowded ship, victim of wind and wave, was usually in those days a matter of two or three months. There was no refrigeration, and food was scarce and limited

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

in variety. In fact, passengers were supposed to bring their own food supplies. Scurvy and other illnesses vied with sea sickness to make the long, tedious and costly journey a real adventure in daring. And one can imagine with what gratitude William Tennent received the landing welcome from his mother's kinsman, William Logan.

He notes under date of September 16, 1718: "We Landed safe at Philadelphia the head Town of Pensilvania and was Courteouslie intertained by Mr. James Logan Agent and secretarie of all Pensilvania."

But the problem of a livelihood and a place of service had not yet been solved. It so happened, however, that the Synod of Philadelphia met just ten days after his arrival; perhaps he had planned his arrival that way. His credentials were accepted by the Synod; and several of the members, who had known of his coming, testified for him. The Synod wanted to know why he had dissented from the Established Church of Ireland. The Synod records give Tennent's replies.

"The reasons of Mr. William Tennent for his dissenting from the established Church of Ireland, delivered by him to the Reverend Synod, held at Philadelphia, the 17th day of September, 1718.

Imprimis. Their government by Bishops, Arch-Bishops, Deacons, Arch-Deacons, Canons, Chapters, Chancellors, Vicars wholly unscriptural.

2. Their discipline by Surrogates, and Chancellors in their Courts Ecclesiastic, without a foundation in the Word of God.

3. Their abuse of that supposed discipline by commutation.

4. A Diocesan Bishop cannot be founded jure divino

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

upon those Epistles to Timothy or Titus, nor anywhere else in the Word of God, and so is a mere human invention.

5. The usurped power of the Bishops at their yearly visitations, acting all of themselves without the consent of their brethren.

6. Pluralities of benefices.

Lastly. The Churches conniving at the practice of Arminian doctrines inconcistent with the eternal purpose of God, and an encouragement of vice. Beside, I could not be satisfied with their ceremonial way of worship. These, have so affected my conscience, that I could no longer abide in a church where the same are practised.

Signed by

William Tennent."

William Tennent's profound scholarship and obvious sincerity made a deep impression on the Synod. Two days later, under date of September 20, 1718 the minutes record: "The Synod recommended it to Messrs. Young and Tennent to apply themselves to what Presbytery within the bounds of the Synod they would think convenient."

William Tennent became pastor in November 1718 of a church in East Chester, New York, where, as the custom was, he was given a "glebe" or a manse farm on which to raise his food. This was the area where Lord Cornbury had done his best to destroy Presbyterianism, and Tennent's sincere teaching ministry was productive.

The archives reveal a letter written Tennent from James Logan, possibly in reply to Tennent's expressed

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

desire to move to Pennsylvania nearer the center of things.

The letter says, in part:

"Philad II June 1719

Dear Cousin,

I thought it most proper to defer writing to thee, till near the time of my departure for N York that I might be more capable of doing it. . . .

That I might be more fully apprized of thy Concerns I discoursed both thy bro*rs* McNish and Anderson concerning them & find by them that y*e* cause of thy uneasiness is that Bertaut keeps from thee a little house of no value, & but of very little conveniency called a Church, being first designed tho' no way fit for it, for divine Service, & about eleven, or as some say fifteen pounds p Annum, but I perceive y*e* most Judicious are of opinion it will be thy Interest to insist as yet on neither of these, for that if thou minds thy Parish and keeps diligently to thy calling Bertaut in all probability will soon end his Visits and but rarely repeat them, and then both House and Stipend may fall to thee of course, without giving either the Gov*r* or the Governm*t* or any person any trouble & this they think will contribute more to thy real Interest.

I took an opportunity as thous desired to discourse y*e* Gov*r* also about it, but I find is very desirous to be excused from intermedling in those affairs which no way concern him, & from whence blame must accrue to Him without any manner of Advantage.

He says he would willingly serve thee in anything reasonable, but would not willingly be made a party in such disputes. This is all that I can Say on that head

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

save that y*e* above-named Gentlemen's opinion seems to be very rational and judicious.

I got well home on y*e* 8th Inst, and found through God's Blessing my family all well, but little Sarah is very puny weakly-I hope all thine continue in health. I heritily will thy Prosperity in all things & am with mine and my wife's kind Love to you both.

Thy affectionate fr.

J. L."

Apparently William Tennent found it difficult to support his sizable family properly on the small glebe at East Chester. The cruder ways of American frontier life were a contrast to the comforts of an Irish town rectory. The plans to move to Pennsylvania having failed, Tennent visited the Synod in Philadelphia in September 1719, to see if he could discover some vacancy in a larger field of work. In May 1720 he moved to a larger church at Bedford, New York. Even there it must have been hard sledding financially, for on September 30, 1721 he borrowed 30 pounds from "The Fund for Pius Purposes" of the Synod. George McNish, Makemie's protege, now also a member of Long Island Presbytery with Tennent, went his bail. The town of Bedford gave Tennent a glebe of 14 acres in April 1721, 100 acres in 1722, and 23 more acres in 1725. In September, 1724 "The Fund for Pius Purposes" refused to grant Tennent another loan. William Tennent remained a member of Long Island Presbytery from 1718 to 1726.

In the archives of James Logan there is a letter written by him to Ja. Greenshields, Dublin, Ireland. The second paragraph of the letter refers to Tennent.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

"Philad*a* 2d of Jan*ry* 1725

Kind Cousin:

. . . . .Thy cousin Tenent came over hither about 6 or 7 years since with his family & after some months here found a living in his old and new way viz. y*e* Presbyterian (from which he complains y*t* his Uncle and thee once unhappily misled) in y*e* Govm*t* of New York, his eldest son was lately w*th* me here, & is now travelling on y*e* true call of the Gospellers viz y*e* best price they can gett for y*e* Word. He has entered in y*e* New Lond (sic) College in Conetticot, seems to have got a very good stock at his trade for a beginner. Only 'tis to be doubted he has more honesty than that required, this however may wear off as he improves y*e* other but he seems at present a sweet youth and too good to be spoiled. His father has some hopes of being made principal of y*e* College I have mentioned, in room of one whom they say has perverted to your Church. If they be *Pares cum Peribus* our American Collegiate Learning may y*e* more easily be judged off, his wife however is certainly a valuable woman & thence y*e* offspring may be improved.

Thy Loving Cousin and Hearty friend,

James Logan."

Yale had been organized about 1700, when ten ministers, coming from all over the colony, met in New Haven "to found, erect and govern a college." Each laid a gift of books on a farm house parlor table, with these words: "I give these books for founding a college in Connecticut." Harvard was in those days too far away from southern New England; and the Math-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

ers and others in Boston were eager to have a college stricter in its theology than Harvard. The Connecticut legislature granted a charter to the new college in 1701. Teaching began in 1702. In the early years the school was in the manses of the successive rectors, and of the various tutors in whatever towns they happen to live. Elihu Yale, a retired English East Indian merchant, who had been governor of Madras, left 562 pounds, then a fortune, to the school in 1718, and the first building was erected in New Haven. By 1720 there were 43 students in a three story house painted blue.

Timothy Cutler, the rector at that period, later developed distinct leanings toward Anglicanism. His emphasis towards the episcopacy caused great disturbance among the college supporters. Cutler was dismissed in 1722 because of his views. It was in the period after Cutler's dismissal that William Tennent had high hopes of becoming the head of the college.

But apparently William Tennent's hopes of becoming principal of Yale College were as impossible to fulfill as his earlier desires to move back to Pennsylvania. There is no doubt that his place in life was that of a teacher. And his one aim was to be a teacher. No amount of failure could deter him from that aim. And so again, at the age of 54, he ventured forth on faith.

By selling some of his Bedford land, Tennent was able to move back to Pennsylvania in the fall of 1727. He settled at Neshaminy, Bucks County, as Whitefield later described it "about 20 miles from Trent Town." Immediately on his arrival Tennent began the building of a stone church, 40 by 30, with galleries. It was finished for divine services in the summer of 1728. Logan

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

was influential in finding him a farm "to encourage him to prosecute his views and to make his residence near us permanent." And in April 1729 Logan turned over 50 acres of land on the Neshaminy to Katherine Tennent for a nominal 5 shillings, and made a contribution of five pounds to pay workmen to get a house built for them, that they might not have to board in a public inn. For, as Logan wrote a friend, "'tis to relieve a distressed family, who now by their Situation on a public road are much oppressed whiles Strait-Hardedness of his Congregation allow him but Scanty Supplies to support y*e* Charge, especially since all this hard season, they have been forced to purchase from Philad*ia* market all their Provisions, bread excepted."

Here was the change William Tennent had yearned for, dreamed of, and moved towards. Here he started his school, at first in his house, and then in a log cabin built for the purpose. If Yale could start its career in the manses of its rector and tutors, why could not he begin a college in his own home with his own five sons? He was 55 years of age in 1728 when he began his teaching, the one ministry to which he knew the Lord had prepared and called him. Between the ages of 55 and 73, the age of his death, Tennent made his truly great contribution to the kingdom of God and to the American church and college. Failing in his hopes of being principal of Yale he went back into the woods of Pennsylvania and started his own little college, whose influence upon the Christian life of colonial America was greater than that of Yale.

The fact that originally Presbyterianism was the product of historic research naturally set up standards of scholarship for its ministry. The grounds on which

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

the Presbyterian belief in the parity of ministerial orders rests were not the product of tradition, custom or emotional fervor, but were the product of careful New Testament scholarship. Institutions of learning became from the first vital adjuncts of the Presbyterian Church. Even in the colonies in the early 18th century it was necessary for ministers of the Presbyterian church to be scholars. Zeal was no substitute for knowledge and private inspiration no substitute for historical evidence. The freedom of the New World tended to emotionalism on the one hand and narrow dogmatism on the other hand; and both extremes threatened the orderly instincts of Presbyterians. Even to man the frontiers the bars could not be let down scholastically!

But it was obviously impossible to expect to meet the needs of a growing area with a dwindling supply of ministers from the old country. Fewer and fewer old country ministers could be counted on to come to the colonies now that religious persecution had ceased. And it cost too much in time and money for most young men from the middle colonies to go north to Yale or Harvard for an education.

So William Tennent came to supply a great need in the Presbyterian Church with his little log school at Neshaminy.

Tennent himself was a scholar and a teacher of rare attainments. He spoke Latin almost as fluently as English; he kept his family journal in Latin, and his Latin oration before the Synod gave him a wide reputation; he taught Greek and Hebrew, and apparently had knowledge of other languages, and he was well versed in philosophy. He was a sound Biblical scholar.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

And with it all he had a rare gift as a teacher, so that the truth became a living, experimental thing. The young men who studied under him became not only great scholars, but true, enthusiastic Christians. Gilbert Tennent, his oldest son and first graduate, was examined by Presbytery in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, logic, philosophy and divinity. He passed a most satisfactory examination. And, in due season, as a tribute to the standards of his father's school, Yale granted Gilbert Tennent an honorary M. A.

When Whitefield, the great English evangelist, first came to America (he eventually made 7 visits) and the Great Awakening of religion was sweeping through the Middle Colonies, he visited the Log College of William Tennent and pronounced it superior to the contemporary colleges in Europe. Whitefield wrote in his journal in November 1739:

"At my return home was much comforted by the coming of one Mr. Tennent, an old gray haired Disciple and Soldier of Jesus Christ. He keeps an Academy about 20 miles from Philadelphia, and has been blessed with four gracious sons, three of whom have been and still continue to be eminently useful in the Church of Christ. (Note—John Tennent died at the age of 25 in 1732.) He brought three pious souls along with him and rejoiced me by letting me know how they had been evil spoken of for their Master's sake. He is a great friend of Mr. Erskine of Scotland, and, as far as I can find out both he and his sons are secretly despised by the Generality of the Synod, as Mr. Erskine and his brethren are by the Judicatories of Edinburgh, and as the Methodist preachers are by their Brethren in England. Though we are few and stand

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

alone like Elijah and though they, like the Priests of Baal, are many in Number, yet I doubt not but that the Lord will appear with us, as he did for that prophet, and make us more than Conquerers." . . . . .

"November 22, 1739. Set out for Neshaminy (20 miles from Trent Town) where old Mr. Tennent lives and keeps an Academy, where I was to preach that day according to appointment. About twelve we came hither and found about 3000 people gathered together at the Meeting-House Yard; and Mr. William Tennent, an eminent servant of Jesus Christ, preaching to them because we had stayed beyond the time appointed. When I came up he soon stopped, and sung a Psalm and then I began to speak as the Lord gave me Utterance. . . . . .After our exercises were over we went to old Mr. Tennent, who entertained us like one of the ancient Patriarchs. His wife seemed to me like Elizabeth and he like Zachary; both, as far as I can find out, walk in all the ordinances and Commandments of the Lord blameless. . .It happens very Providentially that Mr. Tennent and his brethren are appointed to be a Presbytery of the Synod (Note—the Presbytery of New Brunswick—see Gilbert Tennent). So that they intend breeding up gracious youths and sending them from Time to Time into our Lord's vineyard. The place wherein the young men study now is in contempt called *"The College."* It is a log house, about twenty feet long, and as near as many broad; and to me it seems to resemble the schools of the old prophets —for that their habitations were mean, and that they sought not great things for themselves. . . .All that can be said of most of our Publick Universities is they are all glorious *without*. From this despised Place

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Seven or Eight worthy ministers of Jesus have lately been sent forth; more are almost ready to be sent, and others. The Devil will certainly rage against them, a Foundation is now laying for the Instruction of many but the work, I am persuaded, is of God and therefore will not come to naught. Carnal ministers oppose them strongly; and because people, when awakened by Mr. Tennent or his Brethren, see through and therefore leave their Ministry, the poor Gentlemen are loaded with contempt and looked upon (as all faithful Preachers will be) as Persons that turned the world upside down—a Notable War I believe is commencing between Michael and the Dragon, we may easily guess who will prevail—the Seed of the Woman shall bruise the serpent's head."

As Whitefield's notes reveal,—the more successful the Log College became the more the opposition to it seemed to develop. The graduates of the Irish, Scotch or English universities looked upon Tennent's school as an "upstart"; the graduates of Yale could not accept the fact that there could be an adequate local college to rival it, especially when that college was run by one whom Yale did not want as president. Members of the Synod had no official hand in the running of the Log College and doubted whether the courses of instruction were sufficient; yet the examination of men trained at the college should have answered that objection. The older and more conservative ministers to whom their religion had become a smug and comfortable sinecure found the new zeal and enthusiasm of the Log College men repellent. Most of the Presbyterians of Pennsylvania, and a few in Delaware and Maryland, were strongly opposed to the evangel-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

ism of Whitefield; and Whitefield's enthusiastic endorsement of the Log College added fuel to the fire. Gilbert Tennent, whose unquenchable zeal was never undergirded by tact, expressed publicly his great impatience with "carnal ministers," and bitterly attacked them. They attacked back—and aimed their increasing criticism at the Log College.

In 1733 the Presbytery of Philadelphia was divided into two Presbyteries—Philadelphia and East Jersey. In 1738 a new Presbytery, Long Island, was added to East Jersey, and the combination Presbytery called the Presbytery of New York. Two days after that most of the New Jersey part of the New York Presbytery was organized into the Presbytery of New Brunswick. The New Brunswick Presbytery had its first meeting in Gilbert Tennent's Church in New Brunswick; it became the Log College Presbytery, with Gilbert Tennent moderator, his father and his brothers and other strong Log College graduates composing its membership.

To keep the New Brunswick Presbytery, composed of Log College men, from ordaining more Log College graduates, Synod, at the very meeting at which the New Brunswick Presbytery was created, took away from the Presbyteries the right to ordain candidates for the ministry. That right had been a function of Presbytery since the first Presbytery was formed in 1707. By putting the leading Log College men into one Presbytery and taking away their rights the opponents, by a shrewd political maneuver, apparently had now made it almost impossible for Log College graduates to be ordained. Synod put all examination and ordination in the hands of a committee of Synod,

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

which would be composed of the opponents of Tennent.

The ultra conservative Presbytery of Lewes, Delaware, proposed this overture:

"That every student who has not studied with approbation, passing the usual courses in some European or New England college, approved by public authority shall, before he be encouraged by any Presbytery for the sacred work of the ministry apply himself to this Synod, and that they appoint a committee of their number yearly, whom they know to be well skilled in the several branches of philosophy and divinity and languages, to examine such students in this place, and finding them a public testimonial from the Synod which, till better provision be made, will in some measure answer the design of taking a degree in college."

The Synod, with a conservative majority, passed the overture; and William Tennent, perhaps the most scholarly member of the Synod, was completely snubbed, and his Log College repudiated.

Next year the Synod added insult to injury, implying that it would be necessary to send to the old country for properly trained ministers, when everyone knew that war between Spain and England made such a proposal impractical. No mention of the "Log College" is made in the Synod minutes; and no attempt was made by the Synod to improve the standards which were being criticised. Instead of exhibiting a deep spirit of gratitude towards and cooperation with William Tennent, the majority of the members ridiculed his pioneering efforts.

The struggle over the Log College became a struggle by progressive, enthusiastic Christians against the

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

throttling force of ecclesiastical officialdom, the struggle of a fluid, adaptable American Christianity against the rigid, traditional European type of church, a battle for academic freedom against scholastic rigidity, for education for all who wanted it against education for the lucky few—new life against old forms!

The members of Synod who opposed the Log College claimed that William Tennent did not teach "Physicks, Metaphysicks, and Pneumaticks & Criticks" in his school and that therefore the curriculum was inadequate, but instead of attempting to improve the curriculum the tendency of the Old School men was to make fun of it.

In "A Second Letter to the Congregation of the Eighteen Presbyterian Ministers," printed in Philadelphia as late as 1761 (after the 17 years of schism over the Log College had been healed and the church united again) the author writes satirically about the ordination of Charles Tennent, one of William Tennent's sons:

"Bishop . . . 'Pray Gentlemen, what college or university were you educated in?'
3d Candidate. Ch-rl-s T-nn-nt,
'Please your Bishop-prick, we were learned in my father's own college and *versity* at Shameny.'
Bishop: I never heard of it before—what part of the world was it in?'
3d Candidate. Ch-rl-s T-nn-nt,
'Why, it was in America, it was near twenty feet long, and almost ten feet wide—but the logs are all rotten long ago. Indeed, I think, I have heard lately, that the *wicked* people that live there, have

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

made a *hog-sty* of it. Dear, Dir, what a wicked world this is?'——"

But the book did admit that the new light "Log College at Neshaminy is now become a great building at Pr-nct—n in New Jersey."

In 1741 the New Brunswick Presbytery—the Presbytery of the Log College men—was forced out of the Synod. For many years the New Brunswick Presbytery was an independent unit, adding other Presbyteries, New York and Newcastle to it, to form a Synod, the Synod of New York. New Brunswick Presbytery became the center of a wide spread evangelistic and missionary movement which reached from Maine to the Carolinas. The men of New Brunswick, and then the men of their Synod, the Synod of New York, became known as the New Lights. In the 17 years of the split, before reunion in 1758, the New Lights dominated the American scene and aroused the American Church to new enthusiasm and valor.

When William Tennent died and the Log College closed, its spirit was continued, first in the manse of Jonathan Dickinson in Elizabeth, N. J., who was a vigorous member of the New Light group, then in the manse of Aaron Burr, in Newark, another active New Light minister. Out of the Elizabeth and Newark manse schools came Princeton—the product of the Log College.

Of the twenty-one graduates of the Log College all attained places of influence and distinction. One, Dr. John Redman, became a noted physician. The other twenty all entered the Presbyterian ministry and made impressive records. Some of them built their own Log Colleges. Samuel Finley started Nottingham Academy,

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

still in existence; and Dr. Benjamin Rush, Philadelphia's famous doctor, was trained there. Samuel Davies studied at Fagg's Manor, and may have studied with Tennent at the original Log College. Samuel Davies and others started the evangelical movement in Virginia. And Log College men there founded Augusta Academy, in 1749, now Washington and Lee University, and later other colleges. About 50 American colleges and universities can trace their lineage directly to William Tennent's Log College.

William Tennent undoubtedly personally recruited many of his students. Charles Beatty, for example, one of Mr. Tennent's students, had a fairly good classical preparatory training in his native Ireland before migrating to America. On his arrival in Philadelphia he sought to make a living as a travelling merchant, or peddler. In the course of his business tours he came to Neshaminy, and astonished Mr. Tennent by addressing him in correct Latin. After a long conversation in which the school master discovered what kind of a young man the peddler was, Tennent said: "Go and sell all the contents of your packs and return immediately and study with me. It will be a sin for you to continue to be a peddler when you can be so much more useful in another profession." So Beatty entered the Log College, and in due season became a widely influential minister.

The controversy over the Log College even entered the Neshaminy Church where William Tennent preached every other Sunday, supplying a distant church on the odd Sundays. After many years of pastorate at the Neshaminy Church, a group of the Church people protested to the Presbytery, and then to Synod

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

that Mr. Tennent had never been installed and therefore was not their pastor. Synod insisted that his long service through the years had most assuredly made him their pastor; but later Synod authorized "an assistant," who would preach every other Sunday, and who would represent the staid older type of mind, of the "Old Side" opposed to evangelistic fervor. The saintly, scholarly William Tennent was thoroughly misunderstood and bitterly fought against on every side throughout his useful life.

But his "boys" were always loyal; for he had planted a spark in them which did not die out. In the early days he did all the teaching himself; later he hired an assistant; but always he implanted his spirit into his assistants. When they got into the ministry his "boys" came vigorously to his support. After the New Brunswick Presbytery was pushed out of the Synod and began its independent career, and organized other Presbyteries, they answered calls from far and wide. On the minutes of the Church of New Londonderry (sometimes called Fagg's Manor), manned by a Log College graduate, is the following record:

"Dec. 8th, 1740. The Session, viz. the minister and Elders of y*e* Presbyterian Congregation of New-Londonderry, being sensible of y*t* the coming of godly men into y*e* ministry, such as are experimentally acquainted w*t* the renewing and sanctifying grace of God in their souls, has y*e* most hopeful aspect upon y*e* interests of Christ's Kingdom and true vital godliness amonst us; and that upon y*e* other hand, the receiving men of a contrary character into that sacred office is y*e* great Bane of y*e* Church of Christ, and y*e* great reason of y*e* said decay of true lively experimental Religion, and

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

being apprized that there are several very promising and hopeful youths under y*e* gospel-ministry, some of whom have not a sufficiency of their own to support them in y*e* course of their preparatory studies, We think the yielding them our Assistance by contributing to their support for their carrying on & obtaining their pious, and so very needful as well as useful Design, one of the best ways in w*t* our charity can be bestowed; and therefore being ready to contribute our own mite, we heartily recommend it to all such of our christian Brethren to whom these may come, to joyn us in y*e* same, promising, y*t* upon their giving what they allow this way, to any of us, it shall be apply'd to y*e* fors*d* purpose. And in so doing we hope y*e* Blessing of many souls ready to perish will come upon the givers, and y*e* interests of our Glorious Redeemer be promoted in y*e* world."

A very unostentatious, humble, self effacing man, who permitted no adversity or failure to deter him from his divine call, Tennent attained few earthly rewards and found criticism and opposition where he should have had cooperation and praise. He influenced the world through those he educated rather than by his sparkling gifts. Through the recruiting and proper training of youth, to whom he imparted not only a high scholarship by a deep personal piety and an abiding zeal, William Tennent saved the Christian religion in America from dry rot on the one hand and ignorant emotionalism on the other. He made the Christian faith a fervent personal experience and an adventure for souls; yet he kept it on a scholarly Biblical basis. And he made the development of character the high purpose of education. This quiet man, in his little log

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

cabin in the woods, did more than any other man of his day to mold and direct the leadership, the life and the form of the American Christian church.

William Tennent died as he had lived, quietly, humbly, without publicity or popularity, and he lies buried with his beloved wife and help mate at his side in the little cemetery near the site of his Log College in Neshaminy, Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

Following the Irish fashion, his students were taught until they passed the examination of Presbytery. There were no "graduates" in our modern sense of the word. The twenty-one men trained at the Log College, all of whom became of great influence and reputation, were the following, with the year they were accepted by Presbytery or completed their studies:

Gilbert Tennent, 1725; John Tennent, 1728; Willim Tennent, Jr. (who became the gracious minister of the Freehold, N. J., Church, now known as "Old Tennent.") 1732; Charles Tennent, 1736; David Alexander, 1737; Samuel Blair (pastor at Shrewsbury, N. J., then organizer of the Log College at Fagg's Manor, or New Londonderry, Pa.), 1733; John Rowland (who was ordained by the New Brunswick Presbytery in violation of Synod's order, and became pastor at Maidenhead (Lawrenceville), and then at Hopewell, N. J.), 1738; Hamilton Bell, 1739; James McCrea, 1739; William Robinson (an Englishman, who had a very successful roving ministry in Maryland and Virginia), 1740; Samuel Finley (who after itinerant preaching in New England, founded Nottingham Academy in Maryland, then became president of Princeton), 1740; Charles McKnight, 1741; Charles Beatty (missionary to the Indians and agent for the

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Widow's Fund), 1742; John Blair (who taught at Samuel Blair's Fagg's Manor Log College, then taught theology at Princeton), 1742; William Dean, 1742; Joan Roan, 1744; Daniel Lawrence, 1744; Samuel Davies (some historians list him as a student of Fagg's Manor only), 1746; John Campbell, 1747; John Rodgers, 1747; Dr. John Redman, who became a well known physician.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Chapter III

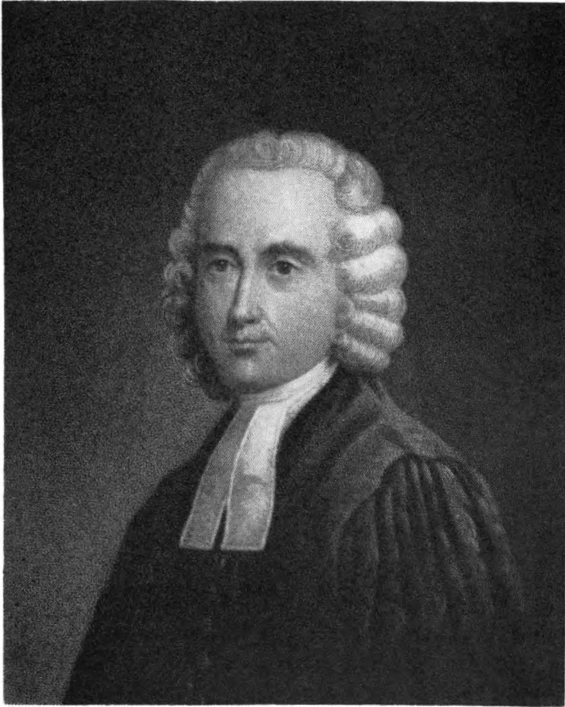
JONATHAN DICKINSON

Far less has been written about the religious beginnings of the colony of New Jersey than about any of the early colonies. Yet, in a sense, New Jersey was the typical, as well as the central colony; and certainly the freest of all the colonies. Maryland had a degree of freedom under the Calverts, but soon became a crown colony with a rigid state church; Roger Williams had granted great freedom in Rhode Island, but Williams had little interest in the visible church, confining his church to his home. There was no church building in Rhode Island for many years; and Williams made bitter, intolerant and ill informed attacks against George Fox and the Friends. In Jersey there never was a state church, and from the beginning there was an amazing tolerance and freedom. The first Church built in Trenton was built jointly to house the Presbyterians and the Anglicans. In some countries where the socialistic experiment is rife today the tendency is to level downward, upper classes to a lower class; in early New Jersey the tendency was upward, and the opportunity for improving one's lot, with its optimism and its democracy, was traceable directly to the religious spirit of its founders and early settlers. Calvinists from New England, other Presbyterians from England, Scotland and north Ireland, with a hearty sprinkling of Baptists (who were also Calvinists), fused

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google



JONATHAN DICKINSON

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

with the Calvinistic Dutch Reformed and the Finnish and Swedish Lutheran beginnings to form a kindly, tolerant Protestant colony which could not abide a state enforced religion.

As the 17th century began Europe, as usual, witnessed great struggles. Spain, the dominant Roman Catholic power, which claimed all North America, had been defeated by England; Holland, the only first class Protestant power on the continent, had developed a republic, after her bloody war to throw off Spanish domination. But her peace treaty with Spain was about to terminate. Holland had developed into a great maritime power.

Sebastian Cabot (a Genoese seaman born and bred in England), paying his own expenses, had probably sailed the New Jersey coast for the English King Henry 7th about 1497. In 1524 Verrazzano, the Venetian, had planted a French flag on the Jersey coast, followed by Stephen Gomez, the Spaniard, a year later. Then the Dutch employed Henrik Hudson, an Englishman, to find a short cut to "The Spice Islands," and he discovered the north Jersey coast and the river which bears his name, at the mouth of which New Amsterdam was settled. The Dutch merchants planned quick profits in furs in the New World, but the treaty with Spain forbade any large scale colonization in the region Spain claimed. As soon as the treaty expired, however, the Dutch lost no time.

The Englishman, Lord De La War, journeyed up the bay which bears his name and, in 1620, the year the Pilgrims landed, Capt. Cornelius May, rounded the cape now known as Cape May. In 1621 the Dutch West Indies Co. was empowered to build forts, estab-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

lish government and do all that "the profit and increase of trade shall require." To further trade they built several trading forts of which Fort Nassau, near Gloucester, was the first, about 1623. The 300 English Separatists, the Pilgrim Fathers of Plymouth fame, came out of Holland because they were aware that another war with Spain was imminent, and because, being English, they were restricted by the Dutch labor laws. They planned to sail to New Caeserea, as New Jersey was then called, but refused the Dutch guarantee of free passage across the Atlantic, cattle for their needs, and the convoy of two Dutch men of war, for fear of the Spaniards' revenge. So they hired themselves to an English company and sailed with the blessing and cooperation of the Dutch, their close friends. But the wind blew them off their course, and instead of landing in New Caeserea (New Jersey) as they had planned, they landed in New England.

By 1629 the Dutch had organized settlements in New Caeserea and annunciated the principle for the first time that land should be purchased from the Indians. Calvinist ministers accompanied all Dutch settlers and the church was in every colony. Meanwhile, as the result of an episode in Flushing, the business men directors of the Dutch West Indies Company wrote in their charter: "The consciences of men, at least, ought to remain free and unshackled." Thus Dutch business men established the principle of religious freedom in New Jersey in 1663.

Meanwhile, Gustavus Adolphus, the great Swedish king, long had visions of a new kind of a state in the new world, free from the evils of war ridden Europe. He formed a Swedish West Indies Co. and, in 1627,

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

invited colonists from all European nations to a new world colony of "workers." A few days before his death on the battle field he urged the German princes in the lands horribly bereft by the terrible 30 years religious war, to consider the benefits of such a colony of freedom in the new world. The king's death postponed the venture until 1637, under the strange Chancellor Oxenstierna.

So the Swedes came over to settle New Caeserea. They were excellent colonizers and built many settlements on the lower Delaware, in the heart of each of which was their church. They were aided and abetted by Dutchmen who did not like the monopoly held by the Dutch West Indies Co. Peter Minuit, a Dutchman of French Huguenot stock, was their early leader. Finns came with them. (The Finns gave America the log cabin.) They were led from 1643 to 1653 by a 400-pound giant of a man, Lieut. Col. Johann Printz of the Swedish cavalry. When he went back home he left his equally fiery and sturdy daughter, Armegot, much more alluring than any woman in historical fiction, in full charge.

New Caeserea, or New Jersey, was and is unique for it can be approached from both the front and the rear by water. The Dutch came one way, and the Swedes and Finns another. But fur trade with the Indians created a natural rivalry, and sometimes the rivalry was not too peaceful.

Then England entered the scene. A sea captain, whose name has been forgotten, sailed his ship up to the falls of the Delaware, to what is now Trenton, called in the Dutch traders and the Indians, and showed them ceremoniously a huge piece of ornate parchment,

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

on which were attached all manner of ribbons and seals, to prove that the land belonged to the English king. It was most impressive! And then the English, in Pearl Harbor fashion, sent in their war ships and seized New Amsterdam, before the Dutch even knew a war was on.

Claiming New Jersey, Charles 2nd of England, in 1660, gave all the land from the Connecticut River to Maryland to his brother James. James, wanting cash, sold to Lord Berkeley and Sir George Carteret, favorite courtiers, the province lying westward of Long Island, bound on the west by the Delaware, on the east by the Hudson and the main ocean and latitude forty-one degrees forty minutes, the land which had hitherto been called "New Caeserea." The name was now changed to "New Jersey," for Carteret had defended the isle of Jersey for the king against the Long Parliament. The new land was opened to colonists and an annual "quit rent" per acre was charged, a device which haunted the colonists until 1740. England was far from crowded and there was no economic urge among Englishmen to seek a new place to live. There was, however, among the nonconformists, need of a land where religious liberty could be practised. To tempt the religiously persecuted, and thus to make the colony profitable for them, Berkeley and Carteret guaranteed full freedom of worship. This was the first colony to seek colonists on that basis. Ample provision was made for the support of ministers in each locality by the majority group as they saw fit; but absolute freedom was guaranteed to all other persons to maintain any other kind of ministers they desired. The very first "Concessions and Agreements of the Lord

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Proprietors of the Province of New Caeserea, or New Jersey" was by far the broadest of any American colony. There were rigid Roman Catholic kings in France and Spain enforcing conformity; Charles 2nd was rigidly enforcing adherence to the Anglican Church in England and in Scotland; 30 years war in Germany had reduced the population there from 16 to 6 million by forcing most of the Protestants to migrate. The freedom of worship offered to those who would colonize in New Jersey was legally known in no similar sized area on earth.

Meanwhile, Governor Nicholls, acting as the Duke of York's New York agent, and unaware of the sale of land to Berkeley and Carteret, permitted the securing of land west of Sandy Hook, known as "The Monmouth Patent." Great numbers of Presbyterians, some Congregationalists, and scattered Baptists, migrated to these lush fields from some of the stricter colonies of New England, and a ship load or so of Scotch, men with their mouths slit from ear to ear and women with their ears cut off by England's king because they would not give up their Presbyterian faith and become Anglicans, settled on Free Hill, and later Freehold, near the Monmouth area.

When the quit rents did not come up to expectations commercially Berkeley offered half his area for sale for the astonishing sum of 1,000 pounds sterling, the biggest land bargain ever offered by one white man to another. The purchaser was John Fenwicke, a Quaker, who was agent for another Friend, Edward Byllynge. When Fenwicke kept for himself a large slice of the land for a commission, Byllynge protested. Avoiding the law courts to settle the dispute, the two men agreed

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

to call in William Penn as referee. Byllynge soon found himself bankrupt. He turned over the New Jersey property to William Penn as trustee to meet the demands of creditors. So Penn took over, with the assistance of a loosely organized group, merchants, farmers and gentlemen. The study of maps, most of them inadequate, and the counsels of wise men, none of whom, however, had even been to Jersey, resulted in an accepted decision that Berkley's land, now owned by Penn, was all the area south of a line drawn from Little Egg Harbor, about half way down the Jersey sea coast, to the northernmost bend of the Delaware River. The rest still belonged to Carteret.

In this region, soon to be called "West Jersey," William Penn organized and developed his first American venture. Four years later Penn purchased, at Carteret's death, the rest of New Jersey, thus uniting the province. Penn organized a company of 150 shareholders, 12 partners and 12 members of a Board of Control, and consulted with Wm. Locke, Philip Sidney and others to develop the fullest possible freedom.

Penn's Concessions of 1676-7 read, in part: "That no Men nor number of Men, hath Power or Authority to rule over Men's Consciences in religious Matters, therefore be it Consented, agreed and ordained, that no Person or Persons whatsoever within the said Province at any Time or Times hereafter, shall be in any way, upon any pretense whatsoever, called in Question, or in the least punished or hurt, either in person, Estate or privilege for the sake of his Opinion, Judgement, Faith or Worship towards God in matters of Religion. But that all and every such Person, or Persons, may from Time to Time, and at all Times, freely and fully

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

have and enjoy his and their own Judgements, and the exercise of their Consciences in matters of Religious Worship throughout the said Province." Freedom to worship and freedom not to worship were guaranteed. No religious restrictions were placed on the right to vote, and the legislature, elected by the people, had full governing power. No one could be put in jail for debt.

The freedom offered went way beyond that granted by Berkeley and Carteret. No one realized more than Penn that his charter was a landmark in democratic government. In the public letter distributed throughout England and the Colonies along with the Concessions, Penn wrote, in the spirit of Abraham Lincoln almost two centuries later: ". . . In the fear of the Lord and in true sense of His Divine will we try here to lay foundations for after ages to understand their liberty as Christians and as men, that they may not be brought under bondage but by their own consent; for we put the power in the people."

Many of the ideas of Penn's Concessions were copied in the Bill of Rights, a century later. Certainly the principles upon which the colony of New Jersey was founded were not only far in advance of that century, but for most of the world far in advance of our own generation.

In 1672 George Fox himself, founder of the Friends, then an exceedingly vigorous group of people, had come into "the wilderness country, some call West Jersey, not yet settled by white men." Both the Friends in the south and the Calvinists in the north, were middle class people, who while they often had large plantations and comfortable homes built with brick brought from England, also practised a trade or a profession.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

In no area of America in that day was there as full a mixture of denominational backgrounds.

Protected from the distant Indian frontiers, near waterways and areas of easy communication, and with the guarantee of unusual religious freedom and democratic rights, New Jersey soon became noted for its tolerant and broad spirit. And the leading men of New Jersey reflected the spirit of the colony.

This was especially noticeable in the life and the thinking of one who was destined to become Princeton's first president, but whose unheralded place in history is his influence on the formation of the new American type of Church—Jonathan Dickinson.

Jonathan Dickinson came from an old Massachusetts family. He graduated from Yale in 1706 and came to the Presbyterian Church at Elizabethtown, N. J., a church of New Englanders, in 1708, about a year after he was ordained by the Connecticut Association. Elizabeth was settled by the brother of Philip Carteret, Jersey proprietor, and named after Philip's wife. Dickinson's field at Elizabeth contained Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and a few Anglicans, all of whom lived in Christian harmony. His parish included what is now Westfield, Connecticut Farms and Chatham. He first met with Philadelphia Presbytery as a corresponding member in 1715, and became a full member in 1717.

Minister of the Church at Elizabethtown for forty years, he had more to do with the public concerns of his denomination than any other man of his day. He early formed the habits of instructing young men who wanted to prepare for the ministry and the other learned professions, and his manse became an educa-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

tional centre. He was a profound scholar, second only to New England's Jonathan Edwards in his reputation as a theologian; but his scholarship had a decidedly practical turn. He balanced an uncommon sagacity, an unshrinking firmness and a calm judgement with a kindly spirit of Christian forebearance and patience and moderation. He was a statesman. The one dominant note which seemed to ring out of all his sayings and writings was "the greatest of the virtues is love." He was no mere academician; he knew and loved people.

As was the common practice of the day, the church supplied him a small farm or "glebe." To consume any spare time unused by his farming, his teaching and his preaching, he studied medicine, and became a very prominent physician, with a wide reputation in the medical profession. He bled patients like all 18th century American doctors; he was his own apothecary, with a wide knowledge of the use of herbs and medicines and medicinal solutions, especially for spring time use, "to purify the blood, stimulate the kidneys and remove the bile." In 1740 he wrote a most interesting treatise—"Observations of that terrible disease, vulgarly called throat distemper"—probably the first publication dealing with sinus trouble and the common cold, so common in New Jersey winters. With his benign, kindly Christian spirit, Dickinson was more than a mere forerunner of a modern pastoral psychiatrist!

In the period of strenuous theological discussion, out of which the destinies of the American church were being formed and in which, for a time, they lay in delicate balance, Dr. Dickinson used all his talents and abilities as a guide and a leader, as a minister and a

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

physician, to mold the character of the Church in the New World. His work was the quiet, formative, unsensational work seldom publicised in history or recorded in the press of the day. But without the broad, wise influence of his statesmanship the Church in America would have become a small, narrow imitation of the Church in North Ireland, with all its narrowness and its prejudice included in its first intercolonial organization. The Sage of Elizabethtown was determined that American Christianity, if possible, would avoid the devastating pitfalls which had all but wrecked the English Presbyterian Church, and the link with government which characterized the Scottish Church. With broad, kindly wisdom he was determined to steer the American Church away from the medievalism of narrow bigotry, the regimentation of academic creeds, and the autocracy of government influence.

Was the American Church to be exclusive or inclusive? Was it to be a Church whose main effort and zeal was to keep itself traditional and rigid, with regimentation of thought and conformity of worship, or would it be broad enough to allow every variety of Christian opinion and experience on the basic spirit of loyalty to Christ and love of neighbor? Was the American church to remain a loose gathering of local Churches, New England style, with no central governing body, or could there be a strong, democratic central government? Above all was the new American church to be officially connected to the government and supported by the government, either as an official branch of government or allied to the government, as was everywhere the custom? Or could there be de-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

veloped something utterly new, a church based on a revolutionary principle of the complete separation of church and state? Even the Westminster Confession of Faith stated the belief that ministers should be appointed by local agents of the government. Was that to be the custom in the New World? Here was the first opportunity to affect a more than local church government in what was rapidly becoming the dominant church of the colonies. What form would this new intercolonial Presbyterian church government have and on what basic principles should this new government be built? This was Dickinson's chief concern.

By 1716, the General Presbytery, Philadelphia, had become so large that it was divided into four Presbyteries—Philadelphia, New Castle, Long Island and Snow Hill, and the four Presbyteries were organized into a higher court, or government, to be known as the Synod of Philadelphia. The English Crown appointed the Anglican clergy in the American colonies and guaranteed their passage and a comfortable living. The Presbyterian, and the other nonconformist ministers in the colonies, had no such guarantee. They were elected by the local congregations. The Virginia legislature had been compelled to express an opinion about the political rectors in a bill defining the duties of the Anglican clergy there: "He is not to give himself to excessive drinking and riot, and spending his time idly by day and night." The nonconformist ministers were not fox hunting officials; they had to struggle for their own education and their own livelihood; but they were often inclined to carry Old World theological dogmas into the New World.

The formation of the Synod, making the Presby-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

terian Church the first intercolonial American independent church, precipitated very intensive problems not only of policy but of belief. There were definite patterns of Presbyterianism in the old countries which dominated the thinking of the American Presbyterian ministers. Prior to 1720 most of them had been trained in the Old Country.

In Scotland, by 1691, the Presbyterians and Congregationalists had adopted a very broad basis of agreement on general Calvinistic principles and on the essential doctrines of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Beyond these simple fundamental agreements, individual ministers and churches could go far to the right or to the left in their thinking and still remain in the circle of the church. The New England Puritans, in their first General Court, the final sessions of which were held in 1648, had likewise found themselves in agreement on the broad essential statements of the Westminster Confession. Dickinson was schooled in New England and most of the members of his New Jersey church were from New England origin.

The Scotch Irish Presbyterians, who had come over in great numbers after the turn of the 18th century, followed the pattern of their home folks across the sea, and insisted on a complete and rigid and total adoption of every word of the Confession of faith without omitting the dot of an i or the crossing of a t.

In the early part of the 18th century in Dublin, the Rev. Thomas Emlyn had given public expression to a belief opposing the strict orthodox view of the Trinity. ("The Rev. James Pierce, a Presbyterian minister in Exeter, England, had expressed similar doubts.) Emlyn was read out of his Presbytery, but no attempt

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

was made to compel other members of Presbytery to subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith. As a result of the controversy in 1705, the Synod of Ulster passed a rule compelling all persons licensed to the ministry "to subscribe to the Westminster Confession to be their faith and to promise to adhere in the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of this church." In England, however, as a result of the similar Pierce case, the attempt to force all members of Presbytery to subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith sharply divided and weakened the English Presbyterian Church.

The General Assembly of the church in Scotland did not at first compel the acceptance of the Westminster Confession of Faith by all ministers. The Assembly had approved the Confession "as agreeable to the Word of God and in nothing contrary to the revived doctrine of the Church"; but it had not required subscription. It was the Scottish Parliament which, for political purposes, required subscription to the Westminister Confession of Faith. After the Scotch Parliament had passed that law, the Scottish General Assembly of the Church adopted a slightly stricter formula, which required a subscription to the Confession of Faith in principle only, not in toto.

In North Ireland another controversy had arisen around the charges or heresy against Prof. Simpson of the University of Glasgow. A group of his former pupils had formed a "Belfast Society" sympathetic to a broad basis of Presbyterianism. Many of the members of this society were the ablest ministers in Ulster; they all believed in the general principles in the Confession of Faith, but they opposed compulsory accept-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

ance of every detail of the Confession as a test of orthodoxy. In 1720 the Synod of Ulster passed a compromise, known as the "Pacific Act," enabling persons subscribing to the Confession of Faith to substitute their own language for the language of the Confession. If the substitute language was judged by the Presbytery to be consistent with the general substance of the Confession of Faith, the candidate was to be accepted. Thus an absolute acceptance of the Westminster Confession of Faith in toto and without change was no longer required. But the so-called Pacific Act did not have pacific results among the Ulster Presbyterians; the experience of Ireland followed the experience of England—and the forcing of acceptance of even the principles of the Confession of Faith resulted in a bitter church controversy.

At the time of the formation of the American Synod the various origins of the American Presbyterians caused a natural clash of views. Those who had come from New England or England favored a broad basis of theological agreement; the Scotch Irish, most of whom had come over from the Irish church when it had a rigid adherence to the confession, wanted a strict and total acceptance of the Confession as it was written. The Scotch Irish, moreover, named the frontiers, and were busy clearing the forests and fighting the Indians; there was no time left for reading or the study of the theological problem of the church; beliefs tended to get rigid and set. And the Scotch Irish were never strong on compromise! The Scottish people had come from a country where the Presbyterian church was the established church, backed up by decrees of Parliament; and they did not always under-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

stand the peculiar problems of the newly formed American church. So most of the Scotch Irish and some of the Scotch insisted on a strict adherence to every word of the Confession of Faith.

The whole question of the adoption of some kind of a standard or creedal form was necessitated by the entrance of American youth into the ministry who were being trained in American schools because of their inability of bearing the expense of going abroad. The mildness of Synod's action in dealing with a case of ministerial discipline precipitated the need of a creedal standard. Party lines were formed. New Castle Presbytery led the fight for a full and rigid adherence to every line of the Confession of Faith. Jonathan Dickinson, and other New Jersey ministers led the fight against a rigid adherence to the Confession of Faith. Dickinson wanted candidates examined carefully by Presbytery, and discipline enforced by the local churches, especially against "scandlous ministers." He insisted that strict enforced subscription to the Confession of Faith would do to the American Church what it had done across the sea—split the church; and the American Church was too weak and too young to stand such a division. Dickinson continued to argue that the Bible, not a man made confession of faith, is the only standard of the Presbyterian Church.

Elected Moderator of the Synod in 1721 Dickinson preached, in 1722, an exceedingly powerful sermon on Divine and Human Authority. An act passed by the previous Synod had forced three members to withdraw; as a result of Dickinson's Moderatorial sermon, however, unity was restored and four new defining acts were adopted.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

A rare and yellowed copy of Dickinson's famous sermon before Synod has printed on its title page: "A Sermon Preached at the Opening of the Synod of Philadelphia, September 19, 1722 by the Rev. Jonathan Dickinson—Printed in Boston by T. Fleet for S. Garrish at his shop in Corn Hill 1723." The text is from 2 Timothy 3:17 "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." In the beginning of the sermon Dickinson emphasized the two facts of the text.—1. A minister is and should be a man of God in all he does. 2. The only rule and standard a minister has is the sacred Scripture, in every way sufficient. "The Man of God has no Power or Authority to make any New Laws or Constitutions in the Affairs of God's House; or to make any Additions unto, or Alterations of those Laws that Christ has left us in the Divine Oracles—to Institute any new Part of Worship, or to bring anything into God's immediate Service, not expressly instituted by Christ, is a Bold Invasion of His Royalty—The forming and imposing any New Acts of Constitutions in the Government or Discipline of the Church I take to be an Unwarranted Legislature . . . I don't design a Dispute upon the controverted Modes of Church Government, but will venture to say with due deference and respect to those otherwise minded that the Presbyterian government appears to me the most conformed to the laws of Christ, or any whatsoever . . . I go on to promise that there are some External Circumstances of Discipline, that are not set down precisely, or expressly provided for in the Word of God but are left to the Prudent Conduct of Church Governors . . . Any Authoritative obligatory Interpretation of the

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Laws of Christ is a Law Making Faculty we are not entitled to—nor is any man obliged to receive them any further than they appear to him to be just and true . . . Ministers have no Commission to teach us anything but what Christ has commanded them. And when they teach any other Doctrine they come in their own name and not in Christ's . . . Though some plan and comprehensive Creed or Confession of Faith . . . may be useful and necessary, since the worst of Heresies may take shelter under the express Words of Scripture. Yet we are by no means to force these credenda upon any of differing Sentiments . . . We may not so much as shut out of Communion any such Dissenters, as we can charitably hope that Christ won't shut out of Heaven: But should open the Doors of the Church as wide as Christ opens the Gates of Heaven, and receive one another, as Christ also receives us, to the Glory of God . . . And tho we ought to object both the Heresy and the Communion of those who deny what we esteem the Fundamental Truths of our Holy Religion, yet even these essential Articles of Christianity may not be imposed by Civil Coercion, Temporal Penalties or in any other Way Whatsoever." This widely circulated sermon of one of Jersey's leading Presbyterians had a cumulative effect.

The Adoption Act, the Magna Charta of American Presbyterianism, passed by the Synod seven years later, 1729, was a compromise, adopted unanimously. The Act disclaims any authority to dictate to man's conscience. Yet, in order to keep the faith uncorrupt and pure it was agreed that all members of the Synod, as well as all thereafter admitted to the Church, shall declare their agreement and approbation of the Con-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

fession of Faith and of the larger and shorter catechism "as being in all essential and necessary articles, good form of sound words and system of Christian doctrine." "But if any minister or candidate shall have any scruple . . . with respect to any article or articles of said Confession of Faith or Catechism, he shall at the time of his making said declaration, declare his sentiments in the Presbytery of Synod," and "if the Synod or Presbytery shall decide his scruples . . . to be about articles not essential in doctrine, worship and government," he shall be admitted. Subscription was thus limited to the essential and necessary articles; but what the essential and necessary articles are was never stated.

The Act concludes—and here is the direct Dickinson touch—"And the Synod solemnly agree that none of us shall traduce or use any approbrious terms of those who differ with us in these extra-essentials and not necessary points of doctrine, but treat them with the same friendship, kindness and brotherly love as if they had not differed from us in such sentiments."

The Adopting Act totally rejected the passages of the Westminster Confession which gave civil magistrates power over the church. It completely separated Church and State. This was the first official church utterance on the American continent declaring for the new doctrine of complete separation of Church and state.

Thus Dickinson's leadership developed the American Church on new American lines, for there was no precedent in Europe for the separation of church and state. The Adopting Act insisted on the traditional high standards of admission for ministers, for Pres-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

byterianism is the product of historical research. The grounds upon which the Presbyterian belief in the parity of ministerial orders rests were not revealed by custom or tradition or emotional fervor, but by Bible research and a knowledge of the original languages in which the Scriptures were written. Even in a new and undeveloped world the standards had to be maintained. But at the same time the Adoption Act steered away from regimentation to freedom of thought.

The more vigorous ministers newly arrived from the old country were violently opposed to Dickinson's broad basis of thought. Stirred by the Rev. John Tomson, a Scotch man, whom one early historian described as "a narrow and opinionated man," a little group was organized in Pennsylvania and Delaware to make strict subscription to every word of the Confession the only basis of belief. In 1730 this group gained control of the Presbytery of New Castle, and that Presbytery adopted the Westminster Confession "as being in all things agreeable to the Word of God" (including also the oversight of the church by civil magistrates). In 1732 the Presbytery of Donegal, not to be surpassed, adopted the Westminster Confession without any change, and promised "forever thereafter to adhere thereto" (including supervision of the Church by the Civil magistrates.)

The able Dickinson fought all efforts to make the American church Irish or Scotch or English or Welsh; he insisted that the American Church be wide enough to include all strains, and he kept insisting that the Adoption Act was right when it denied to civil magistrates "the power to persecute any for their religion",

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

a right which the original Confession had granted. He insisted on complete separation of church and state, and freedom of conscience within the limits of basic principles—the state has no jurisdiction over religious convictions and can use no influence for such convictions, and ministers are bound together by only the necessary and essential articles of the confession.

Throughout the history of the Church, opinionated men, without the sagacity and the benign spirit of Dickinson, have stubbornly and vigorously tried to revive the Tomson program and force strict adherence to this or that minor matter in the church. And today mighty political movements tend to limit the freedom of man's religious thought and regiment his life. Subtle forces are at work to return the Church again to some kind of union with the state. Opposing both the effort towards narrow theological adherence and political union we need to go back to the basic truths insisted on by Jonathan Dickinson. His protest against narrow adherence has the sense of all history behind it. ". . . it might shut the door of the church communion against many serious and excellent servants of Christ who conscientiously scruple it; yet it is never likely to detect hypocrites or keep concealed heretics out of the Church." "Christ alone is the law maker of the Church and the Church has only administrative functions. It may decide upon rules in application of the general laws found in the New Testament . . . but they do not have the authority of laws. A wide liberty should be left to the individual whose conscience does not permit him to follow them. . . . A comprehensive creed may be useful but subscription to it should not be required."

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Dickinson used the printing press to spread his teachings. Even today, as one reads the yellowed pages of his few remaining works, he is impressed with the conviction of the argument, always based on Scripture, the intellect of high order, and the broad, rare spirit of kindliness. He was primarily a Christian apologist of the first merit. He was not a controversalist; but when controversy was thrown his way he did not avoid it. The fact that his sermons were printed in Philadelphia, New York and Boston, the three largest colonial cities, by the printers of his day, show his wide influence. Even the Revolutionary War did not dim his fame; for his printed sermons and pamphlets were republished in Edinburgh as late as 1793.

One of his most popular works was entitled: "The True Scripture Doctrine Concerning Some Important Points of Christian Faith. . . . Election, Original Sin, Conversion, Justification, Perseverance . . . by Jonathan Dickinson, A.M., minister of the Gospel at Elizabethtown, New Jersey . . . Boston, Printed by D. Fowle for S. Kneeland and T. Green in Queen St 1741." This book contains 253 closely printed pages, and logically and convincingly presents five major doctrines, with constant reference to Scriptures, and a direct appeal to the mind of that day.

Even more popular was a second widely circulated book, entitled "The Reasonableness of Christianity-Four Sermons by Jonathan Dickinson, A.M., minister of the Gospel in Elizabethtown in N. Jersey. Boston, N.E., Printed by S. Kneeland and T. Green for Samuel Garrish at the lower end of Cornhill." In an introduction, the New Englander, Mr. Foxcroft, writes: "The reverend and learned Author of the ensuing discourses

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

needs not any Epistles of Commendation to such as are acquainted with his person and character; Whose Praise in the Gospel thorowout all the Churches in the remote parts where Divine Providence has cast his lot." Sermon I is "a Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, reasoning from the argument of first cause." Sermon 2 is "a Demonstration of the Apostate State of Man by Nature and his recovery by Jesus Christ." Sermon 3 is "a Demonstration of the Christian Religion from the Prophecies of the Old Testament." Sermon 4 is "a Demonstration of the Christian Religion from the Miracles Wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ, both before and after his crucifixion, including his influence upon life." The messages are all practical and basic in their appeal. Dickinson concludes with: "We are liable to a thousand mistakes but we have a safe and a sure Pilot, upon whom we may boldly depend . . . we may with courage conclude with the Apostle in 2 Timothy I:12"—"I know whom I have trusted and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day." This practical and appealing book of sermons contains 175 printed pages.

In a day when so many preachers were wrangling over non essentials and getting lost in the impractical things on the outer circumference of religion, it was always Dickinson's genius to stress the basic essentials, the fundamental things of the faith, and to rally and unite men on the great essentials. That is why he was read and followed not only through the Middle Colonies, but in New England. His influence was intercolonial. Even today's American pulpits can learn much from him.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

It was Dickinson's sermons to young people which in 1740 started the Great Awakening in the Elizabethtown area of New Jersey. And when Dickinson added his calm wisdom to the New Brunswick Presbytery movement its success was guaranteed. Whitefield paid several visits to Dickinson's parishes. It was Dickinson, with his near neighbor at Newark, Aaron Burr and Pemberton, who saw the plight of the Indians, gave the missionary concept to the Synod and wrote for aid to the Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge. The Society appointed Dickinson and his two friends their American agents and Azariah Horton and then David Brainerd were appointed by them as missionaries to the Indians. Dickinson, Yale graduate, had become a close friend and adviser of Brainerd when Brainerd was expelled from Yale. Brainerd praises Dickinson as a wise and "safe man" in his Journal, and he made many visits to Dickinson's home for inspiration and cheer.

When vigorous criticisms began to be made against the Great Awakening because of its emotionalism, and the older, more rigid old country conservatives who carried their conservatism into the colonies branded the revival "an act of the devil" Dickinson came to the support of it. In a carefully prepared pamphlet, written anonymously, and widely circulated, he made a careful examination of the whole movement and ended with a complete endorsement of its genuineness. The work became even more valuable when its author became known. Its calm, dispassionate analysis was typical of Dickinson. His open alliance with the "revivalists" of the New Brunswick Presbytery added dignity and worth to the whole movement.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Dickinson constantly fought for that freedom of thought and worship which he conceived the intelligent, practical and Scriptural basis for American Protestantism.

He was the acknowledged leader of the original Synod before the Presbytery of New Brunswick was forced out. Then he became an active member of the expelled Presbytery; and when the exiled Presbytery expanded to form a new independent Synod, the Synod of New York, it was Dickinson again who was the acknowledged guide. Without this wise man from New Jersey the whole story of the Colonial Church would have been a less glorious one, and the whole pattern of the American Protestant church would not have become what it is—something new and vital, and not a mere blueprint of Europe's officialdom.

Dr. Bellamy spoke of him as "the great Mr. Dickinson." Dr. John Erskine of Edinburgh said that the British Isles had produced no such writers on divinity in the 18th century as the Americans, Jonathan Edwards and Jonathan Dickinson.

Meanwhile through the years of the middle third of the 18th century controversies arose between the colonists and the English government. It was this period through which the real American revolution, or change of mind, was taking place, out of which the War of the Revolution developed.

One of the most potent of these controversies was the conflict over the appointment of an American Anglican bishop. If Parliament could tax the colonists without their having representation, Parliament could also send over a Bishop, create an established church, force all people by law to contribute to its support, and

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

utterly destroy the very freedom of religion which the Presbyterians, Baptists, and other Calvinists had striven for. The partition between the Church of Rome and the Church of England seemed a dangerously thin one to the American Calvinists, anyway. Both were backed and promoted by political and military power. The American patriots were resolved to keep a separation between church and state in the New World. The cry of "No Bishop" in the colonies became as widespread as the cry of "no taxation without representation." It was a major phase of the struggle between the American colonists and the powerful British crown. The "Scots Magazine" in Edinburgh in 1768 said that Americans were insisting that "the sight of lawn sleeves (of the Anglican Bishops) in their country would be more terrible than the sight of 10,000 Mohawks."

The Anglicans struck back by calling the Presbyterians "republicans and rebels." To the average Englishman the revolutionary ideas of the colonists had grown out of a "Presbyterian-Congregational plot" The Anglicans insisted that the Americans were trying to establish "a democratic despotism," whatever that might be. The strong intercolonial unifying impulse of the vigorous anti-Bishop controversy has been given too little attention by most historians of the American revolutionary period.*

Coming as it did about the time of the Townsend Act and the Stamp Act, the fear of an American Lambeth stirred the minds of the northern and middle colonists to a fever heat. They were reminded how they

*See Miller: "*The Origins of the American Revolution,*" pp. 186-197 ff.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

had fled from Old World ecclesiastical tyranny; and they wanted no more of it. The Anglican John Hughes, of Pennsylvania, wrote that "the bigoted Calvinists are ripe for rebellion" and that their "avowed purpose" was to form "a republican empire in America," being lords and masters themselves.* "They are as averse to the king as they were in the days of Cromwell."

New Jersey Anglicans organized themselves to keep America content and loyal to the king, "the front line of defense of the empire." Jonathan Mayhew, a vigorous Boston preacher, assailed the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel for its "formal design to root out Presbyterianism in the colonies."** Since Anglican ministers all received their salaries and appointments from the Crown they were ardently for the king. In New Jersey they formally protested against the appointment of too many Presbyterians to public office. The Rev. Mr. Chandler, ardent pamphleteer for royalty and for the appointment of a New Jersey Bishop, rector in Dickinson's home town, listed himself on the title page as "The Ruler of St. John's Parish." That very word "Ruler" put Presbyterians in a fighting mood! They wanted no ministers to rule them.

The whole dispute was drawn by the American Calvinists into the realm of government. The Anglican Church stood for the divine right of kings. A Bishop meant the spread of that idea and the development of the very kind of autocratic government from

*John Hughes to the Stamp Act Commissioners, Jan. 13, 1766, Library of Congress.

**Cross: *The Anglican Episcopate and the American Colonies*, p. 147 to 216 ff.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

which the settlers had fled in the old countries. The American Calvinists made it clear that if the Anglican Bishops were stripped of all their power "to rule over others," divorced from the government, if they came as simple, humble primitive bishops exerting only spiritual power, and that only over Episcopal Churches, there was no objection to them. But to the British a Bishop meant an opulent and regalia loving prelate, backed by government prestige and power, who would rule over people who objected to that autocratic power. They would have none of it.

Jonathan Dickinson was one of the early leaders in this No-Bishop controversy. He helped precipitate the controversy through pulpit and press, and he organized opposition to the proposed move by the British government. It is noticeable that, seer and statesman as he was, he saw the impending danger long before others saw it. The No-Bishop controversy reached its torrid climax in the late 1760's. But as early as the late 1730's Dickinson was aware of the danger.

A sermon preached by Dickinson at the Presbyterian Church in Newark, N. J., assails the attempt to create an established church. On the title page of the printed sermon is: "The Vanity of Human Institutions in the Worship of God—a Sermon preached at Newark June 2nd, 1736, to which are added some little Enlargements—by Jonathan Dickinson, M.A., Minister of the Gospel in Elizabethtown — New York — Printed by John Peter Zenget, 1736."

In the sermon Dickinson argues convincingly that "anything not specifically stated in Scripture are merely the commandments of men and are not binding on us . . . This is one of our greatest arguments or com-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

plaints against the Church of England that they refuse us their Communion . . . their . . . advocates declare us incapable of Salvation for want of a Prelacy whereof we cannot find the least account in the Word of God." In the introduction he uses for the first time a famous clause——it is the first record we have of its use in American history—"The unalienable rights of mankind, . . . the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." He concludes the sermon with a vigorous admonition: "Whatever is wrong, we are sure that this is right; to have brotherly Love continue. Let it be remembered that there can be no Christianity without Charity, Kindness and Love." Those two last sentences voice the theme of Dickinson's life, counselling always for freedom built on a broad and tolerant Christian faith and life.

He argued and wrote constantly against the danger of religion allied to government, against a state religion. He defended the right of American Presbyterian ordination of ministers against a bitter attack of an Anglican critic who scorned and ridiculed it, because no prelate from the old country was present to lay his hands upon the candidate. Reverting to medical terms, because he still practiced practical medicine, Dickinson aptly wrote: "High Churchism is properly no more a part of the Church of England than a wen is a part of the human body."

In later years it was in Dickinson's Church in Elizabethtown that the first official joint convention of the middle colony Presbyterians and the New England Congregationalists was held to discuss and combat the coming of an American Bishop. Dickinson probably called the conference. The uniting of the forces of the

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Presbyterians and the Congregationalists, both Calvinists, created a mighty agency for freedom and against autocracy which precipitated the Revolutionary War.

Dickinson developed an admirable school in the manse of his church at Elizabethtown, N. J., for he was an able teacher. He decided to consult with Aaron Burr, who began to run a similar school in the manse in Newark. Together they visited Ebenezer Pemberton, the man to whom the Scottish Society for the Propagation of Christian knowledge had been sending money to educate Indians, with the hope of financial aid from abroad. Of their own volition, not officially representing the Synod, these three men, together with John Pierson, appealed to the New Jersey royal governor for a charter for a new college which would meet in Dickinson's manse. Dickinson acted as chairman of the committee and the plan was to expand his manse school into a college of New Jersey. Governor Lewis Morris, however, was a strict Anglican, and he wanted no dissenter college in his colony. Moreover he honestly doubted his legal right to grant a charter. For the colonial governors had been instructed that all educational matters were under control of the Bishop of London and no school masters could be appointed or colleges granted a charter without "His Grace's permission."

So Dickinson and his three friends bided their time patiently. The governor died; and it must be truthfully said that they were not the chief mourners. They renewed their application with the coming of the very sympathetic new governor, John Hamilton, who was acting president of the colony's provisional council.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Four of the leading members of the Council were Presbyterians; so the request for the charter was granted. The four applicants expanded their number to a Board of Trustees of twelve, and secured the rights and privileges of all denominations to be represented on the Board, including Quakers and Anglicans, a tradition which the founders of all early American Presbyterian colleges continued. The charter was granted October 22, 1746. Thus Jonathan Dickinson, in a sense, became the father of the college of New Jersey, afterward known as Princeton. The plan was to open the college in the manse at Elizabethtown until a more suitable place could be found. Jonathan Dickinson was the first president; the sessions began in his manse in April, 1747.

The first college advertisement appeared in the Pennsylvania Gazette August 13, 1747: " . . . all who are qualified for it may be immediately admitted to an academick education, and to such class and station in the college, as they are found upon examination to deserve; and that the charge of the college to each student will be Four Pounds a year New Jersey money, at eight shillings per ounce and no more."

The founders of the College of New Jersey were not only in open revolt against the theological looseness of the New England colleges, and eager therefore for a college of their own, which they could control, but they cherished the idea of a liberal college to educate the youth of all colonies and of all denominations, a college equal to any in Great Britain, training men for service, in the Calvinistic concepts, not only in the Church but in the state as well. That idea Governor Hamilton, a liberal Episcopalian, could indorse.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Valiant old William Tennent, meanwhile, had died in May 1746, and the Log College was no more. And that had stimulated Jonathan Dickinson's action. The five other Princeton ministerial trustees elected by the four incorporators, were all ardent Log College men, so the College of New Jersey continued the Log College spirit and tradition.

The college represented the finest fruitage of that combination of New England and Scottish Presbyterianism which had blended in a peculiar way in liberal Jonathan Dickinson. It was different from any college yet started in the colonies, neither denominational nor local. Its founders sought to create a general Christian institution for all people who would find benefit there. The original charter, now lost, debarred none on account of "any speculative principles of religion."

(Since the legality of Dickinson's charter might be questioned, a royal charter was secured under Governor Belchor, an active Presbyterian, in 1748.)

The college opened in April, 1747 and Dickinson died in August of the same year.

His acknowledged intellectual superiority and his commanding influence made him a natural leader of a college. He left upon the college not merely the impression of his keen mind and deep scholarship, but of his tolerant broad Christian spirit. Easy to approach, he was never too tolerant of undue personal liberties. Keen of mind, he attracted serious minded, earnest men. He imparted upon all youth whom he instructed his bland, courteous warmth and the strength of his devotional spirit.

He died at the height of his powers in his sixtieth year.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

While others have often been given the glory and the fame, no man did more to mold the character of the American church and to create the American principle of the separation of church and state than did Dr. Jonathan Dickinson.

Wise and sagacious statesmen whose quiet molding influence is lasting and permanent seldom receive glowing eulogies in the pages of popular history. Their influence is that of the quiet tide and not that of the noisy surf. Such a man was Jonathan Dickinson.

In the wilderness which was early 18th century America colleges were very few and there was a temptation to lower the educational standards of the ministry. The colonists had come from diverse backgrounds in the old countries and the standards and views of one national group often seem utterly wrong to another group. The ties of the old country were difficult to break, for there was a nostalgic pull on the heart strings by the settlers towards much of that which they had been forced to leave. Aside from the churches of New England, a sort of a world in itself established for a century, most American communities still felt that they should be ruled by or, at least, dominated by the Old Country, both politically and religiously.

It took the work of an able far seeing and wise statesman to mold out of these forces at variance a new type of a truly American church.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

DAVID BRAINERD

" 'There is no rest,' he cried, 'but in God.' "

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

CHAPTER IV

DAVID BRAINERD

It is difficult for the modern generation to understand David Brainerd. To him the material and the physical world had little value; he was of the race of the early martyrs. To him all things were naught that he might attain spiritual fellowship with God. He did not purposely torture his body to develop his soul; yet he forced himself to endure hardship and difficulty which would have baffled and defeated the strongest of men. He was exceedingly sensitive and physically far from strong; yet he lived among wild savages whose warwhoops men feared; and he won the admiration even of the Indians for his courage and his ability to live alone in the winter woods, and to sustain himself on long, wearying rides through the wilderness. He had no interest whatsoever in the things which the modern world deems valuable. To him only the things of the spirit had value. And yet he tackled and solved the problem which distresses the modern world—the problem of race and class prejudice— the problem of the relationship of the white race towards those whose skin is of another color. He demonstrated the oneness of all humanity—the sense of responsibility of those who have towards those who have not—the meaning of service—the brotherhood of all men through Christ under God!

As was often the custom in early colonial days, he

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

kept a diary of his daily experiences. The diary limits itself to his spiritual struggles and experiences; it never mentions such mundane things as the Indians' habits and manner of living. As a record of the struggle of a brave soul for communion with God and the doing of the will of God—the travail of the human soul—it ranks with Augustine's Confessions or the Meditations of Thomas a Kempis—but Brainerd's is a record of intense missionary zeal and burning service, not merely of meditations. The diary fell into the hands of Jonathan Edwards, of New England, the greatest theologian and writer of his day, and the 3rd president of Princeton (who died of an inoculation for small pox a month after he began his presidency). Edwards wrote "An Account of the life of the Reverend David Brainerd, Minister of the Gospel and Missionary to the Indians" which contained the diary. Since Edwards ranked in Europe as America's one great, and one of the world's great, theological thinkers, everything he wrote had wide circulation.

Brainerd's short but devout life was made known all over the English speaking world. But Edwards destroyed the diary when his own account was published. Edwards, who scrupulously regulated his life and spent thirteen hours daily in his own study, starting in the mid-winter by candle light at five A.M., was Brainerd's ideal in the ministry, his counsellor and friend, and his prospective father-in-law. Indeed, had Brainerd not chosen the wandering, dangerous hermit life as his calling, Jonathan Edwards would have been his father-in-law. Edwards, however, enjoyed some of the pleasures of this world. He bought trinkets for his family. He used to sit in comfort on one side of his

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

fireplace in the late evening smoking his pipe, while his brilliant and devoted wife sat on the other side, smoking a smaller pipe, after the many children were in bed. The fire Brainerd knew was mostly in the dense woods by the shelter of a damp boulder; the night sounds which most often came to him were the cries of the wolves; and often his only companion was his frightened horse.

Samuel Austin, who wrote the introduction to the 1793 edition of Edwards' book, reminds us that "Mr. Brainerd was from his constitutional habit inclined to melancholy (as seen from his journal). His bodily health was generally low. But his dejection formed no part of his religion. It was merely animal. His religion was, in fact, the only relief from his depressions." He adds: "The Christian life of Mr. Brainerd, though short, was lovely. It is removed from ostentatious seeming zeal on the one hand and from stupid inaction on the other."

David Brainerd was born in 1718 of intelligent parents on a farm in Connecticut. His father was a farmer of parts, a sort of a country squire, and a member of "His Majesty's Council for the Colony." His mother was a brilliant woman, a granddaughter and daughter of ministers, who had three brothers in the ministry. David was the third of nine children. (Of his four brothers three also entered the ministry.) David's father died when he was nine; and his mother died of tuberculosis when he was fourteen. It was a devout and consecrated Christian family.

We have no record of David's earliest years. He was never interested enough in the material world to make any notes about them in his diary. We do know that

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

he was inclined to be exceedingly melancholy, but grew up with a deep religious disposition. Jonathan Edwards later called him "by constitution and temper prone to melancholy and dejection of spirit."

The earlier death of his father and then the death of his mother produced a crisis in David Brainerd's life. The family was scattered. David moved to another farm across the Connecticut River in West Haddam, and during the impressionable and volatile years from fourteen to eighteen became a hard working farmer. Exceedingly serious and devoid of humour and gayety he shunned all "frolicking company", as he described it. When he did occasionally go to a party or a social event his "good frames", as he quaintly described his spiritual moods in his memoirs, were spoiled.

At the age of nineteen he went back to work on his old family farm. There while he ploughed and planted and harvested he read and studied. Daily he went deep into the near-by woods alone to meditate and pray and struggle with his soul's needs. He kept careful watch over his every thought and action. Still convinced that he was "unconverted", he decided to prepare for the ministry with the hopes that "conversion" would come. As a result of his decision to enter the ministry he moved to Haddam to live with and study under the Reverend Thaddeous Fiske, a stirring advocate of higher education, and a skillful, thorough teacher. With one teacher and one pupil, both serious in their efforts, with school sessions from dawn to bed time, and no vacations, a rigorous course of study makes rapid progress. David avoided "all worldly pleasures" his memoirs record, maintained a strict

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

round of duties religiously, and read the Bible through twice in his spare time that year. When Mr. Fiske died he again returned to the family farm, where his brother and sister lived. There he felt himself "without God and without hope in the world." He spent many long, lonely hours at his "solitary place" in the woods near-by and, as he records, he "lived in agony trying to heal his distresses with his duties." About the time of his twenty-first birthday, after a week of desperate emotional struggle in his "solitary place", he felt the surge of "the effective call."

Under a note of April 22, 1739 in his memoirs he wrote:

". . . I was attempting to pray; but found no heart to engage in it. My former religious affections were now gone . . . nothing in heaven or earth could make me happy . . .

"Having thus been endeavouring to pray — very stupid and senseless, I was walking in a dark, thick grove . . . unspeakable glory seemed to open to my soul. I do not mean any external brightness, for I saw no such thing! It was a new view I had of God, such as I had never seen before, nor anything like it.

"I stood still, wondered! . . . My soul rejoiced with joy unspeakable to see such a God. I was infinitely pleased and satisfied that He should be God over all forever and ever!"

A deep sense of peace and purpose now controlled him as he entered with new zeal into the spring time chores of the farm. The pattern of normal life itself was strenuous enough. Up at the earlier streak of dawn, ploughing by hand for an hour, then breakfast

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

of bread and milk, or bread and cider, and a corn meal pudding. Then digging and chopping trees and planting in the frosty morning. Dinner was at noon, with a roast and a pudding. Afternoons meant more hard toil, and then supper of cold meat, and cheese and bread and cold pudding, and cider or ale. Then the evening chores, and the solitary place in the damp woods alone! But "the solitary place" now brought peace and not the relentless, emotion tearing struggle, —yet physically it was still damp and cold, no proper place for a young man with incipient tuberculosis.

He entered Yale College in September, 1739. He had doubts of his ability to lead a life of "strict religion" at Yale. He was not afraid of the temptations of a gay student life; he was afraid that the long hours of study would cause him to lose the "sweet relish of faith." But he kept the inward spark aglow by creating a new "Solitary Place," in the woods just north of the campus; and he found spiritual companionship and inspiration from frequent visits to the pastor of a nearby church, the Reverend Jedidiah Mills, just a few years his senior. In January an epidemic of measles forced him back to the farm on sick leave. In the solitude of his old "Solitary Place" in the woods, he found new joy in his experience of God; and he developed a fear that the gay and carefree life of the students at college might turn him away from God. So he resolved to go back to the campus and throw himself into hard study. But that was a serious mistake; for in August he began to spit blood. The disease which ran in his family, and was incipient in his body, began to develop, to shorten his life and to cause almost con-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

tinuous physical anguish. By January, 1741, tuberculosis had a grip on him.

Yale had gone through varied religious stages. Starting out to be more conservative in its Calvinism than Harvard, it had soon settled down to the standing order. Theologically sound and intellectually conforming, Yale, like Harvard, had come to look upon enthusiasm in religion as an insult to respectability. It was this cold, intellectual type of religion, unwarmed by the fires of enthusiasm, which disturbed David Brainerd. The Great Awakening came. Beginning with Jonathan Edwards in Northampton, Massachusetts, stirred and fired with the preaching of the robust and virile Gilbert Tennent of New Jersey and brought to a climax by the Englishman, George Whitefield, a strange new movement began to sweep the colonies. One David Ferris, of New Milford, stirred by the revival, began to affect some of the students of Yale. With his behaviour and his books he shocked the old guard with "enthusiasm." But the students responded. In February, 1741, many of them were changed overnight. Rowdies became sincere, earnest enthusiastic Christian gentlemen.

Brainerd was lifted out of despondency to his former "sweet relish." He became one of the most enthusiastic of the "new born." In September, the noted alumnus, the famed Reverend Jonathan Edwards, came to preach the baccalaureate sermon; and the Great Awakening was in full swing, for Edwards had invited Whitefield to preach in his church five times, and was his admirer. To Junior classman David Brainerd, Jonathan Edwards became his model. He

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

had heard so much of this noted man and read so many of his writings!

It was possible to excuse many things in student life but not a thorough enthusiasm over religion. (What a disturbance it would make in modern Yale or any other college if students showed the same wild enthusiasm over religion that they show over a winning football team!) The young president of Yale, the Reverend Thomas Clap, "nauseated revivals and detested Whitefield." Being a little man, he lost his temper and tried to exhibit his authority to quench the enthusiasm. He issued stern orders forbidding attendance at enthusiastic meetings. He was determined to punish the ring-leaders. One day Tutor Whittelsey lead devotions in the Chapel. The whole exercise was unusually lifeless and sleepy. Later that day, while a guest at a town home, David Brainerd said of Tutor Whittelsey "He has as much grace as a chair." It was reported to the bumptious little president. Looking for a scapegoat, he demanded that Brainerd apologize before the faculty and student body. Brainerd refused. So he was summarily expelled from college!

The severity and the injustice of the punishment played havoc with sensitive young David Brainerd. But it also stirred Jonathan Edwards, Jonathan Dickinson of New Jersey and other New Light leaders, who immediately came to the aid of Brainerd.

His career apparently ruined, with only a year left before graduation, Brainerd poured into his diary his self loathing. His classmates had already elected him valedictorian of the Class of 1743. And now he was disgraced! But under the guidance of wise friends he privately continued his studies.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Numerous protests were made to the unrelenting Yale authorities. Haunted by the furtive visits of the pale young man to the campus hoping for restitution, Yale's president threatened Brainerd's arrest for trespassing. The Reverend Jedidiah Mills came to the rescue, and brought him into his manse to live with him and study. And as he mastered the Hebrew lexicon, Brainerd's confidence was restored. Riding around to visit other friendly ministers who helped tutor him revived the missionary zeal which the Yale authorities had almost killed. On April 20, 1742 he wrote in his diary: "I want to wear out my life in His service and for His glory." The bitter experience had put iron into his soul to carry out that resolve!

Jonathan Edwards spoke at the graduation of Brainerd's class, in September 1743. In the audience Brainerd sat "in disgrace" but forgiving. Edwards privately commented on Brainerd's noble magnanimity. So Brainerd had the opportunity to become even a closer friend of Edwards. More than that he met Jerusha, who was then twelve, the second of Edward's eleven children. Jerusha had all the beauty and charm and the intelligence of her gracious mother —and Edwards was glad that she and David were so much interested in each other. David became a frequent visitor to Northampton, and was more than delighted that Jerusha, also, wanted to be a missionary to the Indians.

Meanwhile Brainerd had been meeting with a group of Presbyterian ministers who prepared and examined him for licensure to preach. Still wondering whether a man expelled from college should be licensed, Brainerd was amazed to discover that his brethren were de-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

lighted with him. He was licensed to preach by the Congregational Association meeting at Danbury, July 28, 1942. And now his dream of becoming a missionary to the Indians was near to fulfillment. He met in New York City with the American agents of the Scottish Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. The learnėd ministers were captivated with young David. He was commissioned an Indian missionary by the Society meeting at Woodbridge, New Jersey, November 25, 1742.

Northeastern Pennsylvania, rich in fur trade, and open for settlers, was apparently the pioneer area for a missionary to the Indians. Brainerd prepared himself to go to the Indians of the Susquehanna and the Delaware valleys. But Gilbert Tennent protested that the severity of the winter would cause a white man journeying into that wild country to perish — moreover squabbles between the white settlers and the Indians, at that period, over land rights had put the Indians in an inhospitable mood. Brainerd was all prepared to swim his horse over the icy Hudson, ride through the snowy hills to Port Jervis, back to the Delaware Water Gap and westward and southward, but the plans were changed. He was sent temporarily to Stockbridge and Albany in New York state, at Kaunameek. Despite the faithful service of a Christian Indian interpreter named Wau Waumprequannaunt, given him by the pioneer Indian missionary, John Sargent, the work there through the winter brought practically no results. There were few Indians in the area; the rest had wandered away.

And yet it was a sort of a Providentially prepared "boot-camp." Brainerd learned the life and ways of

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

the Indians, mastered some of the rudiments of their tribal lore and habits, learned from them how to care for and feed himself alone in the woods on roots, bark and berries, how to protect himself from sudden storms, how to track his horse when it wandered, how to live on starvation rations, without any of the privileges of civilization. He put in weeks of hard riding through the bitter cold and the darkness.

He went south again, was called to and declined a comfortable church in East Hampton, Long Island.

In May, 1744 Brainerd did swim his horse across the Hudson just north of Bear Mountain, left civilization behind him, entered the dense wilderness, and made his way to the Forks of the Delaware, now Easton, Pennsylvania. Wild flowing torrents, turbulent mountain streams, trackless woods and steep mountains became his daily highway! And everywhere was dampness, chill and solemn solitude, broken only by the cry of the mountain lion, and the fox and the wolf and wild birds!

No sooner had Brainerd arrived at the Falls of the Delaware and begun his work than a messenger was sent to bring him back to Newark, N. J., to a meeting of Presbytery, to be ordained. So he had to make the round trip wilderness journey again to satisfy the Church authorities!

He made his home at the Forks of the Delaware, but he travelled far and wide among the Indian tribes, as far north as Sunbury and Great Island, now Lockhaven, on the north branch of the Susquehanna, and Shamokin, as far west as Lakhauwootong, now Lehigh, and Kantsesanchung, now Catawaqua. He made several trips to the Susquehanna valley area, all of them

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

physically difficult and seemingly fruitless—in the fall of 1744, with two white men and two converted Indian chiefs, in the late spring of 1745, in the fall of 1745 and in the summer of 1746, accompanied by six New Jersey Indian converts. Drink, the vicious lives of the white frontiersmen, and dominant influence of the warlike Indians of the Six Nations who claimed the land, made the Susquehanna area a land of frustration. (The Delawares, who had been conquered by the Iroquois, were composed of three tribes, the fiercest of which, the Monseys, or Wolf Clan, centered around Shamokin, the Turtle Clan around what is now Germantown, and the Turkey Clan around Crosswicks, N. J., and the seashore.)

From the viewpoint of results his ministry at the Falls of the Delaware, too, proved almost fruitless. Few were converted. Not only did the Indian medicine men do all in their power to disturb him, but the wild whites of the frontier wanted to get rid of him. The damp, cold Delaware River valley, the almost impenetrable, roadless forests, the never too friendly tribes, the privation of savage life, the lack of proper food and shelter and care, all added enormous burdens to a man with tuberculosis; but his one eternal passion was not for himself but for the Kingdom of God. In two years Brainerd rode 4000 miles in the Delaware and Susquehanna woods! He visited the church people in Kingston, New Brunswick, Newark, Princetown, Trenton, Cranbury and elsewhere in New Jersey; he went to Philadelphia and even back again to his New England towns, and to Boston, stirring up missionary interest. Almost every colonial pulpit wanted him! The man's vitality was amazing! His

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

energy was ceaseless, and always his urge was for the winning of the Indians to Christianity. He pushed his weak body to seemingly impossible limits. Here, indeed, was a strange white man, imperilling himself not for gain, not to make the Indians drunk and then to steal their lands from them, nor one who came to drive them away and kill them; here was a white man who asked nothing of them, who shared their meagre wigwams without complaint, and actually loved them!

Real results did not begin to come to Brainerd until he started his work at Crosswicks, or Crossweeksung ("Divided Creek"), as it was then called, a few miles below Trenton.

"Crossweeksung, in New-Jersey,

June 19, 1745.

Having spent most of my time for more than a year past, among the Indians in the Forks of the Delaware in Pennsylvania; and having in that time made two journeys to Susquehanna River, far back in that province . . . and not having had any considerable appearance of special success in either of those places, which damped my spirits and was not a little discouraging to me; upon hearing that there was a number of Indians in and about a place called by the Indians Crossweeksung in New Jersey, about fourscore miles southeastward from the Forks of the Delaware, I determined to make them a visit. . . .

I found very few persons at the place I visited, and perceived the Indians in these parts were very much scattered, there being not more than two or three families in a place, and these small settlements six, ten, fifteen and twenty and thirty miles and more from the

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

place I was then at. However, I preached to those few I found there. . . . When I concluded my discourse I informed them . . . that I would willingly visit them the next day. Whereupon they readily set out ten or fifteen miles, in order to give notice to some of their friends at that distance. . . ."

He preached to them daily and the Indians began to gather from afar; at their request he preached twice a day, and he stayed two weeks. On July 2nd he left for his home at the Forks of the Delaware, promising the Indians to return to Crossweeksung soon, if they would gather the Indians from parts more remote.

They kept their promise and so did he. He returned the second of August, and preached daily, sometimes twice a day. To speak to them without an interpreter he had to learn his third Indian language. He wrote in his journal, "Surprising were now the doings of the Lord, that I can say no less of this day, and I need say no more of it, than the arm of the Lord was powerfully and marvelously revealed in it. . . . I stood amazed at the influence that seized the audience almost universally, and could compare it to nothing more aptly than the irresistible force of a mighty torrent, or swelling deluge . . .! Almost all persons of all ages were bowed down with concern together . . . old men and women who had been drunken wretches for many years. . . . The most stubborn hearts were about to bow. . . . A principal man among the Indians . . . was brought under a solemn concern for his soul and wept bitterly. Another man had been a murderer, a powwow (or conjurer) and a notorious drunkard was likewise brought now to cry for mercy with many tears. . . . They were almost universally

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

praying and crying. . . ." This was a new experience for the phlegmatic, self controlled Indians. "Some of the white people who came out of curiosity to hear what this babbler would say to the poor, ignorant Indians, were much awakened, and some appeared to be wounded with a view of their perishing state."

The daily journal for August continues with such notes as: ". . . For so great was their concern that almost everyone was praying and crying for himself, as if none had been near 'Guttummauklummeh, Guttummauklummeh': that is, 'Have mercy upon me, have mercy upon me,' was the common cry."

By the end of August he started his Journal with this significant pronouncement: "August 26—Preached to MY people today . . ." Medicine men brought in their rattles and gave up their incantations. Men returned again to their proper wives. Drunkeness ceased. Debts were paid. According to Brainerd "a new principle of honesty and justice appears among them." "Love now seems to reign among them." He insisted on several months probation before he would baptize any; yet by March of the following year there were over 130 Indians in Crossweeksung who were baptized Christians.

At the end of the first full year's ministry among the Indians of New Jersey Brainerd wrote in his journal: "What amazing things has God wrought in the space of time for these poor people! What surprising change appears in their temper and behaviour! . . . And their drunken and pagan howlings turned into devout and fervent prayers and praises to God! They who were sometimes darkness have now become light in

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

the Lord. May they walk as children of the light and of the day."

A few brief excerpts from his journal portray the iron courage and the indomitable faith of the man, and the odds against which he valiantly struggled.

July 21, 1744. ". . . This morning I was greatly oppressed with guilt and shame, from a sense of inward vileness and pollution. About nine withdrew to the woods for prayer. . . . I appeared to myself the vilest, meanest creature upon earth and could scarce live with myself. . . . Towards night my burden respecting my work among the Indians began to increase much; and was aggravated by hearing sundry things which looked very discouraging, in particular that they intended the next day to meet together for an idolatrous feast and dance . . ."

July 24. "Rode about seventeen miles westward over a hideous mountain to a number of Indians. Got together about thirty of them; preached to them in the evening and lodged among them. Was weak and felt in some degree disconsolate; yet could have no freedom in the thought of any other circumstances of business of life."

July 31 . . . "I am in very poor state of health; I think scarce ever poorer; but, through divine goodness, I am not discontented under my weakness and confinement to this wilderness. . . . I bless God for this retirement; I never was more thankful for anything, than I have been of late for the necessity I am under of self denial in many respects. I love to be a pilgrim and a stranger in the wilderness. I would not change my present mission for any other business in the whole world."

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

October 3d. "We went on our way into the wilderness, and found the most difficult and dangerous travelling, by far, that ever any of us had seen. We had scarce anything else but lofty mountains, deep valleys and hideous rocks to make our way through. However, I felt some sweetness in divine things, part of the day, and had my mind intensely engaged on a divine subject. . . . Near night my beast on which I rode hung one of her legs in the rock, and fell down under me; but through divine goodness I was not hurt. However, she broke her leg; and being in such a hideous place, and near thirty miles from any house, I saw nothing that could be done to preserve her life, and so was obliged to kill her, and to prosecute my journey on foot. This accident made me admire the divine goodness to me, that my bones were not broken, and the multitude of them filled with strong pain. Just at dark we kindled a fire, cut up a few bushes, and made a shelter over our heads, to save us from the frost, which was very hard that night; and committing ourselves to God by prayer, we lay down on the ground and slept quietly."

Oct. 30. "Was sensible of my barrenness and decay in the things of God. . . . If I could but be spiritual, warm heavenly minded and affectionately breathing after God, this would be better than life to me. . . ."

April 13, 1745. "Rode home to my house at the Forks of the Delaware; and was enabled to remember the goodness of the Lord, who has now preserved me while riding six hundred miles in this journey; has kept me that none of my bones have been broken. . . ."

April 14. "Was disordered in body with the fatigues

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

of the late journey; but was enabled, however, to preach to a considerable assembly. . . ."

September 13 (at Shaumoking). ". . . arrived at the Indian town I aimed at on the Susquehannah. . . . I was kindly received and entertained by the Indians; but had little satisfaction by reason of the heathenish dance and revel they then held in the house where I was obliged to lodge. . . . This town . . . contains upward of fifty houses and nearly three hundred persons. . . . How destitute of natural affection are these poor uncultivated pagans! . . . of a truth the dark corners of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. . . . They are of three different tribes of Indians, speaking three languages wholly unintelligible to each other. . . . The Indians of this place are accounted the most drunken, mischievous and ruffianlike fellows of any in these parts; and Satan seems to have his seat in this town in an eminent manner."

September 20th. ". . . In the evening they met together nearly a hundred of them, and danced around a large fire, having prepared ten fat deer for the sacrifice. The fat of the inwards they burnt in the fire while they were dancing, and sometimes raised the flame to a prodigious height; at the same time yelling and shouting in such a manner that they might easily have been heard two miles or more. They continued their sacred dance nearly all the night, after which they ate the flesh of the sacrifice and so retired every one to his own lodging. I enjoyed little satisfaction; being entirely alone on the island as to any Christian company, and in the midst of this idolatrous revel; and having walked to and fro till body and mind were pained and much oppressed. I at length crept into a

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

little crib made for corn, and there slept on the poles."

December 25th (in New Jersey among his Christian Indians). "The Indians having been used on Christmas-days to drink and revel among some of the white people in these parts, I thought it proper this day to call them together and discourse to them upon divine things. . . ."

Aug. 22, 1746. "Continued my course up the river; my people now being with me . . . travelled above all the English settlements; at night lodged in the open woods and slept with more comfort than while among an ungodly company of white people. . . ."

Aug. 27. "There having been a thick smoke in the house (wigwam) where I lodged all night before, whereby I almost choked, I was this morning distressed with pains in my head and neck, and could have no rest. In the morning the smoke was still the same; and a cold easterly storm gathering, I could neither live within doors, nor without, a long time together. I was pierced with the rawness of the air abroad, and in the house distressed with the smoke. I was this day in great distress, and had not health enough to do anything to any purpose."

Sept. 8. "Spent the forenoon with the Indians; in the afternoon left Shaumoking, and returned down the river a few miles . . . exercised with great nocturnal sweats, and a coughing up of blood almost the whole journey. I was a great part of the time so feeble and faint, that it seemed as though I should never be able to reach home; and at the same time very destitute of the comforts and even the necessities of life. . . . In this journey I sometimes was able to speak the word of God with some power, so that several, both men

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

and women, old and young seemed to cleave to us and be well disposed towards Christianity. . . ."

Sept. 9. "Rode down the river, near thirty miles. Was extremely weak, much fatigued, and wet with a thunderstorm. Discoursed with some warmth and closeness to some poor, ignorant souls. . . ."

Sept. 10. "Rode twenty miles. . . . Was much solicited to preach, but was utterly unable through bodily weakness. . . . Was extremely overdone with the heat and the showers of this day and coughed up considerable blood. . . ."

The amazing and continuous results among the Indians at Crossweeksung gave Brainerd the opportunity he sought to help the Indians in a more practical manner. He was greatly troubled at the manner in which the whites foreclosed Indian lands by getting them in debt for whiskey; and he was equally disturbed at the Indian practice of living on the border of starvation. Out of his own little meagre funds Brainerd had supported a teacher elsewhere among the Indians. Now he had opportunity to begin his practice service.

Through the Scottish Society and the help of New Jersey Presbyterian Churches Brainerd bought a large tract of land at Cranbury, about fifteen miles north of Crossweeksung, where the land was more fertile. There he established a new Indian settlement, with a church and an industrial school, the first of its kind. He erected a carpenter shop and an infirmary, taught the Indians how to build barns and make fences, erect cabins and move out of the unsanitary wigwams. A nurse and school teacher were secured. And a practical everyday system of self help and education was begun. At one period when the school teacher was ill, Brain-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

erd took over his teaching duties and personally nursed him back to health. (The Presbyterian Historical Society owns the large conch-shell used by Brainerd to call his Indians to worship.)

No wonder a former savage brave, having become a practical farmer, stopped his hoeing to say of David Brainerd:

> "Him not only talk Jesus all the time,
> Him live Jesus all the time."

Crossweeksung and Cranbury tempted David Brainerd to settle down as a pastor. And that meant that he could marry his beloved Jerusha Edwards. He even wrote her about it. But a few days later he was impelled to write her again: "I am constrained, yet choose to say 'Farewell' . . . friends and earthly comforts, the dearest of them all, the very dearest . . . adieu, adieu! . . . I will spend my life to my last moments, in caves and dens of the earth, if the Kingdom of Christ may thereby be advanced."

And in those last twenty-one months he gave himself even more unstintingly, riding again into the wilderness of the forboding Susquehanna valley. He wrote: "Oh! God, there is no rest but in Thee!"

The primeval American forests had little underbrush or tangled brakes, so that they did permit the passage of a horse. But there were fallen trees, boulders, marshes, springs, streams, storms, sleet, snow and wild beasts. Through the forty-seven months of his active ministry it is estimated that David Brainerd rode over 15,000 miles!

By the spring of 1747 he had returned from the wilderness again and began to tell his story in the New

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Jersey and the New England churches. In the early summer of 1747 he was severely stricken with tuberculosis and confined to bed. His beloved Jerusha, knowing the danger, nursed him when he came back to Northampton, Massachusetts. But even then, he could not remain in one place long. He and Jerusha rode to Boston. There she continued to nurse him. He was carried into the Old South Church Manse; and Jerusha was his constant nurse there. All the leading people of the city wanted to see him and talk with him. On July 19 he was carried into the pulpit of the Old South Church to preach to a breathless crowd. The next day he insisted on being lifted into his saddle and he and Jerusha rode ninety miles back again to Northampton.

There he died, saying to Jerusha: "O Jerusha! I could not have spent my life otherwise for the whole world." . . . "Dear Jerusha, if I thought I could not see you and be happy with you in another world, I could not bear to part with you. . . . But we shall spend a happy eternity together."

His last words were: "He will come; He will not tarry!" . . . "I shall soon glorify God with the angels."

On October 9, 1747, at the age of 29 years, Brainerd's last earthly ride ended. Jerusha, age 18, having nursed him unceasingly for nineteen weeks, contracted the disease, and joined him again four months later. The lot of the 18th century American woman was a hard one. Greatly outnumbering the men her chances of romance and marriage were small. When she did marry she had to breed large families, to do the cooking and keep the fires, spin the flax and make all the clothes. But colonial America produced no lovelier

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

character than Jerusha Edwards. The story of Jerusha and David is one of the great love stories of all time.

The last words in Brainerd's journal are: "O that His kingdom might come in this world . . . that the blessed Redeemer might see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. O come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. . . . Amen."

The publicity given his work by the two great leaders of the Colonial Puritan Churches, Jonathan Edwards and Jonathan Dickinson, his friends, and the amazing results among the New Jersey Indians spread his fame across the seas, and made it last through the years. One hundred years after Brainerd died, a missionary to the Cherokees beyond the Mississippi found some descendants of the Crossweeksung Indians. One of these, a very old woman, who as a little girl had heard her grandmother talk about the strange white man, Brainerd, said: "He was a young man; he was a lonely man; he was a staff to walk with; he went from house to house to talk religion; that was his way." No wonder Whitefield spoke of Brainerd often in his sermons.

William Carey and Henry Martien, pioneer missionaries from Great Britain to the Orient, and fathers of the modern missionary movement, were moved and guided into their epoch making careers by the example of David Brainerd. No one modern life, in so short a span, did more to turn the Christian Church to its mission to the non whites, and turn the Christian people from race prejudice than did David Brainerd, missionary to the Indians.

From the earliest days in this country the European

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

white man had taken an attitude of superiority towards the Indians. The early Dutch and Swede colonizers in New Jersey had become rich by trading cheap trinkets to the Indians for valuable furs. The Swedes had translated the catechism into the Indian vocabulary, however, and tried to convert them to Christianity. The Dutch had established the basic principle that the land had to be bought from the Indians—but any kind of a price acceptable by the Indian was considered a fair price—and beads and fire water were most often used for purchase money. Wm. Penn, in his earlier experiments in South Jersey, before he founded Pennsylvania, was exceedingly fair to the Indians, and the Indians responded. "You are our brothers," said a chieftain to the Friends, "we will live with you like brothers. We will make a broad path for us and you to walk in. If any Englishman falls asleep in the path, the Indian shall pass by and say 'He is an Englishman; let him sleep, let him alone.' The path shall be plain; there shall not be any stump in it to hurt the feet." The Indian kept his word and so did the first generation of Englishmen; but the Jersey Indians were very docile Indians, the Leni Lenapes, or Delawares, who had been conquered by the mighty Iroquois and treated by them as "Squaws."

But when William Penn's own son cheated the Delawares by his infamous walking purchase—(the Indians promised the white men all the land that could be covered in a day's journey by one man—but Penn trained two runners for months to run in relays, carried one on horse back while the other runner ran, and cut paths through dense underbrush and laid bridges over the streams ahead of the runners)—the Indians lost faith

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

in the white man and went on the war path. The Indian was a very naive creature; he was a friend of the white man until the white man "double crossed" him; then, strangely enough, he became the white man's enemy.

On the frontier areas the attitude towards the Indians was often arrogant. James Logan feared the coming of the Scotch Irish to the frontiers, not so much because of what the white man would suffer from the Indian, but what the Indians would suffer from the white man.

Meanwhile in the interior and in the north the French arrived to stir up the smoldering resentment of the red man against the English. The Frenchman had no race pride, usually interbred in the Indian tribe, and often sank to the Indian social level. Stirring up the worst passions of the Indians against the English, and finally precipitating the French and Indian wars, the Frenchman brought to the surface all the barbaric savagery of the Indian. It therefore became the custom for the average Englishman to look down on the Indian as a wild and savage barbarian, not far removed from the brute; and he lost all sense of brotherly responsibility to him.

David Brainerd approached the Indian in an utterly different manner. To Brainerd the Indian was his lost brother in Christ; and the white man owed the Indian a double debt, the obligation of sharing the Christian faith, and the obligation of the best in life to compensate for past ill treatment. Brainerd made the Christian colonist see the Indian in a new light.

At the death of David Brainerd his brother John became head of his Indian school, church and self supporting community. In 1754, when the Jersey Indians

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

were moved to a New England reservation, Brainerd's Indians became associated with Eleazer Wheelock's famous Indian School at Lebanon, Connecticut, out of which grew Dartmouth College.

Because of David Brainerd's work Presbyteries began to raise money for systematic work among the Indians; and Indian students were admitted on the same par with whites at Princeton.

In Samuel Davies' journal, the diary of the European days with Gilbert Tennent, he tells how he journeyed north from Virginia to meet Tennent, and adds:

"Lodged at Mr. Brainerd's the good missionary among the Indians and was pleased with his account of the progress of religion among them, though they are now scattered by reason of their land being fraudently taken away from them. . . . Attended commencement of the College (of New Jersey) in Newark and was given an M.A. Visited Indian Town and was pleased at the affection of the poor savages to their minister and his condescension to them. . . ." From Brainerd's little New Jersey Indian village John, David's brother, carried out Indian work in all directions, until the poverty of the Synod, the unwillingness of the Scottish missionary Society to send more aid, and the ravages of the Revolution ended the work.

The widely publicised work of David Brainerd, followed by the Great Awakening, precipitated a new understanding of the Negro. Totally uncivilized savages from the heart of Africa were being brought over as field slaves; but a new sympathy to other races began to be practiced by the Churches. Agitations against slavery arose.

And the Sessions of the Churches began to receive

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Negroes into full membership of the church, for Brainerd had revealed that before God men were created equal.

In the minutes of the old Lawrenceville, N. J., Church for example are such items as these: "Received into the church on confession of faith, Harry, a man of color, belonging to Mr. Lewis Phillips; a black girl, belonging to Mr. Waters White." Ministers often referred to Negro children being baptized as: "Our children in the Lord."

From Brainerd's day on, in the 18th century there never was any race distinction in Church membership in the American colonial Church.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Chapter V

GILBERT TENNENT

Gilbert Tennent was the firebrand of the early colonial church in the middle colonies, and there was color and action in all that he attempted. He aroused the church out of its smugness and lethargy and put a new life into the Christian faith. He had all the impetuosity of a Peter; it was he who actually caused the final disruption of the Presbyterian Church into New Side and Old Side by his bitter sermon at Nottingham, Pennsylvania; and it was he who did more than anyone else in later days to unite the church.

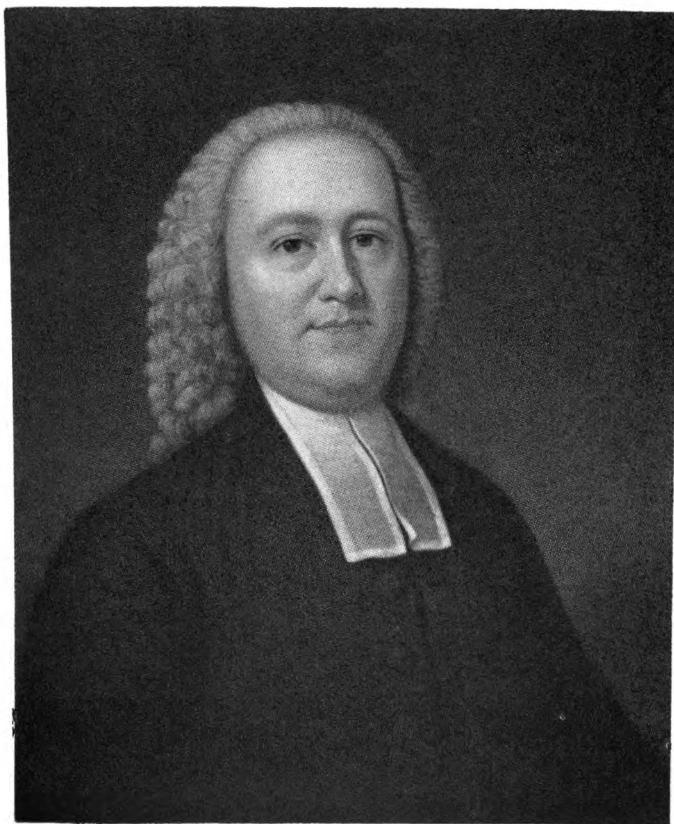
According to his family records, which William Tennent kept (in Latin) "my eldest son Gilbert was born in Vinnecash in the County of Ardmagh (Ireland) in the year of our Lord 1703 ffebr 5 about 12 a Clock at night and was baptized the following day by Mr. Alexander Bruce in Vinnecash in the North of Ireland."

Gilbert was thus fifteen when he sailed with his father and mother and brothers and sister to the New World. He was at the most impressionable age when the family launched into that great new adventure and that very year underwent a vivid religious experience; but it was several years thereafter before he decided to enter the ministry.

We know little of his elementary education; but we do know that from the time he left the old country he

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN



GILBERT TENNENT

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

was most carefully tutored by his father. At Eastchester, N. Y., where his father was a struggling minister, and later at Bedford, N. Y., where his father was much more successful, Gilbert was being given personal instruction and training by his father. He seems to have gone to Yale for a short session, for James Logan, secretary of Pennsylvania, wrote under date of January 2d, 1725, that Gilbert . . . "has entered in *ye* New Lond (sic) College in Conetticot, seems to have a very good stock at his trade for a beginner." While it is correct to call Gilbert Tennent the first "graduate" of the Log College, he was twenty-five or twenty-six when the Log College at Neshaminay got its actual start. Be that as it may, it was from his father that Gilbert Tennent received his education and his enthusiastic faith.

He passed the examination given him by Philadelphia Presbytery in a most commendable fashion. His scholarly attainments were of a high standard. Before he was ordained, however, in his period of licensure, he preached at New Castle, Delaware, so acceptably that he was called to be the minister of the church. But he took leave of the town abruptly and excited the displeasure of the people. The congregation complained to Presbytery, presented a letter from Gilbert Tennent accepting the call, and protested his hasty departure. Gilbert was reprimanded by the Presbytery for his hasty and impetuous action, a fault which continued to be with him, but received the reprimand with deep humility and regret, a spirit he always seemed to have after his hasty actions had created bad reactions.

He was ordained in New Brunswick, New Jersey, at a meeting of the Presbytery and received a call he

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

wanted to accept, a call of the Fairfield Association of the Congregational Church to Norwalk, Conn. But the Presbyterians of Raritan Valley of New Jersey also wanted him; and the Fairfield Association gave their measured judgment that he should not be taken away from "so destitute a region as the Jersies."

In New Brunswick he fell under the influence of a great German mystic, Dominie Frelinghuysen, of the Dutch Reformed Church, and for the first year and a half he was guided and inspired by the good Dominie, whose aim and passion was a real vital experimental religion. Personal piety rather than mental orthodoxy was his test of faith. A severe illness brought young Tennent into a deep despondency over his pulpit failure. But the letters from and the personal visits of the wise Frelinghuysen, a literal Paul with his Timothy, awakened a new concept of preaching in the young Scotch Irishman. His preaching took on a new seriousness. He began to get away from the manuscript; he let his emotions have sway; and there was a new fire and vigor, a new practical message which was far removed from the formal theological preaching of his previous days. And thus, several years before Jonathan Edwards' revival in Northampton, Gilbert Tennent was setting hearts aflame in Jersey.

In a letter written to the Rev. Mr. Prince, of Boston, Gilbert Tennent tells of his early days in New Brunswick, N. J.

"I began to be very much distressed about my want of success; for I know not for half a year or more after I came to New Brunswick that any one was converted by my labors. . . . It pleased God, about that time, to afflict me with sickness, by which I had affect-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

ing views of eternity. I was then exceedingly grieved I had done so little for God, and was very desirous to live one half year more, if it was His will, that I might stand upon the stage of the world, as it were, and plead more faithfully for his cause, and take more earnest pains for the salvation of souls. The secure state of the world appeared to me in a very affecting light; and one thing, among others, pressed me sore, that I had spent so much time conversing about trifles, which might have been spent in examining peoples' states and persuading them to turn to God. . . .

"After I was raised up to health, I examined many about the grounds of their salvation . . . by this means many were awakened out of their security. . . ."

From that time on Gilbert Tennent ceased being perfunctory and professional; he became a flaming evangelist with a passion for the souls of men, a passion frequently marked by an almost irritable impatience towards the smug and the contented.

During the first two generations of the 18th century the Christian religion sank to an all time low in England and the British colonies. The intelligent looked upon Christianity as an outworn superstition. "The subject of religion," wrote Montesquieu, "if mentioned in society excited nothing but laughter." Under the Georges England developed a new materialism, a passion for wealth and comfort. That spirit affected even the ministers of the church, most of whom had chosen the profession for the comfort and social opportunities it afforded. Religion actually had become a weak defense of what seemed to be an outworn system of thought. Even Gibbon, the historian of ancient Rome, had insisted that Christianity had caused the fall of

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Rome; that before Christianity came all Romans were likable, comfortable, jolly, and happy English squires! In the 18th century the Christian ministry had sunk to a profession. As long as one accepted the catechism, the Confession of Faith, the creedal statements, no more was expected of a minister. Baptised children became members of the church without any needed personal experience; just as children inherited the family estate without doing anything to earn it. Sermons were academic, theological or controversial. No one ever dared apply the sermon to practical, personal life. So good a man as the famed Bishop Butler is reported to have told John Wesley that belief in the immediate personal guidance of God's spirit in a man's life is "a horrid thing—a very horrid thing." Religion had lost all contact with personal life. God had become an absentee landlord with no personal contacts with the life of the individual. A cold intellectual acquiescence to the mere fact of God was about all expected of a minister.

"The Great Awakening" is the name given to the American phase of a rediscovery of the Christian faith, a new religious fervor, which stirred England and the colonies. The movement had begun in Frankfort, Germany, under the German "pietists," especially under a local pastor, Jacob Spener, who gathered his people together to rediscover the teachings of Jesus Christ, and to seek personal experience with God. His people turned from arid orthodoxy to a living, personal faith. This simple holy living of the "pietists" affected two Anglican missionaries to the American Colonies, John and Charles Wesley, whose insufferable attitudes had resulted in a very natural failure of their efforts, and

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

who were returning home in disgust. The Wesleys became new men, "their hearts glowed within them"; they started a new movement which stirred England and made Christianity real again. One of their number was George Whitefield, a Calvinist, who when refused the use of Anglican Churches, began with the Wesleys to preach in barns and fields, on streets and wherever the people were. Garrick, the English actor, said of Whitefield that he could throw an audience into paroxysms by pronouncing the word "Mesopatamia." Whitefield was dramatic and emotional. He had powerful lungs and could be heard plainly by as many as 20,000 people. In print, to us of the modern age, the sermons of Whitefield seem a bit bombastic; there was too much of the fear of hell; but to people who hitherto had utterly divorced religion from all emotion, they were stirring and powerful and explosive. The spirit of Whitefield is revealed by a prayer in his diary: "When thou seest me in danger of nestling—in pity—in tender pity—put a thorn in my nest to prevent me from doing it."

In this country another stirring phase of the revival had arisen in the staid and famous church of the renowned theologian Jonathan Edwards in Northampton, Mass. Edwards had been pastor there for nine years; and nothing like this had ever happened before. Over 300 persons, half of his church members, were strongly and personally affected by the revival. Morals and manners changed. The whole town was moved. Edwards had preached a stern and intellectual Calvinism, which has little room for emotionalism. But he had been striving to awaken the sense of sin, to break down the smug complacency, to develop personal piety.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

And it was this sense of mission which goaded him to more emotional preaching. Heir to the "Half Way Covenant," which permitted baptised children of church members to become full members of the church with no required personal experience, he began to insist that the Christian faith demand a personal experience in every believer. He protested against the tyranny of formalism; he wanted no one to escape the unending ordeal and continuous struggle of a personal faith.

In the old country and the colonies it was as if the people had been looking for something and suddenly found it. True, there were strange and emotional expressions and even odd and extreme physical manifestations on the part of believers—men fell on the ground and wept—women cried aloud—young people were emotionally excited. But the same manisfestations were present everywhere in the Wesley movement in England. People who religiously were emotionally starved suddenly let go. But despite the physical and emotional manifestations the movement was real. It saved England from the Continental excesses of the French Revolution; it gave the colonists a new faith, a new understanding of the practical and personal meaning of Christianity, without which the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution never would have happened.

Since Edwards was a famous man, news of the Northampton revival had spread across the sea. The warm, new fervor which Gilbert Tennent had received from the German pietist, Dominie Frelinghuysen in New Brunswick, New Jersey, an utterly independent development, had not been publicised.

Preceded by a press agent who knew all the tricks

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

of the trade and saw to it that all the colonial journals gave proper publicity, George Whitefield, then only 25, arrived at Lewes, Delaware, in 1739. He had undoubtedly heard of Jonathan Edwards' revival, and he got to New England in time to fan it into a larger blaze. But he had not heard of the revival in New Jersey, led by Gilbert Tennent. Whitefield had expected to find arid orthodoxy, and listless and lifeless churches and ministers in the middle colonies. He had not expected to meet a man like Gilbert Tennent. And his enthusiasm for the New Jersey pastor knew no bounds.

Whitefield made 13 trips across the Atlantic, seven preaching tours to the colonies. He preached to great masses in the fields and on the streets and in special tabernacles. But he never found any man in the colonies more to his liking than Gilbert Tennent. He tells in his journal how they used to ride through the dense woods together between settlements making the woods ring with their glad hymns of praise. And that in itself was something new. Indians always went through the forests as silently as possible, single file, so that they could not even talk to each other.

Whitefield's influence was so great that he was asked to be chaplain of the combined Colonial and British troops in their first united effort against the French, at the siege of Louisbourg, Canada, in 1745. Although he declined, the soldiers gladly accepted the motto he suggested for their banners: "Nothing is to be despaired of, with Christ for our leader."

Gilbert Tennent, fired by his already fully developed New Jersey revival, really struck his stride when Whitefield came along. He quickly learned dramatic

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

tricks from the Englishman. What Samuel Finley honestly said of Gilbert Tennent in his funeral sermon was true of his whole life: "He would not give up the point while one glimpse of hope remained." It was that indomitable, undefeatable spirit—naturally extreme at times—that absolute and thorough consecration and enthusiasm which made Gilbert Tennent "the fire brand of the revival." He, like Whitefield and Wesley, determined to break through the smug, icy orthodoxy and make the Christian faith a warm, vital, personal and practical experience.

When they first met, Whitefield, enthusiastic for a kindred spirit, induced Tennent to go to New York with him. When he heard the New Jersey minister preach Whitefield branded it one of the greatest sermons he had ever heard. Gilbert Tennent became the right hand man of Whitefield—the American leader of the Great Awakening. In the winter of 1740 Whitefield convinced Tennent that he should go with him for evangelistic services to staid and stern Boston.

Whitefield, who had been personally warned by Jonathan Edwards against too much impressionism, stayed but a few weeks in Boston. But with his usual fixedness of purpose, Tennent, "loud of voice and uncouth of gesture" dared brave the cold winters of an unknown section, and stayed on for two months after Whitefield left. It was one of the great experiences of his life; and despite the opposition of the conservatives and the critics of his "rough manner," his "crude gestures" and his emotionalism, something mighty happened to Boston religiously as a result of Tennent's preaching.

Critics scorned him because he dressed "like John the Baptist." Well, there was nothing unreal about

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

his call to repentance! He had only two doctrines—the sin of man and the grace of God. All Boston and environs were stirred. Some did not like his crude mannerism and his rough, unpolished ways; some did not like his fire and enthusiasm. But there was a magnetic, Celtic allure about the man, a strange sort of appealing mysticism which had deep spiritual effects. You could criticise him; you could praise him; but you could not ignore him! And if you did not go along with him, you had to stir up your own forces to compete with him. The "wild Irishman" from the heart of New Jersey started the fires of God blazing in gay, careless sophisticated Boston. Despite his savage appearance, his bellowing voice and his clumsy gestures, he was a great evangelist, and his new style of preaching, apparently extemporaneous, stirred men's emotions.

Tennent seemed to be much deeper than Whitefield; Whitefield at times impressed one as a bit superficial, here today, gone tomorrow. Tennent stayed on. Dr. Timothy Cutler, former rector of Yale, the then Episcopal minister in Boston, naturally was revolted: "It would be an endless attempt to describe the scene of confusion and disturbance occasioned by him (Whitefield) . . . after him came Tennent, a monster impudent and noisy, and told them they were all damn'd, damn'd, damn'd; this charmed them, and in the most dreadful winter I ever saw people wallowed in the snow night and day for the benefit of his beastly brayings, and many ended their days under these fatigues. Both of them carried more money out of these parts than the poor could be thankful for."

But one could hardly expect anything else from an

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

established Anglican priest! On the other hand the Rev. Mr. Thomas Prince, minister of the Old South Church, praised Tennent's work highly and added: ". . . And now was such a time as we never knew. The Rev. Mr. Cooper was want to say that more came to him in one week in deep concern, than in the whole twenty-four years of his preceding ministry. I can say also the same of the numbers who repaired to me."

Tennent had all the virtues of the Irish; and all the faults. No one slumbered peacefully when he was around; not even the church. He was alive, potent, magnetic, a passionate man of action; his mistakes were the mistakes of a man of virility and determination, the tendency to feel that opposition was a mere stubborn obstructionism, the resentment against lethargy, the anger of delay. He was in truth, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness—Repent Ye!" He was the dominant leader of the missionary evangelistic activities of the colonial church. He was indefatigable. He wandered far and wide and never spared himself. And he won his great fights—for the recognition of the Log College, for the right of the local Presbytery to examine and ordain ministers (democratic self-government instead of autocratic overlordship), for the right of licensed ministers to preach the Gospel anywhere and not be confined to the narrow limits of a small parish (religious freedom). Being Scotch Irish, he never fled a good fight.

An unknown Philadelphia writer, in a eulogy written after Gilbert Tennent's death, wrote: "In him the good old Puritan spirit that had for a series of years been asleep, seemed to revive and blaze forth with a genuine lustre; He knew that a reformation that did

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

not take rise in the heart could not be of long continuance, or pleasing in the sight of God; and therefore he always strove to convince his hearers that a thorough renovation of it was necessary for salvation. . . . The manner in which he usually preached and the indifference with which he treated all secular advantages, abundantly evinced, that neither a love of popular applause, nor a desire of promoting his own affluence and ease, could have been any inducement to him to assume the holy function. . . . The beginning of his ministry was employed in long and tedious itinerations. And whenever he had a prospect of doing good, however remote the place might be from his friends and however repugnant to his own ease, he needed no other inducement, but cheerfully undertook the pleasing task. . . . Fatigues and toils from which even worldly men in persecution of an earthly good shrink back, he joyfully engaged in; and with a degree of perseverance peculiar to himself. . . ." Tennent accepted the philosophy of Jonathan Edwards never to do anything but his duty, whatever the unpleasant circumstance, and not to please any man.

In his New Jersey days Gilbert Tennent's manner was inclined to be rough and blunt; he had an exhuberant emotion and a violent zeal; as he lived at peace with his brethren the last 17 years, the period of his Philadelphia ministry, it would seem that his obstinate spirit, and his oftimes fanatical, unkind and unmannerly criticism of his fellow ministers in his New Jersey days were the product of his honest and passionate attempt to awaken the church to the need of a new spirit. His defense of revivals and of the evangelistic spirit, and his advocacy of his father's Log College, where that

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

spirit was being generated, enabled Gilbert Tennent's ardor frequently to get the better of his judgment. He had to clear the way for a vital New Life in the church, and he let the chips fly where they would. Despite the divisions and the clashes he precipitated, it must be remembered that the American colonial church in the 18th century would probably have died of dry rot without Gilbert Tennent.

The Presbytery of New Brunswick (New Jersey), the stormy petrol of 18th century American Protestantism, and the leader of the New Life movement in the Presbyterian Church, was organized August 8, 1738 at 3 p.m. in Gilbert Tennent's Church at New Brunswick, New Jersey. There were present with Gilbert Tennent four other notable ministers, John Cross of Basking Ridge, Eleazer Wales of Kingston, William Tennent, Gilbert's brother from the Freehold Church, and Samuel Blair, from Middletown and Shrewsbury; there were also five elders present. As Moderator, Gilbert Tennent preached the sermon from John 21:15 —a significant text which revealed the spirit of the man—"So when they had dined Jesus said unto Peter: Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He sayest unto Him, Feed my lambs."

And the calls which came from all over the eastern seaboard from Maine to Carolina to the New Presbytery gave opportunity to practice the text. It became the accustomed duty of the members of the new Presbytery, following the leadership of Gilbert Tennent, to spend several months each year in itinerant ministry, on horse back, along the narrow Indian trails to remote settlements.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

To the rest of the church, however, the two Tennents, Blair, Cross and Wales were radical innovators, with their flaming enthusiasm, their private group meetings for prayer and Bible study, and their aggressive spirit. The conservative ministers, who had a static concept of Christianity, and to whom the Westminster Confession of Faith was finality, the last word spoken by God to men, abhorred emotion in religion. Enthusiasm was a weakness to be shunned! To them the Christian faith was the formal acceptance of a creedal statement—the aim of the church was solely to secure a rigid conformity to standards. What Samuel Blair wrote later was true in the 1730's, that "religion lay dying and ready to expire its last breath." For the wilderness tended to sink people into barbarism and the ministers were victims of the prevailing laxity. The New Brunswick Presbytery idea of a personal religion, bred at the Log College, and personified in men like William Tennent, Samuel Blair, and especially Gilbert Tennent, was obnoxious to the more conservative ministers; so the new New Brunswick Presbytery became the "radical party" in the church of that day. And from that new Presbytery the Synod withdrew the right to examine and ordain candidates for the ministry. The plan was simple—to corral the new fashioned, ardent Presbyterians, believers in personal religion, into one Presbytery, New Brunswick, and to tame them by Synod action limiting the power of the local Presbytery.

By that time Gilbert had become doubly famous for his sermon on "Unconverted Ministers," preached at Nottingham, Pa., right in the very bailiwick of his critics and opponents. Temperamentally giving his emo-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

tional all to his enthusiasm, he was intolerant of any opposition.

Yet a thorough reading of Gilbert Tennent's Nottingham sermon* reveals the mighty earnestness and enthusiasm for an awakened church which so characterized the New Jersey firebrand. The text is from Mark 6:34, "Jesus moved with compassion because the people were as sheep not having a shepherd." Tennent pointed out that the people did have teachers when Jesus said what he did; but the teachers were "the old Pharisee teachers . . . as crafty as foxes." "Although some of the old Pharisees had a very fair and strict outside; yet they were ignorant of the new birth." . . . "The old Pharisees, for all their long Prayers and other pious Pretences, had their eyes, with Judas, upon the Bag."

"Natural men have no call of God in the ministerial Work under the Gospel Dispensation—the Pharisee Teachers having no experience of the Holy Ghost upon their souls. . . . They comfort People before they convince them, sow before they plow and are busy raising a Fabrick before they lay a Foundation . . . they do but strengthen men's Carnal Security . . ."

"Their prayers are cold . . . their Conversation hath nothing of the Savor of Christ. Is a blind Man fit to be a Guide in a dangerous Way? Is a dead Man fit to bring others to Life?"

". . . Isn't an Unconverted Minister like a Man who would learn others to swim before he has learned it himself and so is drowned in the act and dies like

*The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry—considered in a sermon on Mark 3:34 preached at Nottingham in Pennsylvania, March 8, Anno 1739-40, Philadelphia. Printed by Benjamin Franklin in Market St., 1740.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

a Fool? . . . Look at the Congregations of Unconverted Ministers . . . not a soul is convinced that can be heard of . . ."

"Be these Moral Negroes never so white in the Mouth . . . yet will they hinder instead of helping others in the strait gate. . . . We should mourn over these who are destitute of faithful ministers. . . . Dear Sirs! we should earnestly pray for them . . . we should join our endeavours to our prayers . . . to encourage. . . . Private Schools of the Prophets especially in such places where the public ones are not. . . . Let all the followers of the Lamb stand up and act for God against all Opposers. . . . Who is upon God's side? Who? . . . And let those who live under the Ministry of Dead Men . . . repair to the Living, where they may be edified. . . . Let all who will oppose it." The sermon is 31 printed pages; printed by Benjamin Franklin.

Meanwhile the zealous crusader has found two great causes to champion. When Synod had taken from the Presbytery the right to license candidates, Gilbert accepted it for exactly what it was—a bitter flank attack on the scholastic standing of his father's Log College. That was a worthy cause for him to champion. And when the Presbytery of New Brunswick, mainly because of his Nottingham sermon, was read out of the Presbyterian Church, it was irresistible and indomitable Gilbert Tennent who turned what looked like a calamity into a mighty missionary opportunity, until the exiled Presbytery was the real leader of the American Church from Canada to Carolina.

Passion possessed him in all he did. He had a new confidence, but he did not totally ignore the old theo-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

logical issues. He had a long controversy with the Rev. David Cowell, of the Trenton Church, a staid and rather colorless man, because Cowell insisted that human happiness was a motive for seeking God. To Gilbert Tennent man was a fallen sinner, and the very idea of permitting the happiness of mere man to be a motive for religion, rather than the glory of God, was a sort of an insult to God. Gilbert, always the crusader, went to God's defense. A committee of Synod heard both ministers and read all the correspondence. Then they wisely let the matter drop for a year. But Gilbert forced it to the attention of Synod again in 1740. Synod harmonized the opinions very sagaciously by saying that the glory of God meant the happiness of the individual—but the fiery evangelist would have no such mush diet as that. So the next day he read a paper to the Synod on "The Deplorable State of the Ministry"—sanctioning such a doctrine that made the happiness of man something to be considered!

One wonders what Gilbert's opinion would be of our day, when the list of non-fiction best sellers is usually headed by books with such titles as: "How to be Happy," "How to find Peace of Mind," "How to Live with Yourself and others." He could never have understood an age whose first question is: "What do I get out of it?" To Tennent nothing was so unrealistic and so unChristian as the doctrine of self seeking. To him the first question of every true Christian is: "What can I do, Lord?" And the first thought in every Christian mind is not the thought of personal rights but the thought of personal responsibility, not profit but duty.

Meanwhile among the group of those who opposed the College and refused to reorganize it because they

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

had no hand in its management there arose a plan to develop a Synod College. There was little money to be had in the colonies. The money had to come from the old country. But war with Spain was keeping all England busy. And the plans for the development of a new and official college were not feasible. Gilbert Tennent got wind of the plans and resented the obvious snub to his father's Log College. Aided and abetted by Whitefield's hearty endorsement of the Log College as "superior" to many European Universities Tennent, as the ancient record quaintly put it, "grew hardy enough to tell our Synod he would oppose their design of getting assistance to erect a college wherever we should make application, and would maintain young men at his father's school in opposition to us." The Log College was in existence and had proven its worth. Why start a competing school? Why not acknowledge the worth of the Log College?

Despite the fact that it had long been the custom for Presbytery to examine its own candidates for the ministry before licensing or ordaining them, the Synod of 1740 ordered that all such examinations and ordinations be in the hands of a Synod Committee. The reason was obvious—the Scotch Irish conservatives controlled Synod, could pick their own committee, and could thus refuse to pass any Log College graduates who were up for examination. That was one way to get the Log College out of existence. It was a shrewd political maneuver. But it boomeranged.

New Brunswick Presbytery refused to obey the rule of Synod, its superior government. For the next year it proceeded to examine a Log College graduate, and to ordain him, as it had long been accustomed to do.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

When Synod met again in its annual meeting an open clash was precipitated. And by more political maneuvering the anti Log College forces expelled the New Brunswick Presbytery from the Presbyterian Church. But again they forgot the temper of the men with whom they were dealing.

For again the action of Synod made little difference to Gilbert Tennent and his group of progressives. They went ahead on their own. So vigorous was their growth that it soon became necessary for them to organize other Presbyteries. And with the organization of other Presbytery came the necessity of organizing their own Synod—the Synod of New York.

The Presbytery of New Brunswick minutes under date of June, 1741, the meeting being held in Philadelphia, immediately after the expelling action, read:

"Att a Meeting of the Presb. held at Philada pro re nata, June 2, 1741 ubi p.p. Sederunt, Mes*rs* G. Ten*t*, Wm. Ten*t*, Jun*r*, Elea: Wales, Jn*o*:Rowland, Elders David Chambers, Jn*o* Henderson, together with Correspondents Mess*rs*, Wm. Ten*t*, Sen.*r*, Sam. Blair, Elders John Ramsay, Sam.*l* Irwon

Sam. Blair
Charles Ten.*t*
David Alexander
Alexander Hutchinson
Alex.*r* Craighead
Rich.*d* Treat
Sam.*l* Irwin
Francis Alexander
Will.*m* M*c*.Cray
Tho.*s* Flemmings
Rich.*d* Walker

Mr. G. Ten.*t* chosen Mod.*r* and Jn.*o* Rowland Clerk p.Tempore

Post Meridiam Whereas the Aforementioned

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

New B.Presb: and Correspondents have all along hitherto been in a state of Union with the other M.*rs.* in these parts of the World who are professedly of the Presbyterian Persuasion, as Joint Members with them of one united Synod, and whereas the greater part of the other members of s.*d* Synod with is in Synod mett, did yesterday without any just ground protest against our Continuing members with them any longer, and so cast us out from their Communion, The Presb: and correspondents afs.*d* thus turned off and protested against, first came together to consider how they ought to Conduct themselves in their present Circumstances for the fulfilling of the Work and Charge committed unto them by the Lord Jesus Christ as Mr.*rs.* and Rulers in His House, and they do agree to declare that y*e* Protestation of their Brethren agst them is most unjust and sinfull And do moreover agree that it is their bounden Duty to form themselves into Two distinct Presbyteries for the Carrying on the Government of Christ's Church and do accordingly agree and appoint that Mr. W.*m* Ten.*t* Sen.*r* and M.*r* Richard Treat be joined to the standing Presb: of New Brunswick: And that Mess.*rs* Sam.*l* Blair, Alexander Craighead, David Alexander and Charles Ten.*t* be a distinct Presb: distinguished by the name of the Presb: of London Derry . . . .Appointed that the s.*d* Presb: of London Derry, meet upon the 30th of this Ins.*t* June at White Clay Creek, and M.*r* Blair to open the Presb: by a Sermon."

"It is further agreed and appointed that these Presbyteries of New Br: and London Derry do meet at Philad.*a* on the 2nd Wednesday of Aug*st* next in the Capacity and Character of a Synod. Mr.G. Ten.*t* ap-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

pointed to open the Synod by a Sermon at 3 o'clock PM . . . . ."

So Gilbert Tennent, aided by his lieutenant, Samuel Blair, found himself in a new position of leadership and authority; and the New Brunswick Log College men were untrammeled and free to continue the ferver of their evangelistic efforts from New England to the Carolinas. For during the 17 years of schism, in the Presbyterian Church, the New Brunswick Presbytery Synod (the Synod of New York) actually became the true Presbyterian Church, the most vigorous and active church in the American colonies, reflecting the enthusiastic evangelical spirit of Gilbert Tennent.*

It is a commentary on the leadership and the spirit of Gilbert Tennent's "New Side" Log College men of New Brunswick Presbytery to notice that during the 17 years of split in the church, the number of ministers of the Old Side, in and around Philadelphia and south of Philadelphia decreased from twenty-five to twenty-two; and the number of ministers in "The New Side," in New Jersey and New York, and the mission points they reached as far south as Virginia, increased from twenty-two to seventy-two. (The reunion of the two Synods, largely due to the conciliatory later ministry of Gilbert Tennent, occurred in 1758.)

In May, 1743, Whitefield's disciples and admirers in the Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia had withdrawn from the staid Old First Church and had decided to build a new church edifice of their own.** Gilbert Tennent was the one man they wanted for their

*_American Church History Series_, v 13; Bacon, _American Christianity_, p. 168.
**I. Sprague: _Annals of the American Pulpit_, Vol. 3, p. 36.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

pastor. He accepted the call, left the New Brunswick church where he had served so vigorously for sixteen years, and moved to Philadelphia. The new Philadelphia church was made a member of New Brunswick Presbytery, despite its location; for since it was a church of the revival party it was compelled to belong to the exiled Presbytery, the Presbytery of the revival party. Immediately after he moved to Philadelphia Gilbert Tennent showed his great energy and perseverance by planning a beautiful new church edifice. He went to Benjamin Franklin and asked him for a list of names of prosperous Philadelphians who might give money to the new church. Franklin told him to call on everybody of note in the city; and Tennent followed that advice. The money was soon raised and a notable new building was built for Tennent's ministry.

But soon after the new building was occupied, something began to happen to Gilbert Tennent. He seemed to become aware of the violent controversies he had stirred up. Perhaps he had learned by wisdom and softened by age. The thunder and lightning of his Jersey days began to disappear, and in their place a soft mellow glow developed. True it was war time, and soon Braddock was to be annihilated by the French and Indians. But the French and Indian war could never have changed the preaching ways of Gilbert Tennent. Somehow, somewhere in the geometric streets of Philadelphia Gilbert Tennent lost the vibrant, controversial spirit, and began to live in sweet harmony with everybody. But the controversial spirit was not all he lost. Perhaps he had "arrived"; and the air on the top was a bit too rarified for him. Perhaps he had been vulnerable to the attacks of those in Boston who

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

had called him crude and unpolished, a "wild Irishman," from the woods of New Jersey; so when he came to the largest city in the colonies he determined to put on the garments of culture. Philadelphia was a cosmopolitan city, America's greatest seaport, and its population of about 20,000 at that time made it nearly as large as Dublin and Edinburgh, or Bristol, England's second city. Philadelphia's people were growing rich and building fine houses. The old Quaker belief in non-resistance and the Quaker desire for peace at any price had bred a benignity of spirit, a certain laissez faire attitude, staid, comfortable and content. That urbanity and smug sufficiency affected all its citizens, and even the cosmopolitan spirit, and the street signs in German as well as English, seemed to create a complacency in which controversy and burning conviction had no place. "Philadelphia," writes a modern biographer, "has yet to produce a Roger Williams or a Nathan Hale."* Maybe it was that strange something which permeated the air of Philadelphia; maybe it was the presence of educated and famous men like Benjamin Franklin; maybe it was the keen competition with the staid old conservative and reactionary First Church; maybe it was the handsome new church building, so unlike the cross roads pulpits of itinerant days—but Gilbert Tennent gave up the extemporaneous type of preaching, began to choose his words with great care and to polish his style for his auditors. He began to read his manuscript closely, with considerable loss of the old magnetic enthusiasm and animation. The hot fire simmered into a warm glow. And while he did faithful work in Philadelphia for over twenty

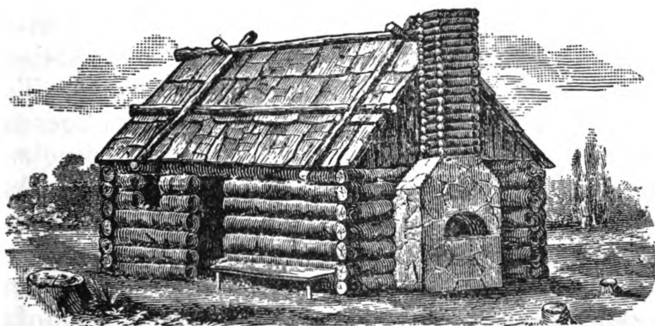
*Struthers, Burt: Philadelphia: *Holy Experiment,* p. 58 ff.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

years—it was not the Philadelphia Gilbert Tennent but the earlier Jersey Gilbert Tennent who molded the church!

He still remained a member of New Jersey's New Brunswick Presbytery until the final reunion of the two Synods. While he was in Philadelphia, too, he was sent to England and Scotland with Samuel Davies to solicit funds for the building of the College of New Jersey at Princeton. Samuel Davies, a product of the Log College or of the Fagg's Manor Log College, the apostle to Virginia, who later came to New Jersey as president of Princeton, was one of the really great preachers of that or any other day, and very much of a polished gentleman. Gilbert Tennent was one of those rare jewels which are actually ruined by polish.

In a very amazing document, the careful daily diary



The type of building of "The Log College"

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

of Samuel Davies kept from July 2, 1752 to February 13, 1755, including the days when he first left Virginia on his task of collecting money through his experiences in England and Scotland and his return home, the kindly and wise Samuel Davies speaks* feelingly of Gilbert Tennent. The gracious, charming Davies was reluctant to make the long, hard mission when he found that the blunt and strong willed Gilbert Tennent was to go; but he became a warm admirer of Tennent.

In his diary he writes of his first week end in Philadelphia: "Heard Mr. Tennent preach an excellent sermon on 'Deliver us from the evil one.' " . . . Later, as their journey across the sea begins, Davies writes: "Mr. Tennent treats me with the utmost condesencion (the humble Davies used the term in a complimentary way to mean—"affability") and the unbounded freedom of friendship; and my anxieties at the prospect of the voyage are much mitigated by the pleasure of his conversation. . .Mr. G. Tennent is come down here to wait for the ship and my spirit was revived with his facetious and in the meantime spiritual conversation." Later Davies writes in his journal of "dear Mr. Tennent," "Mr. Tennent . . . cheerful and courageous," "Mr. Tennent, my father and friend." In England, after having visited Whitefield and other notables, Davies writes: "Mr. Tennent's heart was on fire. . .after all had gone to bed Mr. Tennent suggested that we watch and pray, and we arose and prayed together at 3 a.m." As there was probably no man more level headed than Samuel Davies in the church of his day, his judgment

*Included in *Sketches of Virginia—Historical and Biographical,* by the Rev. William Henry Foote, D.D., Philadelphia; William S. Martien, 1850, p. 232 ff.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

of Gilbert Tennent must be taken at its face value. When Davies repeatedly called Tennent "my father and friend," he meant it.

Gilbert Tennent was one of the original Trustees of the College of New Jersey and he was vitally interested in its welfare until his death, at 61 in the year 1764. He was also one of the incorporators of the Pensions and Relief Fund, organized February 6, 1759 as "The Corporation for the relief of poor and distressed Presbyterian Ministers, their Widows and Children, Etc.", the first social security, or insurance pension scheme in America.*

John Finley, president of Princeton, said of Gilbert Tennent in his funeral sermon: "He had an habitual unshaken assurance of his interest in redeeming love for the space of more than forty years; but eight days before his death he got a clear and more affecting sense of it still. And although he lamented that he had done so little for God, and that his life had been comparatively so unprofitable, yet he triumphed in the grace of Jesus Christ, who had pardoned all his sins, and said his assurance of salvation was built on the Scriptures and was more than the sun and the moon."**

Always and under all circumstances Christianity to Gilbert Tennent was vital and real, experimental, and not just mental.

The spirit of Gilbert Tennent is perhaps best shown in his remarkable appeal of 141 printed pages (with an additional five and a half page introduction), written to unite the Synod of Philadelphia and the Synod of

---

*See *The Original Minutes of the Corporation for Relief of Poor and Distressed Ministers,* p. 5, in the office files of Presbyterian Ministers' Fund.

**Sprague, Vol. 3, p. 38.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

New York after 17 years of split. "Irenicum Ecclesiasticum or A Humble Impartial Essay upon the Peace of Jerusalem—also a Prefatory Address to the Synod of New York and Philadelphia by Gilbert Tennent, A.M."* This followed Gilbert Tennent's resolution for union in the Synod of the previous year. The printing was paid for by Tennent. The Prefatory Address is to "Reverend, the Synods of New York and Philadelphia, and to all the religious societies under their respective Care and Charge. Reverend, Honoured and Beloved Fathers and Brethren. . ." and it ends with . . . "Reverend, Honoured, and Beloved Fathers and Brethren, I remain, Your Affectionate Friend, Unworthy Brother, Son and Servant, G. Tennent." From the 122nd Psalm, 6.7.8.9. verses—"pray for the peace of Jerusalem," the 141 closely printed pages of argument is for unity on the essential and necessary truths of Christ—"and yet to maintain inviolable the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." He does not express "a change of sentiment about the late Revival of Religion. No! . . . Tho I value the late Work of God highly, yet in the mean Time I think it is sinful to make my opinion of it a test of communion to others, for tho I am fully persuaded as ever of its Reality, yet in the mean Time, I believe that my Opinion, and the Opinion of others, about such Matters, is falliable and uncertain. Nor can I see in the sacred Scriptures, any Warrants for imposing my Opinion, or the Opinion of others, respecting the invisible grace of God in particular Persons, as a Term of Communion, Ministerial or Christian. . ." Tennent reminds the Synod that

*Philadelphia, Printed and Sold by W. Bradford, at the Sign of the Bible in 2nd St.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

"Uncharitable Division, like a Trojan Horse has a way of entering and ruining . . ." The argument, conciliatory and kindly, ends with the last words of Paul to the Philippians 2:1-6 and 2 Corinthians 13:11. As it was Gilbert Tennent who had split the church by his tactless zeal, so now it was Gilbert Tennent who united the church by his humble conciliatory spirit.

On his English money raising trip with Davies, one British minister refused point blank to have any thing to do with the Princeton venture, pulling out of his files a copy of Gilbert Tennent's Nottingham sermon. Tennent humbly acknowledged that he had been too severe, suggested that the British minister read his much later "Irenicum," and showed such a Christian spirit that the objector relented.

It was this spirit of early fire and enthusiasm in the time of crisis, combined with this later spirit of humility and conciliation, which reveals the true Gilbert Tennent and his place and influences in the formation of a great American church.

There are some who trace the origin of democracy to the Greeks. But the Greek concept of democracy, where women and slaves were thought of as having no souls, is a far cry from our modern concept. The fact is that our American ideas of democracy came from the teachings of the Bible, especially from the teachings of the New Testament. In no area where the New Testament has not been circulated and taught has there ever been democracy. Conversely, it was the basic ideas of the New Testament which gave our founding fathers the ideas of government upon which America was built. To Gilbert Tennent must go full credit for keeping Christianity alive and making it

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

vital, for returning the colonists to the teachings of the New Testament. The American Revolution was not merely a matter of the War of 1776. The American Revolution started with new attitudes of thought on the part of the colonists many years prior to 1776. To a very great degree the American Revolution started with the Great Awakening. And Gilbert Tennent more than any other American was responsible for the spread of the Great Awakening.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

A North-West Prospect of Naſsau-Hall, with a Front View of the Presidents Houſe, in New-Jersey.

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

CHAPTER VI

SAMUEL DAVIES

Samuel Davies was born of Welch lineage, in Newcastle County, Delaware, on November 3, 1723. His father was a farmer of moderately worldly means and devout character; his mother was a woman of very superior mental attainments who named her only son "Samuel," and consecrated him to the Lord. The mother, who outlived her son, was Samuel's only teacher until he was ten years of age; and then he was sent to a Mr. Morgan, some distance from his home, to receive the elements of classical training. About 1736 he was strongly affected by the preaching of Gilbert Tennent, whom he liked to call his "spiritual father." He took at least a part of his studies under Samuel Blair, at Blair's "Log College" at Fagg's Manor, Pennsylvania (an outgrowth of Log College) and he may have studied under William Tennent in the original "Log College" at Neshaminy. He was licensed to preach by Newcastle Presbytery July 30, 1742, at the age of 23, and ordained as an evangelist Feb. 19, 1747. Newcastle Presbytery was formed by the "New Light" New Brunswick Presbytery group.

At the time of his licensure he was suffering from a strong tendency to tuberculosis. He married in October, 1746, and a year later his wife and newly born baby died. The disease and the sorrow made him exceedingly melancholy and he preached "as a dying

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

man to dying men." He was sent by Presbytery to the Eastern Shore of Maryland, where he had a most successful short pastorate of several months; finally, in the spring of 1747 Presbytery sent him to Hanover, Virginia, where he really began his first great life work.

He founded churches in Henrico and Louisa and elsewhere. The people who came to hear him were in little groups and congregations fifteen or twenty miles apart. Davies' preaching was the kind of preaching they had been hungry for. In Virginia the Anglican Church was the established church, and all other churches were illegal. The rectors appointed had sought their jobs as political and professionally sinecures. Their religion was formal and exceedingly perfunctory. They were supported by public taxation, and the law required people to attend their churches. The typical Virginia rector lived a gay and social life, had few scruples or standards, and proceeded on the assumption that the chief aim of a rector was to accommodate himself to the social habits of his people. An earlier Virginia law had passed at least a negative requirement for the established clergy: "He is not to give himself to excess in drinking and riot, and spending his life idly by day and night; but to hear or read the Holy Scriptures, catechise the children and visit the sick." But towards the middle of the century it was said among the Virginia law makers that "these gentlemen clergy spend much of their time in fox hunting and aping the sports of the aristocracy at home, (England), and in company with the more dissolute of their parishioners."

Samuel Davies refused to lower his standards to the level of society, and insisted in a scholarly and sensible

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

way, that Christians be different. With a thorough and vivid personal religious experience, Davies brought the New Light to the people of Virginia. Like Gilbert Tennent he insisted that religion be a vital personal experience. Groups heard him gladly everywhere; but the law was strict, and no "dissenter" meeting houses could be built. The Governor and Council forbade his preaching under penalty of a fine of 500 pounds, or a year in prison. Meanwhile Samuel Davies founded three more churches and precipitated a hearing.

Davies had applied for a government license to preach at the beginning of the ministry in Virginia; and he had been so much of a gentleman in his attitude towards the Council, and had revealed such an exact knowledge of custom and English law that a license had been granted him.

Meanwhile Davies had slowly recovered his health and remarried. He had become widely known as a very practical, yet scholarly preacher, and teacher, an efficient organizer, and above all, a thorough gentleman of charm and refinement. The best people of the community listened to him gladly; and even many Negroes were turned to Christ and baptised.

When the trial was held, Davies defended himself; the famous lawyer, Payton Randolph, was the king's prosecuting attorney. The argument of Randolph was that the Toleration Act, passed under William and Mary, did not apply to the colonies. Davies, in a kindly but convincing fashion, revealing a vast knowledge of English law, completely demolished the arguments of Randolph, and insisted that if the Toleration Act did not apply to Virginia, neither could the Act of Uniformity, making the Anglican Church the estab-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

lished church. So brilliant and forceful was Davies' argument, and so gracious and appealing his manner that he not only won his case but scored a personal triumph. Randolph, his opponent, became his friend and admirer. The highest colonial officials, who insisted that his remaining in the ministry had "ruined a great lawyer," became his fast friends and followers. A new dignity and respect was given the dissenter cause. By his brilliant and gentlemanly attitude in court dissenter churches had full rights in Virginia for the first time in Virginia history.

There were, however, many later legal skirmishes. But there was no more legal opposition to the building of Presbyterian churches among the Scotch and Scotch Irish Presbyterians who settled in great numbers in Virginia. The Anglican episcopacy put strong pressure on the Virginia government, for the Anglican Church was still the established church, supported by public taxation. Protests were made by Anglican authorities when people who had arrived in Virginia before the Scotch Irish and the Scotch, especially people who were assumed to be Anglicans, even though they might never have attended church, suddenly became truly interested in Christianity and joined one of Davies' churches.

Under Davies' leadership Presbyterian ministers were extremely careful to conform to all laws of preaching licensure. From the very first Samuel Davies insisted that under the new laws of England the legislative and governing council had no right whatsoever to interfere with "the spiritual concerns of religion." And he kept insisting that Christian people in general and ministers in particular be different, that they could not

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

and must not stoop to the vices of normal social life. For Christianity is a divine calling.

While the origin of most of the influential old Virginia families was distinctly middle class, prosperous and easy life on the great and comfortable plantations had evolved a distinct aristocracy in Tidewater Virginia, and the Chesapeake Bay country of Maryland. In fact, life had become quite comfortable and enjoyable all along the eastern seaboard from the Carolinas to Boston. Back of the Tidewater country in Virginia, towards the mountains and in the famed Shenandoah Valley, and in the similar country of Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York and New England, the Scotch Irish formed a solid phalanx between the aristocratic estates and the Indians. Life in that area, by very necessity, was rough and difficult, the frontiersman's life, with all its crudeness. Here there were small clearings, instead of large plantations, log huts, instead of fine homes made with bricks brought over from England; and all the dangers of the lurking Indians and the dense forests. Davies' influence among the intelligent, cultured and wealthy plantation owners was enormous. They did not join his churches but they were tremendously swayed by his clear thinking in public questions. The Scotch Irish valley people, and the people between the valley and the Tidewater did join his churches; but their economic condition kept them from having places of influence on public questions. That one man could be so respected and followed by both groups, and even by those who were of other denominations, was a great tribute to his amazing leadership.

It is difficult for us in this day of columnists, news magazines, books, radio and television to comprehend

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

the influence of the pulpit on American colonial life in the 18th century, especially the influence of the highly educated Puritan pulpit. There were papers and pamphlets, books, brief articles—but they were not cheap, and thus they were handed from one to another. Many of them, in fact most of them, were written by the Puritan preachers, the best educated men in the community, and the leaders of thought everywhere. But the influence of the pulpit was the one dominant influence of the day.

And the great preachers never confined their sermons to merely academic themes after the period of the Great Awakening. Religion was applied to all life; and since the Christian religion made men free, freedom was the basic and constant theme.

18th century America had many great and popular preachers. Some of their sermons are a bit dull when we read them today. But the peer of them all was Samuel Davies. His clear logic, his practical ideas, his application of Christian principles to the problems of his day even now stir the reader. How they must have stirred his hearers!

In only one century of her history, from 1814 to 1914, has America been free from European Wars. During the colonial period from 1690 to 1763, when England was attempting to make uniform the treatment towards and the government of each American colony, the colonies were almost constantly involved in war with France. To the south were the hostile Spaniards, and north of Maine and all to the west were the French. Thus the English colonies occupied a narrow strip along the Atlantic Coast, almost a thousand miles long and only about two or three hundred miles wide.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

In 1690 there were about 215,000 English and only about 12,000 French. But the French were a unit, under a totalitarian command. And the English were under twelve different local governments, jealous of each other. In most colonies trade with the Indians was of little importance, and the English had learned to look upon them as dangerous savages. The French had no racial bias; they were willing to stoop to the level of Indian life. There were few French homes and settlements. And the French men were mostly soldiers, adventurers, traders who did not hesitate to interbreed with the Indians and become a part of their tribal life. They were explorers who travelled thousands of miles into the interior among the Indians, establishing trading posts and forts. And they had no scruples using the Indians as their military allies and stirring up savage hate against the English.

Spain and France were the dominant Catholic powers. Among many of the Indian tribes Jesuit missionaries often accompanied war parties; and the English colonists were led by far-seeing leaders to become increasingly aware that a victory for Spain and France would be an end of the religious liberty for which they had crossed the sea.

King William's War, which really was World War I, in its larger phase, lasted from 1689 to 97. New England got the brunt of the Indian attacks and, in the colonies, the war ended indecisively.

Queen Anne's War, actually World War II, from 1701 to 1713, in its American phase again settled in New England, with attacks by the Spaniards in Carolina. At the Peace of Utrecht Spain gave England the right of monopoly of all the African slave trade with

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

her West Indian colonies. The people of England resented slavery, and no cargoes of slaves appeared in English ports. But the ships were repaired and resupplied in English ports and loaded with trinkets to buy slaves in Africa. King Philip, of Spain, invested heavily in the stock of the British West Indies Company. Thus he privately profited heavily in the slave trade when he had officially lost the trade. The treaty rights gave Britain the privilege of trade in slaves only, but the wily British began buccaneering with all the trade in the Spanish colonies. Spain sent out war ships to stop the illegal commerce. Then France came to Spain's aid. And war was on again—the War with Spain, in 1739. Over 3,700 Americans, mostly from New England, volunteered to join the British in an expedition against the Spanish West Indes. Over two-thirds of them died, chiefly because of the inefficiency of the British navy.

This war was soon followed by the War of the Austrian Succession, 1744 to 1748, featured by the joint attack of colonists and British against the strong French fortress of Louisbourg, Canada. Through all these periods the agonizing Indian war whoop was heard frequently on the frontier, for the French stirred up the Indians to fight for them.

But neither of these wars settled the boundary line between England and Spain, or England and France in the New World. And so there broke out the most savage of all the series of wars, as far as the colonies were concerned, the French and Indian War. In 1754, when a group of Virginians, of whom George Washington's brother was one, moved westward to lay claims to some of the Ohio country, the French at-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

tacked. This war began in the colonies before its European phase, the Seven Years' War, got under way. It was a world struggle for power, with the West Indies, the African trade, India and the wealth of the Orient, the American continent and the balance of power in Europe at stake. The Prussian army invaded Austria and fought with the British army against France and Spain. In the American colonies it was really a struggle for existence. If the Roman Catholic powers, and the 100,000 savage Indians they controlled, should win, the English colonies not only would be unable to expand westward, but they would lose their hard earned freedom. On June 19, 1754, an informal "Congress" of governors of eight colonies (two more additional colonies being considered also represented), agreed on a defense plan drawn up by Benjamin Franklin. Each colony planned to raise troops.

Many of the tidewater settlements could not see the seriousness of the situation. But the Scotch and Scotch Irish on the frontiers had heard the Indian war whoops and could not agree with their tidewater friends that this was only "England's War." The Pennsylvania Quakers were strongly pacifist and refused to bear arms or pay for volunteers or to vote in the Legislature for military aid. Even James Logan, prominent Quaker official, bitterly condemned the Quaker majority of the Pennsylvania Legislature in a violent "broadside," as such widely distributed pamphlets were then called.

"There are Quakers," wrote he in his attack in the Philadelphia yearly meeting, "who deny even the lawfulness of self defense. (Though I have ever condemned offensive war as being contrary to the peaceable doctrines of Jesus.) . . . Yet without regard to

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

others of Christ's precepts, full as express, against laying up Treasure in his world, and not caring for tomorrow, they are as content as any others whatever in amassing Riches, the Bait and Temptation of our Enemies to come and Plunder us. . . ."

In the period of great danger, when the prevailing attitude was one of "It's none of our business, it's England's war," it is impossible for us to comprehend the tremendous influence of Samuel Davies. It was against Virginians that the colonial aspect of the war had precipitated; for George Washington had been sent out to Ohio by Virginia to ask the French what they were doing there. But even the Virginians were apt to lose sight of the religious nature of the war, and of the grave danger to freedom.

It was in the political area of defense of freedom that the influence of Samuel Davies was so significant. To him the French and Indian War, like the Spanish War preceding it, was a holy Protestant campaign and a struggle of life or death against the mighty force of Catholicism. If France, in Louisana and Canada, combined with Spain, in Florida, were to win, they would control all of America; and that would be the end of religious freedom for which he had been striving so hard and for so long. France and Spain were the military arms of the Pope of Rome, and Davies could not let the people forget that. Pacificism and lack of vigorous defense action at such a time were to Davies abject surrender of the Protestant faith. And he did not propose to let people surrender through lack of action.

Just after the stunning tragedy of Braddock's defeat, and the beginning of the French and Indian Wars Samuel Davies preached a typical public sermon to a

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Virginia volunteer company. It was printed and had wide distribution. At the beginning of the sermon he departed from his written text to make a personal and prophetic observation about another young Virginian whom he knew well and greatly admired. He said to the crowd: "I may point out to the public that heroic youth, Col. George Washington (then 23 years old) whom I cannot but hope Providence has hitherto preserved in so signal a manner for some important service to his country." Davies' commendation of the man who saved the British from utter rout was the first recorded recommendation of George Washington to a larger intercolonial service.

The text of the sermon is from Joshua 22:12-14: "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered together at Shiloh to go up against them in War." . . . The sermon, in brief, reminded his congregation that " . . . the military preparation made by the Jews had no proper regard for the Supreme Ruler of the world. . . . So with us . . . Instead of making preparation for their own defense and humiliating themselves before God the people are sunk in security, luxury and wickedness . . . Where is there a more sinful, obnoxious spot upon any guilty globe than in our country? What number of drunkards, swearers, liars and unclean wretches and such like burden our land! . . . What vanity, luxury and extravagance is gaining, and other foolish and criminal diversions and pleasures appear among our people of high life and effluent fortune! . . . Deism and infidelity have made inroads upon us . . . Now if the outer conduct of man is so bad, alas, what shall we think of their hearts, the secret springs of action within? . . . what practical atheism prevails

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

among us . . . Multitudes do not live in the world as though they were under divine government . . . My advice is this—Repent! O my countrymen, repent!"

A special part of the sermon is to Negroes. And the conclusion of the sermon is "1. Let us not be discouraged—we have a gracious, though provoked, God over all . . . 2. Be not too presumptious—our country will have to suffer a great deal. . . . 3. Be diligent in prayer for our army, for the unhappy families on the frontier (in the war zone), etc . . . And may the Lord of Hosts be with us, the God of Jacob be our Refuge!"

Even the reading of these practical, vigorous sermons stirs one; add to the thoughts the virile personality, the charm and winsomeness of the man, and it is easy to understand how Samuel Davies was the greatest American preacher of his day.

In a General Muster of the Virginia militia on May 8, 1758, at the beginning of the bloody French and Indian Wars, Samuel Davies expresses the Presbyterian attitude against appeasement and pacificism. The title of that sermon was "The Curse of Cowardice."

"Nothing can be more agreeable to the God of peace than to see universal harmony and benevolence prevail among his creatures, and He has laid upon them the strongest obligation to cultivate a pacific temper towards one another, both as to individuals and nations. 'Follow peace with all men,' is one of the principal precepts of our holy religion. And the Great Prince of Peace solemnly pronounced—'Blessed are the Peace Makers.'

"But when in this corrupt, disordered state of things where the lusts of men are perpetually embroil-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

ing the world with wars and fightings, throwing all into confusion; when ambition and avarice would rob us of our property, for which we have toiled and on which we subsist; when they would enslave the free born mind and compell us meanly to cringe to usurpation and arbitrary power; when they would tear from our eager grasp the most valuable blessing of heaven, I mean our religion; when they . . . capture our fellow subjects and confine them in barbarous captivity . . . when our earthly all is ready to be received by rapacious, and even our eternal all is in danger by the loss of our religion; when this is the case what then, is the will of God?

"Must peace then be maintained . . . at the expense of property, liberty, life and everything dear and valuable, maintained when it is in our power to vindicate our right and to do ourselves justice? Is the work of peace then our only business? No; In such a time even the God of peace proclaims by His Providence— 'To arms!' Then the sword is, as it were, consecrated to God; and the art of war becomes a part of our religion. Then, happy is he who shall reward our enemies as they have served us (Psalm 137:8) . . . 'Blessed is the brave soldier; blessed is the defender of his country and the destroyer of his enemies; Blessed are they who offer themselves willingly in this service and who faithfully discharge it. But, on the other hand 'Cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully; and cursed is he that keepeth back his sword from blood.' " (The last quotation is from the text of the sermon, Joshua 47:10).

But Samuel Davies was no war monger. In a sermon

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

at Hanover, Va., at the opening of war he had declared:

"Brethren, while we are surrounded by the terrors of war, let us learn our own degeneracy, mourn over it, and cry for the exertion of that power which alone can form us anew, and repair these wastes and desolations. The present war indeed . . . is just, is unavoidable; and consequently our duty. But how corrupt must this world be when it is even our duty to weaken and destroy our fellow men as much as we can? How corrupt must this world be, when peace itself, the sweetest of all blessings, is become an evil, and war is to be chosen before it? When it is become our duty to shed blood, when martial valor, or courage to destroy man, who was made in the image of God, is become a virtue? Then it has become glorious to kill men! And when we obliged to treat a whole nation as a gang of robbers and murderers and bring them to punishment? This certainly shows that they are degenerate creatures; and as they share in the same nature with us, we must draw the same conclusion concerning ourselves. Let us therefore humble ourselves, and mourn in dust and ashes before the Lord; let us lament the general depravity of the world."

While his preaching was practical and popular, Samuel Davies was also a scholar of the first rank. The President of William and Mary College had created a sensation in a college lecture when he insisted that Jesus' statement about the "straight and narrow way" applied only to the Jews of his day and not to the Gentiles of modern Virginia. Samuel Davies wrote a long and scholarly answer. Unfortunately the French and Indian War made the printing impossible, and the

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

death after the war of William and Mary president made Davies reluctant to publish his answer. A good many years afterward, however, the booklet was published under the title of: "Charity and Truth United, or the Way of the Multitude Exposed, in Six Letters to The Rev. M. William Tith, A.M. President of the College of Wm. and Mary, by Samuel Davies, A.M." In the thick booklet of many chapters Davies warns of the grave danger of Christians missing the way, and insists that the way is never wide and easy. To sustain his arguments he makes direct reference to over thirty of the Latin and Greek philosophers, in their original tongue, quotes freely from Plato, Aristotle, Virgil, Horace, Seneca, and others and translates a famous poem of Cleanthus into English rhyme.

The utter fear of the danger of autocratic and dictatorial government which would result in a French victory, stirred up the colonists enough to aid the British. But the young British officers were so arrogant and condescending in their attitude toward "the provincials" and so many other areas of friction developed, that the fear of dictatorial government was not confined to fear of the French. The victory of the French and Indian war was considered a victory for Protestant freedom, for free government and the rights of man. And the idea began to take root—to the later consternation of the British—that there was no room in the New World for absolutism in Church or State, whether British or French.

The 17th century Puritans of England had forged the "Natural Rights" philosophy. John Milton wrote that "the power of kings and magistrates is nothing else but what is . . . committed to them in trust from

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

the people to the common good of all." Sandys had laid down that principle by challenging the "divine right of Kings." When the Puritan dissenters fled from England and Scotland to America they merely pushed off for 100 years the inevitable conflict between Calvinism and autocracy. The freedom of the wilderness only magnified the Puritan concept of self government. In England Harrington, Pym, Hampden and Sidney insisted on the Puritan doctrine of self rule. Thomas Hooker, and the Dutch Calvinist Grotius, challenged autocracy. Hooker, forced to flee from England, had preached a famous sermon in Hartford, Conn. in 1638. "The choice of public magistrate belongs unto the people by God's own allowance . . . it is in their power to set the bounds and limitations of the power and place into which they call them." And the greatest of all the Puritan writers on government, the English philosopher Locke, who had fled from England to the more tolerant Calvinistic Holland in 1690, had developed the Protestant doctrine that government is a "social compact between people and ruler." That is why de Tocqueville wrote in his classic book in 1835 ("Democracy in America") "The doctrine of the sovereignty of the people is a product of of Puritanism, of Calvinism."* And also "In America the spirit of religion and the spirit of liberty were one."**

It was this basic religious concept as it applied to the area of government which Samuel Davies and others

*Alexis de Tocqueville: *Democracy in America.* Translated by Henry Reeve, Esq., London, Sanders and Otley, 1835. Vol. I, pp. 20-25.

***Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 25.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

kept driving into the minds of Virginia's leaders. To Locke's thesis were added two logical corollaries—the idea of the relationship between the colonies and the Mother country as a social contract, in which the colonies themselves would have a voice, and the conviction that there should be no taxation without representation.

As John Adams wrote in 1818—"the Revolution began in 1620. It reached its climax in the middle third of the 18th century. It finally entered into the phase of war in 1776." It was men like Samuel Davies who precipitated the break with England and the development of the American way of life.*

The wide spread influence of Davies on the thinking of Virginia's leaders has been greatly overlooked. Patrick Henry's uncle, with whom young Patrick lived, was an ardent Anglican. But young Patrick, aided and abetted by his Mother, used to attend regularly the Presbyterian Church, some distance from his home, to sit under the preaching of Samuel Davies. It was from Davies that Patrick Henry got his basic ideas of government. "A king who annuls or disallows laws of so salutary a nature from being the father of his people degenerates into a tyrant and forfeits all rights to obedience." Henry's cry of "Give me liberty or give me death" was the Puritan concept he had learned from Samuel Davies.

Another great Virginian had been similarly schooled in the doctrine of natural rights,—Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson had been tutored in his youth by Presbyterian ministers, and in college days his professor of law was a Presbyterian minister. He was familiar with the

* *John Adams' Works*, 5, p. 492.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

struggles of the Scottish people against the government and the compacts always signed in the significant way "We the people," was a result of the victories over autocracy. Jefferson read the Puritan philosophers, and especially Locke.

Samuel Davies was the founder of Hanover Presbytery in Virginia and imbued the Presbytery with his ideas of government, and particularly with an insistence on the separation of church and state. After Davies' death it was Hanover Presbytery which made the first demand for a legal separation of Church and state in Virginia. Hanover Presbytery memorialized the Virginia Legislature for legal separation, and with it for other basic fundamental guarantees of freedom. Thomas Jefferson was chairman of the committee of the Legislature to which the memorial and the arguments of Hanover Presbytery were sent. The Presbytery not only asked for the dissolution of the Virginia union of Church and states but insisted that the support of any and all churches be left to the voluntary offering of friends and never to public taxation. Jefferson was much impressed with the petition and the argument of the Presbytery founded by Davies. The famous Virginia Bill of Rights was adopted June 12, 1776. Aiding Jefferson in the adoption of the first "Bill of Rights" in America, were George Mason, who had been trained in Locke's theory by his Scotch Irish Presbyterian uncle, and Princeton trained (Davies, as president had left his impress on Princeton), and Davies schooled Patrick Henry. It assumed the Compact theory of government, and completely separated church and state. It insisted that " . . . religion, or the duty we owe our Creator, and the manner of discharg-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

ing it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence; and that therefore all men are equally entitled to the free exerce of religion, according to the dictates of their conscience; and that it is the mutual duty of all to practice Christian forbearance, love and charity towards each other."

Jefferson, in the epitaph which he wrote for his own tomb, clearly states what he believed to be his two great contributions to his country "author of the Virginia Bill of Rights and founder of the University of Virginia."

Without detracting in the least from the honor due Jefferson, the long educational and preparatory ground work laid by Samuel Davies cannot be ignored.

Meanwhile the split in the church which had occurred over the acts of New Brunswick Presbytery, and had lasted 17 years, was healed. The rival Synods, the Synod of Philadelphia, and the much more aggressive Synod of New York, with New Brunswick Presbytery and Newcastle Presbytery, to which Davies belonged, its virile agents, had, in 1758, become the Synod of Philadelphia and New York. One of the first efforts of the union Synod was to develop the long needed college. The new college (The College of New Jersey, later called Princeton) was started in the manse of Jonathan Dickinson at Elizabeth, then moved to the manse of Aaron Burr, in Newark, when Dickinson died. The new Presbyterian College was founded on the one hand to combat the theological looseness which New England Colleges, Harvard and Yale, seemed to be developing, and on the other hand to prepare a broad Calvinistic education for service both to the Church and the nation. The original charter, now lost,

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

barred none on account of "any speculative principles of religion." Men of all faiths were on the board of trustees, and there were as many laymen as ministers. The charter was formed on the broad basis of the Adoption Act of 1729.

In 1751 the trustees, looking for a location, accepted the offer of the people of Princeton—200 hundred acres of woodland, 10 acres of cleared land, and a thousand pounds of money. Princeton, named after its earliest settler, Samuel Prince, was then a straggling little village in the heart of New Jersey, and even then the home of several wealthy and influential families. So the new Presbyterian College of the Colonies, named The College of New Jersey, began its vigorous life at Princeton.

To secure funds for buildings Synod appointed Gilbert Tennent, who had so long defended his father's school, the progenitor of Princeton, and Samuel Davies to travel to England and Scotland to collect funds from dissenters. It was a great team—Tennent, who had caused the original church split, and had afterwards been the leading spirit in the reunion, a bit gruff of manner, but confident and emphatic—Samuel Davies, one of Tennent's "sons in Christ," somewhat shy and humble, accustomed to the ways of polished Virginia society, ever the gracious gentleman, but very practical and unemotional, undoubtedly the greatest preacher of the colonies but not in the least aware of it. Both men, however, represented the New Light, or the New Brunswick Presbytery School of thought.

Fortunately for posterity Samuel Davies kept a diary of the European journey, beginning July 2, 1752, the day he left his Virginia home. From Virginia he

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

journeyed to Philadelphia, thence to Princeton, where he received a degree at commencement, and then to Philadelphia and ship board. The diary concludes with his return home Feb. 13, 1755. (Diary of Samuel Davies. In 5"Sketches of Virginia Historical & Biographical" by Wm. Henry Foote, D.D., Phila. Wm. S. Martien, 1850.)

Despite seasickness, toothache, and other disorders which multiplied their discomforts at sea, the trip over was an amazingly speedy and easy one of only five weeks duration. With letters from Presbyterian Governor Belcher, of New Jersey, and Whitefield's influence to open the way Tennent and Davies lost no time in launching their mission. They found the English Presbyterians less responsive than they had hoped; but because of the broad Christian basis on which Princeton was being built the other Calvinistic groups, the English Baptists and Congregationalists, were most responsive. Several leading Anglicans also made generous contributions.

Excerpts from Davies' diary reveal problems and reactions:

"London. Mr. Whitefield, having sent us an invitation last night to make his house our home during our stay here, we were perplexed what to do lest we should blast the success of our mission among dissenters, who are generally dissatisfied with him; with the advice of our friends and his we at length concluded that a public intercourse with him would be imprudent in our present situation; and visited him privately this evening, and the reception he gave us revived dear Mr. Tennent . . .

"1753 . . . Heard Mr. Whitefield in a large and spacious building. Though the discourse was incoher-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

ent yet it seemed to me better calculated to do good to mankind than all the accurate languid discourses I have heard. . . . "

" . . . Wm. Penn gave no encouragement on account of the Academy of Philadelphia about which he apprehended himself under peculiar obligations to promote. . . . "

" . . . Called on Lutherans, Baptists and Congregationalists . . . The Presbyterians in England, being generally Arminians or Socinians, seem shy of us. . . . "

In Glasgow, Scotland, Tennent and Davies were given the freedom of the city and warmly received. A letter from Gov. Dinwiddle, of Virginia, had precipitated the Glasgow welcome. They found, however, that Robert Cross, an Irish minister in Philadelphia who was a bitter opponent of the Log College, of New Brunswick Presbytery and particularly of Gilbert Tennent, and his Nottingham sermon, had sent a "malignant letter" urging the Scottish Assembly to turn down flatly any appeal for aid to the College of New Jersey. But the presence of Davies and Gilbert Tennent made the letter of no avail; and the Assembly unanimously supported the appeal, and opened the Scottish churches to further appeals. Tennent visited Ireland alone and was warmly and generously received.

One of the fascinating diary notes of Davies reads:

"Jan. 25. Dined with Mr. Bradbury, who has been in the ministry about fifty-seven years. He read us some letters which passed between Mr. Whitefield and him in 1741; occasioned by Mr. Whitefield's reproving him in a letter for singing a song in a tavern, in a large company, in praise of old English beef. The old gentleman sang it for us, and we found it partly com-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

posed by himself in the high flying days of Queen Anne. He is a man of singular turn, which would be offensive to the greatest number of serious people. But for my part I would say

> I knew 'twas his peculiar whim
> Nor took it ill as come from him."

(This is characteristic of Davies' diary—the expressed love and understanding of people—and the frequent verses.)

"Oct. 27. . . . Yesterday we visited Messrs. John and Charles Wesley. Notwithstanding all their wild notions they appear very benevolent, devout and zealous men that are laboring with all their might to awaken the secure world to a sense of religion; and they are honored with success. But I am afraid the encouraging so many illiterate men to preach the Gospel will have bad consequences. I heard one of them last Tuesday, but he explained nothing at all. His sermon was a mere huddle of pathetic confusion, and I was uneasy as it might bring reproach on experimental religion. The despised Methodists, with all their foibles, seem to me to have more of the spirit of religion than any people in the island. . . . "

"Jan. 15, 1754 . . . I find a great number of the (Presbyterian) clergy and laity have of late carried church power to an extravagant degree and deny to individuals the rights of judging for themselves, and insist upon absolute universal obedience to all the determinations of the General Assembly. . . . "

Despite his busy schedule Samuel Davies found time in England to appeal to the highest court for a decision on his Virginia Toleration Act case; again Davies

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

acted as his own lawyer and won the case, making any further legal interference with dissenters in the colonies impossible.

En route home Tennent and Davies boarded a ship in London harbor, only to have it spend five weeks in the estuary and the channel, waiting proper winds. When they did leave England's shore Nov. 18, they did not arrive in the colonies until Feb. 13, 1755, docking at York, Va., exhausted from seasickness.

They had been successful beyond hope. After all expenses were deducted they turned over to the Synod 3200 pounds! Work on Princeton's new building began immediately. Gov. Belcher, of New Jersey, had given Princeton 475 books and other substantial gifts. But he refused to let the Trustees call the new building Belcher Hall; he insisted that it be named after England's Calvinist king, who had given the dissenters the Toleration Act. So Nassau Hall it became, after Wm. of Orange. The gifts of the churches of England, Scotland and North Ireland gave the new college a broad foundation. The minutes of Ulster Presbytery urged all Ulster churches to take up collections for "the infant college of N. Jersey to the Interest of Religion and Learning."

Aaron Burr and his boys had scarcely settled in Princeton when Burr died. The Trustees immediately elected a new president—Burr's father-in-law, Jonathan Edwards, America's most learned theologian of the day; five weeks after Edwards arrived in Princeton he died of small pox.

Samuel Davies then became Princeton's fourth president. In his two years' presidency, until his death, he left a lasting impression on the school. With his amaz-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

ing combination of charm and common sense Davies "modernized" the college. He added secular studies to the curriculum, substituted the study of English composition for the memory courses in musty old Latin poetry through which students were supposed to have developed an English style; and he secured many new books on mathematics and physics for the library. He daringly introduced music in chapel services, to the delight of the students. When Davies purchased an organ President Stiles, of Yale, bitterly branded it "an innovation of ill consequence."

In his last baccalaureate sermon Davies summed up the Calvinistic ideal of education: "Be the servants of the Church; be the servants of your country; be the servants of all."

The conservatives were greatly alarmed at the many college innovations Davies had made in two short years; but the sheer charm and deep sincerity of the man won over his opposition. It is doubtful if any Princeton administration has ever accomplished so much on the campus in so short a time.

At Princeton Davies remained the great preacher who always seemed able, with clarity and conviction, to express the concepts of his church.

The English celebration of Christmas had deteriorated into a pagan bacchanalia, with "mummers" and "fools" wandering through the streets, and drunkeness everywhere. The Puritans, including the Presbyterians, would have nothing to do with so pagan a carnival.

In a typical sermon, which reveals his practical and appealing preaching style, Davies expressed the Presbyterian attitudes towards Christmas. The sermon

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

was preached in the chapel of the College of New Jersey on December 26, 1769.

The text is from Luke 2: 13-14, the angels' song: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will to men."

"This is the day which the Church of Rome, and some other churches that deserve to be placed in better company, have agreed to celebrate in memory of the Prince of Peace, the Saviour of the World, the Incarnate God, Immanuel. And doubt not, that many convert superstition into rational and scriptural devotion, and religiously employ themselves in a manner acceptable to God, though they want the sanction of Divine Authority for appropriating this day to sacred use. But alas! it is generally a season of sinning, sensuality, luxury and various forms of extravagance, as though men were not celebrating the birth of the holy Jesus, but of Venus, of Bacchus, whose most sacred rites were mysteries of iniquity and debauchery. The birth of Jesus was solemnized by armies of angels; they had their music and their songs on that occasion. But how different from those generally used by mortals. . . . Is the music and the dancing, the feasting and the rioting, the idle songs and the extravagant mirth of mortals at this season a proper echo or response to this angelic song? . . .

"To remember and religiously improve the incarnation of our divine Redeemer, to join the concert of angels and dwell in ecstatic meditation upon their song; this is lawful, this is a seasonable duty every day, and consequently upon this day . . .

"But as the seeds of superstition, which have sometimes grown up to prodigious heights, have been fre-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

quently sown and cherished by very inconsiderate incidents, I think it proper to inform you, that I may guard against this danger, that I do not set apart this day for public worship, as though it had any peculiar sanctity, or we were under any obligations to keep it religiously. I know no human authority that has the power to make one day more holy than another, or that can bind the conscience in such cases. As for divine authority, to which alone the sanctifying of days and things belongs, it has thought it sufficient to consecrate one day in seven to religious use for commemoration both of the birth of the world and the resurrection of its Great Author, or of the works of creation and redemption. This I would religiously observe; and inculcate the religious observance of it upon all. But as to other days, consecrated by the mistaken piety and superstition of men, and conveyed down to us as holy through the corrupt medium of human tradition, I think myself free to observe them or not, according to convenience and the prospect of usefulness; like other common days on which I may lawfully carry on public worship or not as circumstances require. . . ."

President Davies then adds that it is far from his design to widen differences between Christians; but he refers to Paul's plain denunciation of holy days, and adds his personal reasons for the non observance of Christmas Day.

"1. I take my religion just as I find it in the Bible without any imaginary supplement of human invention. . . ."

"2. For at least 300 years the Christian Church did not observe any day of commemoration of the birth of

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Christ, according to the church fathers." (There follows quotations from many of the early church fathers.)

"3. If a day should be religiously observed in memory of the birth of Christ it ought to be the day on which he was born. . . . But the day is altogether uncertain. . . . We know neither the day nor the year. . . ."

"4. Superstition is a growing evil and should be prevented at the very beginning. . . . In Italy . . we are told by travellers . . everything bears the appearance of poverty, notwithstanding all the advantages of climate and soil; and that is chiefly owing to the superstition of the people who spend most of their time in holy days. . . . And if you look over the Kalender of the Church of England, you will find that the festivals in one year amount to thirty-one, the feasts to no less than twenty-five, to which add the fifty-two Sundays in a year, and the while will be 178; so there are only 187 days left in the whole year for the common purposes of life. . . ."

Then President Davies concludes with a helpful spiritual message of the meaning of Christmas. And he closes his sermon by quoting a hymn of Isaac Watts. That he dare quote a hymn, and not a Psalm of David, revealed his courage in breaking tradition, and his modern mind.

No man of his generation did more for freedom of thought, freedom of worship and freedom in government than did Samuel Davies; and if the measure of preaching power is the influence of the sermons upon the thinking of the day, then, undoubtedly, he was the peer of all American preachers of the mid-eighteenth

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

century. And many of the principles upon which the Revolutionary War fathers built this free land were learned by them from the preaching of Samuel Davies.

He died at the early age of 48; and he is buried in the old grave yard in Princeton, where lie the mortal remains of so many of the early college presidents.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Chapter VII

JOHN WITHERSPOON

In 1815 John Adams, the second president of the United States, and previously the vice president under George Washington's eight years of the presidency, wrote to Thomas Jefferson, the third president, "As to the history of the revolution my ideas may be peculiar, perhaps singular. What do we mean by the revolution? The war? That was no part of the revolution; it was only an effect and consequence of it. The revolution was in the minds of the people, and this was affected from 1760 to 1775, in the course of fifteen years, before a drop of blood was shed at Lexington."*

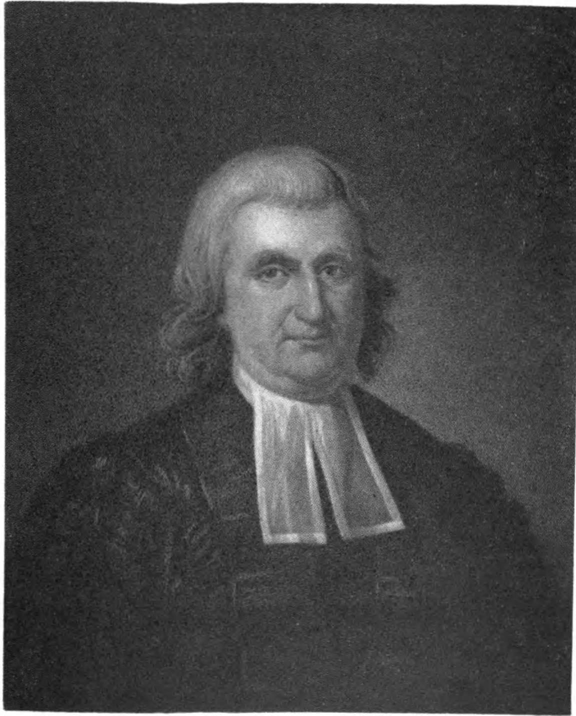
The idealogical conflict had been going on for three-quarters of a century. Immediately after the Great Awakening peace had finally terminated the long world wide war between France and England, a war which had been waged as far away as India, as well as all over Europe and in colonial America. The peace of Paris was signed in 1763, and France was driven from the continent of America, leaving England in full possession. Depleted England started at once to reorganize her colonies, and England's merchants were eager for profits to recompense the years of war losses. Heavy taxes were laid on all colonial trade and no colonial representation in Parliament was even considered. More and more trade restrictions were imposed,

*_The Works of John Adams_—Little Brown & Co., 1850-6. Vol. 10, p. 172.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN



JOHN WITHERSPOON

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

and royal tax pressures tended to increase. Free trade disappeared; American commerce was totally at the mercy of English merchants. The colonists, meanwhile, freed from the danger of attack by the French and Indians, developed a new feeling of solidarity. And the old opposition to imperial power, to taxation without representation, took more vital forms.

The journey across the sea to the new land was one which only the stout hearted and the lovers of freedom dared chance; the comfort loving and those who profited by the status quo stayed at home. Many of the immigrants, particularly Scotch and Scotch Irish, had not been able to afford the fare in their flight to freedom and had to sell themselves as slaves for a period of years to work off the passage price; indeed, they often had to enslave themselves for additional years to pay the passage of those who had died enroute. That increased their ire towards the British, especially when unfair taxes began to be imposed on them for quick financial profits after the war.

The economic and political pressures of England stirred up again the long smouldering and bitter hatred of the American colonists of the arrogance and greed of the English luxury classes and a renewed antagonism against interference by centralized overlords in the private freedom of individuals. A violent ideological conflict arose. The Calvinistic pulpits thundered forth the Christian foundation of American colonial thought —that in Christ and his principles alone can men be free. And the principles of Christ permitted no such doctrine as the divine right of the king, or government without the consent of the governed.

John Calvin had early laid down the principle that

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

it was Bible doctrine that the people rule, and that when the state no longer functioned properly the people should rebel. God had early made a compact with his people, it was only "in anger against their rebellious mood" that God allowed the kings in Old Testament days; and since even God acted that way all government was a compact, or a contract. For that principle Puritans had died in Cromwell's day.

In 1776 the population of the American colonies was 2,500,000. Of these 1,500,000 were Calvinists. The only group with an intercolonial organization among the Calvinists were the Presbyterians. There were 1,000,000 Anglicans, royalists, one-half of whom were slaves. A slave was listed as having the faith of his owner. There were 25,000 Catholics and 2,000 Jews.

It was in this crucial period of tremendous discussion and cold war, which Adams called "the period of Revolution," when there arrived from Scotland America's most potent leader for freedom, John Witherspoon. He had already made a wide reputation in Scotland and England when he became president of the newest and most influential college in the colonies, and the natural leader and spokesman of his fellow Calvinists, the dominant majority of Americans.

John Witherspoon was born in Scotland in 1723 and graduated from the University of Edinburgh. He was ordained to the ministry at 22, and served two large Scotch churches most successfully. In his later years he told Asbel Green that he would not have felt able to persevere in his chosen calling had it not been for his father's urging and insistence; for he always had a nervous system which was easily disturbed. He

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

was a good student, a fisherman, a golfer, and a proficient curler, and until his weight in later years made him keep his horse at a walk, an excellent horseman.

Despite the size of his last church in Paisley, Scotland, he was never a man to be confined to one parish; he was in constant discussions with "the moderates" and he wrote bitter satires against the move to make the Presbyterian ministry the voice of mere traditional morality, instead of doctrinal faith. His reputation spread through the Scottish church. Every Sunday in Paisley from twelve to fifteen hundred people crowded the church to hear him preach. Thus he had led twenty years of active church ministry before moving to the College of New Jersey, at Princeton.

Witherspoon was forty-five, at the very height of his power, when called to the presidency of the College of New Jersey. His able wife, three years his senior, at first made him decline the call, but she soon relented and came along with him and the five living children, ranging in age from eight to nineteen, to share the three months' confinement in the cramped ship's quarters, to brave the life of the frontier country and to share the duties of a financially straitened infant college.

When the Witherspoons landed in Philadelphia in August 1768 distinguished persons vied with each other to welcome and receive them. It is seldom that any man is welcomed with higher hopes; but never in his 26 years of American public service did the versatile, able, dynamic Scotchman disappoint those hopes. He exceeded them.

Witherspoon soon made Princeton the foremost American college. The other colleges were local;

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Princeton was intercolonial. Witherspoon greatly strengthened the standards of scholarship. Bringing 300 books with him from Scotland, he gathered more books from far and wide to form a substantial library. He introduced important educational changes. He developed a new technique, the lecture method, textbooks and new studies, especially Hebrew and Greek, in which he was highly proficient.

His coming had united the Old School and New School branches of the American Presbyterian Church so that a truly united church was eager to promote the college. Witherspoon travelled into New England to seek funds, wrote to the West Indies and to his friends in England and Scotland for continued financial support.

The college day began at 6 a.m. with morning prayers. No cuts were allowed from classes except by special permission from the president. Even Sunday was a day of study and of special work in theology and Bible subjects. There was no Christmas or Easter recess, but there was a short rest period of from two to three weeks in the spring and in the fall. Final examinations were given orally by the president and the tutors in "the presence of any other gentlemen of education who shall choose to be present."

Witherspoon soon attracted real students to the college from all over the colonies and through him Presbyterianism was given a prestige which dominated American thought. His students became the leaders of American life and thought. As the days went by Witherspoon's love of liberty led him to discuss all kinds of public questions verbally and in print; and his constant public expressions created even more interest in Princeton. It was not long before students of

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Whig tendencies in New England were deliberately shunning Harvard and Yale in order to come to the college where liberty was being emphasized. When the war was precipitated there were more Princeton men signers of the Declaration of Independence than Yale and Harvard men put together.

Meanwhile, despite his active duties as president of a growing college, Witherspoon acted as pastor of the Princeton town church, which met in the college every Sunday. In his earlier days in Princeton he did the pastoral work of the church. Most of all he gave Princeton an international reputation, and found friends and influence for it across the seas.

He was always faithful in attendance at Presbytery and in the duties of Synod. For it was he who, representing the best for which the New Lights and the Old Lights had valiantly struggled, actually reunited the Presbyterians of the colonies, welded them again into an harmonious whole, and made them America's most influential church in Revolutionary War days.

John Adams called him "a clear and sensible preacher." He had a strong Scotch accent. He never carried notes in the pulpit. While his sermons were strongly doctrinal, they dealt vigorously with the matters immediately at hand, especially during the days of the political struggles. He was not an orator, but he had no superior in the pulpit of the day. And he was undoubtedly the most scholarly man in the American churches of his day, a master of five languages, a writer and a pamphleteer of international influence. On the 17th day of May, 1776, a day appointed by Congress as a Day of Fasting and Prayer, Dr. Witherspoon preached a sermon which later was published

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

and dedicated to John Hancock, President of Congress, entitled "The dominion of Providence over the Passions of Men." The sermon rallied the advocates of freedom on this side of the water, and gave such great offense in England and Scotland that in Glasgow the author was branded "a traitor and a rebel."*

A heavy built man of medium stature, grave in repose, but with a sense of humor, he had that indefinable characteristic we call "presence," and men naturally looked to him for leadership. He was the idol of his students, for he exacted high scholarship but permitted them freedom of thought; he made strict demands, but always was fair and considerate. One of the many stories told of him contains the inevitable basin of water which a student placed above the door, aimed at another student; but the President of the College entered first and got the full impact of the water. The "Prexy's" rebuke was: "D'ye see, young man, how ye wet my new coat?" The culprit humbly apologized; the good doctor accepted the apology. But the student was not punished. For Witherspoon had a way with young men, and once they knew him they never forgot him.

He had the same attitude in the councils of the church. His genius for organization, his virile leadership, his sound common sense and his intense love of liberty were reflected through the church. The old countries, Scotland and Ireland, sent many ministers to the colonies; oftimes many of them had been deposed for heresy, immorality, drunkenness, or other conduct unbecoming a minister; and when they arrived they claimed to have lost their credentials. With his

*I. Collins. *President Witherspoon,* V. I, p. 84.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Scotch connections, Witherspoon was able to keep out the bad and to recommend the good among them. Witherspoon was frequently a fraternal delegate in conferences with the New England Congregationalists, and a strong advocate of union. When the Widows' Fund, the first social security, or insurance pension plan in the colonies, was developed by the Presbyterians in 1759, a charter was secured in Pennsylvania. But the charter of one colony did not apply in other colonies. It was Witherspoon who wrote for and secured the charter for New Jersey. His letter, written in 1772 to secure aid from a Scotch peer in obtaining the charter for the corporation contains many illuminating sentences:*

"My Lord, though I have not the honor of being personally known to your Lordship, I am encouraged to this application by your character which has been long known to me. . . . I was persuaded to move to America to take charge of a college with a royal charter in this province. . . . There are at this time under my tuition young gentlemen of the first fortune from almost every province on the continent, as well as several of the West India Islands. . . . in all the Middle Colonies from Maryland northward, the Presbyterians are a great majority and including the other subdivisions of non-Episcopals, Baptists, Quakers, etc. are to the Episcopalians at least ten to one in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York and possibly twenty to one in New England. Yet in all the royal governments the most illiberal and unjust partiality prevails in favor of the Church of England. This is more shameful that Pennsylvania is before our eyes, which though the

*Woods: *John Witherspoon*, p. 143 ff.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

last settled of any of them, is already superior to them . . . by the equal and impartial support it gives to every religious denomination. Every religious society there has the rights, including property, of a corporation.

In this province (New Jersey) though the non Episcopals are so great a majority and though the lower House of Assembly consists of a majority of Presbyterians, yet it is impossible to obtain a charter for any Presbyterian society. While any inconsiderable number of Episcopalians, though utterly unable to maintain a minister, but having a minister from the London Society, can obtain anything of that kind they see proper to ask. . . .

To get charters for houses of worship we have long despaired of, but lately applied to the governor for a charter of incorporation to raise a fund for the support of the widows and children of Presbyterian ministers. The council recommended to him to pass it on two conditions, that it should be wholly confined to charity and made accountable to the governor and council. This we readily complied with. Yet though the Governor at first seemed to be friendly he has all along put it off. . . .

There are now under my care many who in a very short time will be at the head of affairs in their several provinces, and I have already and shall continue to temper the spirit of liberty which breathes high in this country, with just sentiments, not only of loyalty to our excellent sovereign, in which they do not seem to be defective, but with a love of order, and an aversion to that outrage and sedition, into which the spirit

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

of liberty, when not reined, is sometimes apt to degenerate. . . ."

In spite of his slurs and half-hearted attitude towards the Presbyterians, whose love of liberty he did not like, Governor Franklin granted the charter, and Witherspoon and Elihu Spencer, pastor at Trenton, applied for the charter, which named Gov. Franklin among the Trustees. That was John Witherspoon's way; he did not stand by and permit people to be pushed around contrary to their rights; and he did not propose to waste his time in little meaningless skirmishes with nobodies; he carried the battle for "rights and liberties" to headquarters.

John Adams called Witherspoon "as high a son of liberty as any man in America." In fact, through their president, the name of Princeton became synonymous with the name of "Liberty." Bancroft wrote: "The first voice publicly raised in America to dissolve all connections with Great Britain came . . . from the Presbyterians." In 1763-64 the annual commencement exercises, lasting all day, were enlivened by such entertainment as "A Beautiful Harangue on the Advantages of Health," and debates in Latin and English on topics like "The Light of Reason Alone does not afford sufficient Motives to Virtue." By 1776, under Witherspoon, such topics were replaced with orations on "Liberty." The students carried their Witherspoon-inspired patriotism to the point where they would wear only American made woolens — and by 1775 they had formed their own military company. The college was closed during the war itself.

It was this influence which Dr. Witherspoon had abroad which made his leadership so vital for the cause of liberty and self rule, and precipitated anger and

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

hate of him among the British as "the fomenter of Revolution." From the very first of his Jersey days he was an American to the core. The resources and possibilities of this land intrigued him. He was delighted with the men he met and the towns they had built. He was a promoter of a land company to develop Protestant migration to Nova Scotia, and he invested in lands in Vermont. In private letters he assured the people in Scotland and England that the people in America were just as respectable, fully as civilized and just as learned as they were. He warned the British that if they continued their heavy tax policy they would lose the colonies. In an article "on Conducting the American Controversy" he wrote: "I have often said to friends in America . . it is not the king and the ministry so much as the prejudice of Britons with which you have to contend."

In July 1774 he represented Somerset County in a Jersey convention to promote the American cause. Witherspoon and William Livingston, a Trustee of Princeton, urged the convention to adopt a rigorous resolution against tax on tea. He became a member of the Provincial New Jersey State Congress and guided the people of the colony into cooperation with other colonies in boycott action against Britain. It was Witherspoon, more than any other Jerseyman, who stirred the state for liberty. Nor did he confine his activities to Jersey. Up and down the seaboard he spoke, he wrote, he pleaded that the British were coming; and wherever he went regiments sprang up in defense of freedom.

When the preliminary Continental Congress was called in Philadelphia John Adams and the New Eng-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

land delegation made their way through New York and North Jersey. There they were frequently hooted and reviled as rebellious advocates of independence. But when they got to Princeton the reception was different. The President and the faculty and all the students of Princeton were "Sons of Liberty," and Witherspoon welcomed them in his own house and drank coffee with them in their lodgings.

Witherspoon's resolute and unyielding spirit directed the attention of all America to New Jersey. He personally was head of a local committee watching suspicious persons, in 5th column activities, and corresponding far and wide. He opened the New Jersey Constitutional Convention, June 11, 1776, with prayer, and was active in the development of the State Constitution, chairman of a three-man committee, of which the Rev. Jacob Green, of Hanover, was a member. He personally organized and helped drill five companies of militia men, including his own son, from Somerset County. The Princeton Scotchman's caustic pen helped create demands for an independent central colonial government.

He became a member of the Continental Congress a few days before the signing of the Declaration of Independence. When John Dickinson, of Delaware, in the debate over the Declaration, suggested that the time was not ripe, Witherspoon interrupted to say: "In my judgment the country is not only ripe for the measure but in danger of becoming rotten for the want of it." Arguing for the Declaration Dr. Witherspoon made a famous speech which began: "There is a tide in the affairs of men, a nick of time. We perceive it now before us."

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

The rebellion against Britain demanded reasons which would appeal to the mind of the world. The Declaration of Independence was a philosophical statement of those reasons. It ignored British custom and law and appealed to "natural law," the appeal which the Puritans had been making for many generations. No state can give or take away human rights. They come from a Higher Authority than any state.

The Declaration of Independence bore a strong resemblance in its basic appeal to the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, written and signed by North Carolina Presbyterians a year previous, in May 1775. Both these declarations had a common source of inspiration in the various Presbyterian ecclesiastical covenants against the despotism of the king and loyalist party in Scotland in 1580, 1643, 1648 and later—for in each of these covenants "the people" made a solemn league and declaration of principle.

Thomas Jefferson, who wrote the Declaration of Independence, had for his teacher at the age of nine William Douglas, a Scotch Presbyterian. At the death of his father Jefferson had studied under the Rev. Mr. Maury, a Scotch Presbyterian, and Dr. William Small, a Scotch Presbyterian minister, had been his favorite teacher at college. He was therefore familiar with the Scotch covenants. And he was schooled in the teachings of Locke, Sidney, Hobbes and Hooker. He had just undergone the experience of the development of the Bill of Rights in Virginia.

Jefferson's original copy of the Declaration of Independence had in it a phrase derived from the French natural philosophers: ". . . that all men are created equal; that from the equal creation they derive rights

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

inherent and inalienable, among which are the preservation of life and liberty, etc." John Adams, raised in the Puritan Calvinist tradition, whose early ambition was to become a Presbyterian minister, Benjamin Franklin, also trained in the Calvinist ethic, and Livingstone, a vigorous Presbyterian and friend of Witherspoon, undoubtedly changed that phrase to its present form. For they, with Sherman, were the other members of the committee to which Jefferson gave his original draft for revision and correction. The revised form expressly says: ". . . that all men are created free and equal, and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among them being life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. . . . When men become dissatisfied with the existing regime they reach out for what ought to be, as they conceive it rationally, asking the help of God."* That is basic Calvinism, basic Protestantism, and from the very beginning of the movement was the expressed belief of the Puritans, and especially of the Presbyterians, in the colonies.

Without distracting in the least from the genius of Thomas Jefferson it must be recorded that very few of the ideas of the Declaration originated with him.** It was the Puritan concept of government as a compact, and freedom as the gift of God to man. Jefferson was wise enough to put the power of his mind and personality behind the great truths of those concepts.

"We claim our rights," wrote John Dickinson, who as delegate from Delaware refused to sign the Declaration of Independence because it was "too premature,"

*Carl Becker: The *Declaration of Independence,* pp. 53, 78, 142 ff.

**Schreger: *The Evoluton of Modern Liberty.* p. 198 ff.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

but who was none-the-less a vigorour patriot, "not from parchments and seals but from a higher source, from the King of Kings and the Lord of all the earth." A distinguished Englishman said after the Declaration of Independence reached England, "If you ask any American who is his master he will tell you he has none, nor any governor but Jesus Christ."*

The tendency of the early 18th century from Isaac Newton's day was to deify nature; so the 18th century deified nature and denatured God. John Locke, the distinguished Calvinist philosopher, broke down the partition between the material and the spiritual. The appeal to God, nature and reason, was made the basis of religion (for God was the creator of nature and reason). Thus the natural philosophy of John Locke had been used by the American Puritan pulpit to confirm the American belief in freedom from the dictatorship of kings. No king could claim to rule by divine right; the form of government should always be determined by the people. That is the religious basis of the Declaration of Independence. God is the author of freedom; God repeatedly made compacts with men in the past; and all government has its foundation in compact and mutual consent, or else it proceeds from fraud and violence.

In the debate over the Declaration of Independence, John Witherspoon, the only clergyman member of Congress, never left any doubt about his opinions. To him debate was hardly necessary.

Twelve colonies voted for the Declaration on July 4, 1776. The members did not sign on that date. It was not until July 19th that they ordered a rough draft

*Force: *American Archives* (4th series), pp. 1, 77 ff.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

engrossed, although copies had already been printed and sent to the army and the Legislatures. It was not until August 2nd, 1776 that all present signed; absentees signed later; but the names of the signers were not made public until December, 1776.

When the Declaration of Independence was made public it was enthusiastically received by the Whigs, and treated with derision and scorn by the Tories. Typically, by suggestion of John Witherspoon, Princeton's Nassau Hall was brilliantly illuminated with lighted candles in all the windows and a great celebration and rally by the students on the campus until late hours of the night.

On October 31, 1776, the Rev. Charles Inglis, ardent Tory and rector of Trinity Church, New York, bitterly wrote:

". . . although civil liberty was the ostensible object, the bait that was flung out to catch the populace at large and engage them in the rebellion, yet it is now past all doubt that an abolition of the Church of England was one of the principle springs of the dissenting leaders' conduct and hence the unanimity of dissenters in this business. Their universal defection from government, emancipating themselves from the jurisdiction of Great Britain and becoming independent, was a necessary step towards this grand object. I have it from good authority that the Presbyterian ministers, at a Synod where most of them in the middle colonies were collected, passed a resolve to support the continental congress in all their measures. This, and this only, can account for their conduct; for I do not know one of them, nor have I been able after strict inquiry, to hear of any, who did not, by preaching and every

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

effort in their power, promote all the measures of the congress, however extravagant."*

The good rector could not understand the Calvinistic love for freedom in the new world and its corollary—the separation of church and state. No wonder Witherspoon, behind whom the Synod rallied with complete unanimity, was a frightful ogre to the Tory mind.

Samuel Seabury, who strangely was destined to come back several years after the war as the first American Episcopal bishop, castigated Witherspoon and the other "radical leaders" in Congress and wrote: "If I must be enslaved let it be by a king . . and not by a parcel of upstart, lawless men. . . . He preferred being devoured by the "jaws of a lion" to being "gnawed to death by rats and vermin."

While representing New Jersey in the Continental Congress for six years Dr. Witherspoon was absent from the meetings of his Presbytery and his Synod; but he kept in constant communication with his ministerial brethren and he always expressed their unanimous opinions. Presbytery and Synod meetings were hard to get to, for there was much detail work to be done in Congress, and British success forced the Congress to vary their meeting places. When the British captured Philadelphia, Congress had to flee to Baltimore, and at other times to Easton, Lancaster and York. Once it met in Witherspoon's Nassau Hall. Even the good Scotch college president was forced to gallop his horse at times to keep ahead of the British army,

---

**Documentary History of the State of New York* (Albany 1850), vol. 3, p. 1050-1 ff.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

though with his increased weight he liked to keep his horse at a walk.

Witherspoon served indefatigably on numerous important committees of the Continental Congress. He was the forceful personality on the vital committee of supplies for the Army, a committee whose duties challenged all the ingenuity of his Scotch mind, for there was no national currency, and Tory opposition everywhere was great. He was on the Committee of Finance, whose problem was to secure some kind of a staple currency which could be valid in the several colonies, each of which had its own currency. He was on the Committee of Foreign Affairs which, at long last, secured French aid to help win the war. And he was on the Committee of The Board of War. In fact, there was no important committee of the Congress, created to win the war, which did not depend on the ability, and the leadership of John Witherspoon. He was a close confidant and friend of George Washington, who had few close friends. John Witherspoon was sent on an official visit to the Army at Valley Forge and elsewhere, and, if the facts were known, Witherspoon would be credited with renewing the morale of the army in its times of defeat and despair. And Witherspoon's pen and voice were always active among the civilian population, stirring up the sentiments of liberty. Next to Tom Paine, his pamphlets were the most influential in the dark days of the war. He thoroughly put into action the concluding sentiments of the speech he had made in favor of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence: "For my own part, of property I have some, of reputation more. That reputation is staked, that property is pledged, on the issue of this

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

contest; and although these gray hairs must soon descend to the sepulchre, I would infinitely rather that they descend thither by the hand of the executioner than desert at this crisis the sacred cause of my country."

In November 1776 at the very darkest period of the Revolutionary War, when the Continental Army, after a series of routs was in full retreat across New Jersey, and it began to look as if the American cause were hopeless, Witherspoon, as member of a special committee of three of the Congress "to inquire into and render redress to the utmost of their power the just grievances of the soldiers" did much to rally the patriots. The army, discouraged and poorly supplied, with enlistments expiring, was held together mostly by the vigorous efforts of this committee.

It was because of the desperate task before this Committee that John Witherspoon went to the vigorous defense of Thomas Paine. In his personal life Paine exhibited all that Witherspoon detested; but Paine's brilliant pen captured the enthusiasm of his readers with thoughts and ideas Witherspoon was trying to promote.

Seldom has there ever been a stranger contrast between a man and his work than is exhibited in the life of Paine. He was a consummate master of the skillful phrase and the dramatic expression. Few men of any period have had his power to inflame imagination. Yet his life was dissolute. Born in England he married, lived with his wife until he got all her money, and then abandoned her. He married again and that wife died of ill treatment. He lived with a widow, who

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

owned a store, got her business, then ran away with her daughter. Half wretched and starved in Paris, his talents were recognized by Benjamin Franklin. Sent to Philadelphia, and working on a newspaper there, his talents were again recognized by Dr. John Rush, of the University of Pennsylvania, an active Presbyterian layman. He got him to write "Common Sense," which expressed the thoughts of dissenters in a brilliant and stirring fashion. When, after the early defeats of the colonies, the pompous Lord Howe offered a proclamation of mercy to all Americans who would now come over to the British side, Paine's reply, widely circulated by the Whigs was "The United States of America will sound as pompously in history as the Kingdom of Great Britain." "The cause of America is the cause of mankind." "There is something absurd in supposing a continent to be permanently governed by an island!"

Because of his alcoholic and financial absurdities many people objected to Paine; but Witherspoon, as a member of the all important committee of Congress, went to his aid.

"Common Sense," written by Paine in January 1776, spread everywhere. It was estimated that one person out of five in the colonies bought the little book. And each reader passed it on to friends. After the bitter defeat on Long Island and during the utter rout through New Jersey, the rector of an Anglican church in Philadelphia, wrote a letter to George Washington asking him to surrender for the sake of the colonies. Paine then wrote the first of thirteen papers called "The Crisis." "These are times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

this crisis, shrink from the service of their country." Paine had learned his concept of government from Hooker and Locke and the Calvinists; but he never gave them credit. He boldly assumed himself a Columbus, discoverer of new ideas.

Paine was made secretary of the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the Congress, a committee on which John Witherspoon was most active. But later Paine became involved in a financial scandal and breach of trust and was summarily dismissed. Even Washington was then unable to secure him aid. He became a drunken sot, and went around with long nails and unkempt appearance. Witherspoon did all he could to aid him. He respected and used Paine's talents and promoted and used them for the cause of liberty; but he knew Paine well enough to oppose his nomination for public office.

Witherspoon's passion was to win the battle for freedom, and to use every legitimate agency which could help accomplish that goal.

He was greatly disturbed by the lack of authority of the Congress; for actually there was no central government. At the outbreak of the war each colony was an independent sovereignty as a colony of Great Britain. Witherspoon insisted that the exigencies of the time demanded some form of general government. The committee consisted of one delegate from each state. The draft of the Articles was presented to the Colonial Congress on July 12, 1776, and debated at intervals until November, 1777, when they were adopted. Witherspoon, a leader in the movement for adoption, representing New Jersey, signed for his state, insisting that "our greatest danger is dis-union

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

among us." On February 3, 1781 he proposed to clothe Congress with authority to impose imports and regulate taxes. The Bill passed but failed to get the support of the thirteen separate colonies. In 1776 Witherspoon took the lead in opposing paper money, very much against the popular opinion of the day. Afterwards some of his opponents in Congress insisted that he publish his monetary ideas. So in due season they appeared in a product of a Philadelphia printing press as: "An Essay on money as a Medium of Currency."* Thus Witherspoon antedated Alexander Hamilton in ideas of finance.

Witherspoon was a member of the New Jersey Provincial Congress in 1776, the State Senate in 1780, the State Assembly in 1783 and the Constitutional Assembly in 1789.

His keen, practical common sense is revealed in his writings. One sermon, a calm and striking statement of the reasons of America's demand for the right to control her own affairs, caused great indignation and wrath in England and Scotland, where it was widely circulated. This "The Dominion of Providence over the Passions of Men" was preached in Princeton on May 17, 1776 on a fast day appointed by Congress. In it are such convincing statements as: " . . . There is not a single instance in history in which civil liberty was lost and religious liberty preserved entire . . . If therefore we yield up our temporal property, we at the same time deliver the conscience into bondage . . . He is the best friend to American Liberty, who is the most sincere and active in promoting true and undefiled religion, and who sets himself with the greatest firmness

*Humphrey: *Nationalism and Religion in America,* pp. 83-89.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

to tear down profanity and immorality . . . Habits of industry prevailing in a society not only increase wealth, as their immediate effect, but they prevent the introduction of many vices, and are intimately connected with sobriety and good morals . . . True religion is nothing less but an inward temper and outward conduct suited to your state and circumstances in providence at any time . . . And as peace with God and conformity to Him, adds to the sweetness of created comforts while we possess them, so in times of difficulty and trial, it is the man of piety and inward principle that we may expect to find the uncorrupted patriot, the useful principle and the invincible soldier . . . God grant that in America true religion and civil liberty may be inseparable and that the unjust attempts to destroy the one may in the issue tend to the support and establishment of both."*

Capable beyond most men of seeing the historic and cosmopolitan significance of the Revolution, gifted with keen insight, the power to think clearly, and the skill of public expression, John Witherspoon had the moral greatness to risk his own popularity for an unpopular cause. He dared tell the American people that as great as liberty is, liberty is not everything, and that the disregard of moral obligations was an even greater peril than the Red Coats and the Indians and the Hessians. Incompetence, selfishness, greed, shallow and anarchial politics he insisted were as great dangers as the mightiest invading army. Advocate of revolution, he none the less was an even greater advocate of law

Works of John Witherspoon, Vol. 5, pp. 176-216.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

and order.* He has never been fully given his rightful place as one of the great fathers of the American republic.

Paul Wentworth, New Hampshire loyalist and Fifth Columnist, a New Hampshire agent in London, had a great scheme to buy off the American leaders in the early beginnings of the War, as the British later bought off Benedict Arnold. Wentworth insisted that America was really an incongruous federation of three sections, the Eastern Republic of New England, the Middle Republic from the Hudson to the Potomac, and the Southern Republic. Each had its own leaders, as he saw it, and each section's leaders were jealous of those of the other sections. "Only Franklin's influence is general . . . I believe Washington is jealous of Dr. Franklin and those who are governed by republican principles, from which he is very adverse." And he lists as the several leaders of great influence in the "three republics" the Rev. John Witherspoon, whom he brands a "zealot and a republican, but prone for the love of power and riches." Lord Carlisle, copying Wentworth's list, heavily stars the name of Witherspoon, along with several others, as the man of influence, who, if they could be bought off with money or honors, could stop the Revolution.** Wentworth's judgment of Witherspoon's love of money was as wide of the mark as his judgment of Washington's jealousy of Franklin; but at least he knew Witherspoon enough to brand him "a zealot and a republican," and list him among the several American leaders of major importance.

*Humphrey: *Nationalism and Religion in America,* pp. 96 ff.
***Secret History of the American Revolution,* Carl Van Doren, pp. 77, 78.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

The greatest compliment given the influence of Witherspoon was the bitter hatred of the enemy. British troops on Long Island hanged effigies of Washington, Lee, Putnam and Witherspoon—with the three generals listening to Witherspoon—considered the civilian leader of the Revolution by the British.

A Tory satirist, Jonathan Odell, wrote of Witherspoon:

"Known in the pulpit by seditious toils,
Grown into consequence by civil broils . . .
. . . unhappy Jersey mourns her thrall,
Ordained by vilest of the vile to fall;
To fall by Witherspoon! . . . O name, the course
Of sound religion and disgrace by verse.
Member of Congress we must hail him next
'Come out of Babylon' is now his text.
Fierce of the fiercest, foremost of the first,
He'll rail at kings, with venom well nigh burst;
I'd rather be a dof than Witherspoon.
Be patient, reader, for the issue trust;
His day will come, remember heaven is just!"

Early in January, 1777, at the crucial Battle of Trenton, where the apparently crushed Americans suddenly won a dramatic victory, the Rev. John Rosbrugh, pastor of a Presbyterian Church, and a chaplain in the American army, was captured by the Hessians and bayoneted to death. The Hessians were sure that he was Dr. Witherspoon and showed him no mercy.

Tories assailed him from every angle. Dr. Rush, a good American, claimed that his influence in Congress was hampered and freedom of his speech limited be-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

cause Witherspoon wore his academic, or ministerial robe. (Even today in Edinburgh university students wear their gowns into town restaurants and stores. Witherspoon was following the Scottish tradition.) But it is difficult to imagine him having more influence in Congress.

Horace Walpole in the British Parliament declared: "Cousin America has run off with a Presbyterian parson," meaning Witherspoon.* Hugh Arnot, an Edinburgh character who was an English royalist at heart, circulated through Scotland a pamphlet which had an introduction about one "Dr. Silverspoon, preacher of sedition in America." The pamphlet explained the American rebellion in these terms: "Rebellion is due to drunkenness, and drunkenness is of two kinds—natural and political; the former is due to liquour and the latter to zeal." Many of the leaders of the English Parliament called the American Revolution, "a Presbyterian rebellion."

In our own time John Ranke, the German historian, wrote "John Calvin is the practical founder of America." In 1927 Andre Siegfried, a French student of American life, told his fellow countrymen that America "is not only Protestant but essentially Calvinistic in her religion and social development." John Witherspoon was the leader of the Calvinistic practical and political philosophy in the days of revolutionary struggle.

Asbel Green, who knew Witherspoon well, wrote of him that "he had more of the quality called presence than any other individual with whom the writer has ever had intercourse, Washington excepted."

---

*Collins: *President Witherspoon,* Vol. 2, p. 196.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Witherspoon's conception of the political struggle was not only religious but practical. The separation of the colonies from the mother country would not merely grant religious and other freedoms to Americans, but it would lead to other advantages as well. His vision of the future possibilities of America was a rosy one. When Asbel Green told him of a new turnpike proposed from Philadelphia to Lancaster to relieve the burdens of the Pennsylvania frontier farmers, Witherspoon replied: "You are not to be surprised if you live to see a turnpike from Philadelphia to the Pacific." Perhaps the old seer was not aware of how far the Pacific was from the east, and the grave difficulties to be encountered enroute. Asbel Green did not live to see that day. But it is curious to remember that the original Lincoln Highway from New York to San Francisco passes by the gate of Witherspoon's old Nassau Hall.

In the after war days Witherspoon kept insisting on and working for a more authoritative central government; but he could not see the wisdom of a separate city for a new Federal capital.

Before the Congress demanded so much of his time Witherspoon exerted great spiritual leadership over the churches of the Middle Colonies. For the Synod he wrote official calls for "prayer and fasting" "for the dark and threatening aspect of public affairs, both civil and religious."

As chairman of a special committee of the 1775 Synod he prepared the following pastoral letter to the churches:

"Very dear Brethren: The Synod of New York and Philadelphia being met at a time when public affairs

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

wear so threatening an aspect and when . . . all the horrors of a civil war throughout this great Continent are to be apprehended . . . cannot help thinking that this is a proper time pressing all of every rank, seriously to consider the things that belong to their eternal peace . . . Surely it becomes those who have taken up arms, and profess a willingness to hazard their lives in the cause of liberty, to be prepared for death, which to many must be certain, and to every one is a possible or probable event. . . .

Suffer us to lay hold of your present temper of mind and to exhort, especially the young and vigorous, by assuring them that there is no soldier so undaunted as the pious man, no army so formidable as are those who are superior to the face of death. . . .

Be careful to maintain the union which at present subsists through all the colonies . . . we hope you will leave nothing undone which can promote this end. . . . In particular as the Continental Congress, now sitting in Philadelphia, consists of delegates chosen in the most free and unbiased manner by the body of the people, let them not only be treated with respect and encouraged in their difficult service—not only let your prayers be offered to God for his direction in their proceedings—but adhere firmly to their resolutions; and let it be seen that they are able to bring out the whole strength of this vast country to carry them into execution. We would advise . . . that a spirit of candor, charity and mutual esteem be preserved and promoted towards those of different religious denominations . . . the experience of our happy concord hitherto in a state of liberty should engage all to unite in support of the common interest; for there is no example in history in

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

which civil liberty was destroyed, and the rights of conscience preserved entire. . . .

It is with the utmost pleasure we remind you that the Continental Congress determined to discourage luxury in living, public diversions and gaming of all kinds. . . . The greatest service which magistrates, or persons in authority can do with respect to the religion or morals of the people, is to defend and secure the rights of conscience in the most equal and impartial manner. . . . We think it of importance at this time, to recommend to all of every rank, but especially to those who are called into action, a spirit of humanity and mercy . . . that meekness and gentleness of spirit which is the noblest attendant of true valor. That man will fight most bravely, who never fights until it is necessary, and who ceases to fight as soon as the necessity is over."

The American revolution was actually a conservative religiously inspired counter revolution in the name of freedom against the new European tyranny of a rational liberalism and a political and an economic despotism. "This war is at bottom a religious war," wrote one of Lord Dartmouth's representatives from New York in 1776.

John Witherspoon was neither a formal thinker nor a great theologian. He was primarily a man of action and a leader of men who interpreted Christianity in terms of practical life. In the rough and tumble struggles of his day he vigorously took his part. In his papers there was found a copy of a catechism he had written about the celebrated Philadelphia Anglican rector, the Rev. Jacob Duche, a pamphlet which had had wide and enormous circulation. Duche was rector

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

of a fashionable church, renowned for his flowery oratory, his beautiful powdered curls, his stylish clothes and his formal pulpit attires. He welcomed the Continental Congress into Philadelphia, opened Congress with prayer, and expressed publicly strong American sentiments. After the Americans began to suffer defeat after defeat, however, and were forced to flee in rout across New Jersey, and the British captured Philadelphia, Duche proclaimed himself an Anglican in every sense and an agent of the king. He became more pro-British and anti-American as the days went by. And he even had the audacity to write a letter to General Washington suggesting that he surrender. That stirred Witherspoon's blood; the widely circulated pamphlet resulted. Among the questions and answer are these: "Q. Who is a fop? Ans. The Rev. J. Duche. Who is a robber? Ans. The Rev. J. Duche. Q. What is your reason for this opinion? Ans. Because the late chaplain of Congress has entered with zeal into the service of Sir. Wm. Howe. Q. Who is a fool? A. The Rev. J. Duche . . . Q. Who is an ass? Ans. The Rev. J. Duche . . . Q. How comes it that so many inconsistencies meet in one man? A. I can give no other acct of it but that if God Almighty had given a man a topsy turvey understanding, no created power will ever be able to set it right and uppermost. . . Q. What is your opinion of him? A. He is a wretch without principle, without parts, without prudence, and that by an unexpected effort he has crept up from the ground floor of contempt to the first story of detestation. . . . "

When the war was over Witherspoon busied himself trying to refinance and reorganize Princeton. New Jersey had been "the cockpit of the Revolution"

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

and Princeton students had been active in the American cause; so the college had been closed during the days of fighting.

George Washington, out of his admiration of and friendship for John Witherspoon attended one Princeton commencement, and sat for the famous Peale portrait.

In national affairs Witherspoon kept working for a stronger central government. Meanwhile, he saw the necessity of expanding the Synods of the Presbyterian Church into a new national church government called the General Assembly. He made the proposal in 1785 and was made chairman of the committee to carry it out.

Meanwhile he had taken time to visit Scotland to secure financial aid for his college. But the trip was of little value. He was stunned to find that the people in Scotland were bitter and unresponsive, for they looked upon him as one of the prime instigators of the war. And action like that from a man who had left Scotland so recently was "treason." On his way back, during a storm at sea, Witherspoon was thrown and received a serious eye injury. Combined with an injury in the other eye he had received when thrown from his horse in the hills of Vermont this led to eventual blindness.

As chairman of a committee he prepared a new American Book of Discipline and Government and corrected the proof of an edition of the Bible printed by Isaac Collins of Trenton, which omitted the dedication to King James.

He molded and framed the present organization of the Presbyterian Church, with its three governments, the local government, called a Presbytery, the

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

state government, called a Synod, the national government, called The General Assembly.

It so happened that his committee framing a new national government for the Presbyterian Church was in session in Philadelphia at the same time the national Constitutional convention was in session. No other city in America was so rich, so famous, and so metropolitan as Philadelphia. It actually then was one of the largest cities of the English speaking world. Its street signs were in German and English; and from Philadelphia the main road went west.

The national constitutional convention had been preceded by an informal conference at Annapolis, Maryland, which had been called by James Madison, of Virginia, trained in Princeton and strongly influenced by Witherspoon. At the convention in Philadelphia many of the delegates had been pupils of Witherspoon and most of them were his strong admirers. He and other Presbyterian ministers had been insisting on a stronger national government. The governing body of the Presbyterian church in the colonies had, since 1729, been the only intercolonial government in America, with its local representatives elected by the people. Thus the Presbyterian church government had become a stirring and practical example of representative government to the delegates to the national constitutional convention.

That the Presbyterians were in Philadelphia developing a stronger national government for their church, while the national constitutional convention was in session, was no accident. Two bodies of men had gathered with the same ideas to do the same thing—one in the state, the other the church. They stayed at the

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

same taverns and ate and fraternized together. John Witherspoon divided his time between the statesman and the preachers. Many of the delegates to the national convention were Presbyterians, and the great majority of them were Calvinists. Hugh Williamson, the North Carolina delegate, was a Presbyterian minister; James Wilson, of Pennsylvania, was an active elder in the Carlisle Church. All but one of the New Jersey commissioners were active Presbyterians. James Madison and Edmund Randolph of Virginia, Oliver Ellsworth of Connecticut, Gunning Badford of Delaware, Williams Davies of North Carolina, and many others were graduates of Princeton, and trained under John Witherspoon. Two thirds of the people in the colonies were Calvinists. And the men at the Constitutional Convention were their representatives.

One of the most vital questions considered in the Constitutional Convention was the question of slavery. If the population of states was to be considered in representation, are slaves to be counted as human beings or property? The Church had something to say about that.

When the two bodies adjourned, they had done pretty much the same thing. Built side by side in the same city, at the same hour, by men of similar ideas, who knew each other intimately, the two institutions, the American Government and the Presbyterian Church might almost have been born under the same roof.

The National Constitution ultimately developed and later adopted by the states, follows the general lines of a combination of the Congregational and the Presbyterian forms of government. It is not a personal

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

government which the American Constitution defines; it is a constitutional government by law. Congregationalism is a confederacy of independent churches; and Presbyterianism is an organized central government. The Presbyterian influence on the makers of the American Constitution is clear—the government is not a government of an indispensable man, but a government of elected representatives, who function through committee action and majority rules. New England, being Congregational, saw to it that there was a Congregational factor in the national Constitution. The Congregational influence limited the power of the central government and reserved many rights to the states (rights, which, in our recent days, have been taken away from the states). The happy balance of one house of Congress, in which the states are equally represented, with the other house, where representation is according to population, is a combination of two systems, both of which are the outgrowth of Calvinism—or representative government.

The religious influence upon the forming of our national constitution is not fully recognized. The stylist of the Constitution, the man who did most of the phrasing of the final product, was Gouverneur Morris. While he himself was not an active member of the church, he had been educated for King's College at the Huguenot Academy, and among his closest friends were the Livingstone family, of Elizabeth Town, N. J., active Presbyterians. Morris picked up the phrase "we the people of New Hampshire," and "we the people" of the other colonies, a phrase commonly used by Calvinists, and first used by Presbyterians in Scotland in their struggles and agreements

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

with the persecuting Scottish kings, and combined these phrases into the telling beginning of the American Constitution, "we the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union." Thus the very phrase which makes the American Constitution unique among the written constitutions of the world, voices the old Scottish Presbyterian Church covenants, and puts the emphasis on government by the people, which is essential Calvinism. This was the emphasis which Witherspoon had been constantly insisting on, and which he bred in the minds of all students at the College of New Jersey, and in all people with whom he worked.

Almost immediately after the adoption of the national Constitution, upon which he had had such a strange indirect influence, John Witherspoon led in the creation of a larger national form of government for the Presbyterian Church. Following the principles adopted from the Bible by John Calvin in Geneva, Switzerland and paralleling the new national government, the Presbyterian constitution formed a local government, the Presbytery, a state government, the Synod, and a national government, the General Assembly. On each level, however, there was a single legislative house, instead of a dual house. Ministers and ruling elders were equally represented; and the local churches elected representatives to the local government, while the Presbytery, or local government, elected representatives to the state and national governments. Shunning any remote possibility of the dictatorship of a bishop, the presiding officer of each level of government was strictly limited in power, as his name, "Moderator," implies.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

The first Presbyterian General Assembly met in Philadelphia in 1789 at the very time the national Constitutional was adopted by the last state necessary, and soon after George Washington was enroute to be installed as president at the recently chosen temporary capitol, New York. Witherspoon called the Assembly to order, opened it with prayer, and presided. He prepared the Assembly's address to George Washington.

The war, the strain and worry, the physical exertion, the long years he served his country without salary, had left him in straitened circumstances. He had lost money in investments in Vermont lands, and as a result of the war, similar investments in Nova Scotia had added to his losses. And he was getting old and feeble and nearly blind. But to the end he was vigorous and vital and always practical. On his farm at Tusculum, on the outskirts of Princeton, he prided himself on his "kitchen garden." A lady visitor said to him: "Why, Dr. Witherspoon, I see no flowers in your garden." "No, madam," was the reply, "no flowers in my garden or my discourses either."

In November 1794, eight weeks after the annual commencement over which he presided with his usual vigor and dignity, John Witherspoon, a man of action, apostle of American liberty, moulder of American education, and promoter of representative government, left the America he had loved and had helped create, for an even more glorious shore.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

An Interesting And Important Chapter In The History Of The American Free Church

It was during the difficult Restoration days in England that the American colonies were established. Here in America meanwhile, Puritanism, partly because of its individualism and partly because of the scattered nature of the settlements in a new world, broke up into unorganized fragments each existing face to face with God, in the wilderness. It was at this juncture of history that there came to the new world a far-seeing Christian statesman and pioneer who gathered the unorganized fragments together to form the first organized intercolonial American Church, utterly independent of the Old World, and broke the power of the British king to rule men's consciences.

THIS IS THE STORY TOLD IN CHAPTER 1 ABOUT

Francis Makemie
: who engineered the forming of the first intercolonial government and legally established the right of freedom of worship.

OTHER CHAPTERS DESCRIBE

William Tennent
: who made higher education available to all who wanted it.

Jonathan Dickinson
: who launched a new kind of an American Church, independent of European dominance, and established the principle of the separation of Church and State.

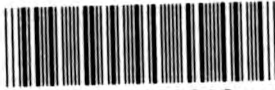
David Brainerd
: who wiped out race prejudice and made brotherhood real.

Gilbert Tennent
: who kept Christianity from dying of dry rot and put enthusiasm and virility in the Christian way of life.

Samuel Davies
: who fought successfully for the rights of the people against the encroachment of dictatorial overlords in Church and State.

John Witherspoon
: who lead the colonies into freedom and independence and greatly influenced our Constitutional form of government.

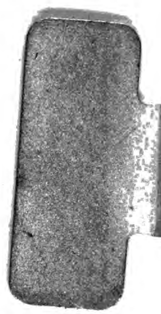
Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google
Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN



Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN



Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

89059430819
B89059430819A

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-09-22 04:04 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89059430819
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN