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*PRESIDENT WITHERSPOON*

**VOLUME TWO**

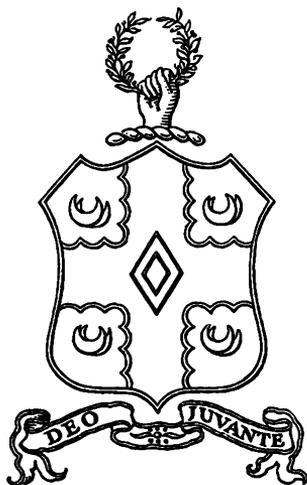
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PRESIDENT  
**WITHERSPOON**

A BIOGRAPHY

BY  
VARNUM LANSING COLLINS



VOLUME TWO

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*PRESIDENT WITHERSPOON*

VOLUME TWO

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE MEMBER OF CONGRESS

DR. WITHERSPOON left no journal or other personal record; his extant private letters are very few in number; and excepting a *Memorial of Facts* written by him, and now in the Library of Congress, describing the circumstances that led to the much discussed "Instructions" given in 1781 to the American commissioners for negotiating peace, comment of his own on his career in Congress is non-existent, and the story of his work as a member rests entirely on the barren *Journal* of that body, on the few speeches carefully prepared by him for important debates and preserved in his *Works*, and finally on allusions to, or summaries of, his remarks, found in the writings of his colleagues, the most useful being the notes of John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and Charles Thomson. The record of his share in congressional deliberations is therefore at times unavoidably scanty. To a certain extent his course after August, 1777, when it was decided to record yeas and nays on demand, may be followed in the tally of votes, but here one is necessarily suspicious that voting was sometimes governed by the exigencies of parliamentary tactics and not solely by the merits of the questions at issue.

Elected to Congress in June, 1776, to serve one year, he remained three years and a half, or until December, 1779; then at his urgent request released for the year 1780 by his constituents, he allowed himself to be returned for 1781, and finally in May, 1782, he was sent back again to serve until November.<sup>1</sup>

President Witherspoon had the good fortune to be in Congress during many important episodes of its early history; he voted for both the Resolution and the Declaration of Independence;

<sup>1</sup>The exact terms of Dr. Witherspoon's five years in Congress were the following: June 21, 1776, to serve one year; November 30, 1776, reelected under the state constitution to serve one year; November 20, 1777, reelected to serve one year or until December 1, 1778; November 6, 1778, reelected to serve one year or until December 1, 1779; November 24, 1780, reelected to serve one year from December 1, 1780; May 30, 1782, reelected to serve until November 5, 1782.

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took active part in the succeeding debates on the Articles of Confederation; shared in the formation of the new government's foreign alliances; witnessed that government floundering in a bankruptcy of which he had given it plain warning; assisted in organizing the executive departments that superseded the earlier committee plan; was a leader in the discussion of the perplexing problem of the western lands, helping to prepare for future legislation on statesmanlike and non-provincial lines; and when peace with Great Britain was impending he was conspicuously prominent in directing the preliminaries in selecting the American commissioners, and actually dictated himself their most important instructions. In addition to these major concerns he was occupied with a multitude of lesser activities which may be classed under the head of humanitarian endeavors—such as the kindlier treatment of prisoners, the checking of cruelty in warfare, the better administration of military hospitals, the improvement of health and morals and therefore of discipline, in the army. It was to be expected also that for drafting fast-day and Thanksgiving Day proclamations and other appeals to the public consciousness, for the codification of parliamentary rules to govern congressional debates, or for the preparation of official publications such as the *Journal of Congress*, his experience and training should be largely drawn upon. Furthermore, he served on many interesting special committees appointed to act in emergencies outside the routine of congressional business and calling for particular tact and firmness, such as the capture of Henry Laurens by the British, the New Hampshire Grants controversy, and the mutiny of the Pennsylvania Line.

He was a member of three standing committees of which at least two—the Board of War and the Committee on Secret Correspondence, or Foreign Affairs—were of supreme importance, while to the other—that on Clothing for the Army—he at least brought good intentions and some knowledge of the weaving industry gained from his residence at Paisley. During the five years of his life as a Congressman he served on more than one hundred and twenty committees. The continuity and length of his attendance gave him an advantage of familiarity with past actions and circumstances which few others enjoyed and which

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on more than one occasion was of distinct service to his colleagues.

His strong sense, says Judge Wharton, his resolute courage, his high moral and religious tone, were of immense value. He at once saw the necessity of a strong executive, both in the military and civil side of the government, and he uniformly gave his support to whatever measures were calculated to strengthen Washington and to sustain Franklin, and afterward Livingston and Morris. Of the necessity of a punctilious fulfilment of our obligations to France he was a firm champion; and perhaps his Scotch blood may have added somewhat to his conscientiousness and his tenderness in whatever related to our dealings with France.<sup>2</sup>

To trace his congressional career in detail is needless and this chapter will endeavour to follow only the main lines of service to which President Witherspoon devoted himself—the stabilizing of the national government, the solution of its internal and in particular its financial problems, the creation of its international status, and the direction of the preliminaries to the peace it won. If here and there the narrative shall touch upon matters of less public concern, it will be only because they supply to the portrait this book attempts to draw their measure of the human values in which the President's personality was so rich.

His name appears in the *Journal of Congress* for the first time on June 28, 1776, when Francis Hopkinson presented the credentials of the New Jersey delegates; it is not found again until October 2 when he received his first committee appointment. Although he was not given any responsibilities during the summer, he was no mere onlooker. As shown in the preceding chapter, he spoke on the resolution of independence and voted on July 2; he protested against certain phrases in the original draft of the the declaration of July 4, and secured the deletion of at least one objectionable sentence, and in the debate on the Articles of Confederation his definite convictions quickly found utterance. While he firmly believed in a strong central executive, as Judge Wharton has intimated, he nevertheless was just as insistent on the rights of the individual States and on their equality under

<sup>2</sup> *Diplomatic Correspondence*, vol. II, p. 470.

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the confederation, steadily opposing any action which would give one State undue advantage over another. If he was a champion of France in foreign affairs, in domestic affairs he was no less the champion of the smaller Colonies or "landless" States, those which held no claim to vast territories west of the mountains, the ultimate disposal of which lay behind so much of contemporary discussion and action.

His course in the debate on the Articles of Confederation was typical of this attitude. When in July, 1776, the committee appointed to prepare articles brought in a draft, Dr. Witherspoon at once figured in the discussion that ensued. In connection with Article XI, proportioning to population the money quota to be paid by each State into the common treasury, he gave it as his opinion, says Mr. Jefferson, that the true barometer of a nation's wealth is to be found in the value of its lands and houses and not in its population; any estimate based on population was imperfect of itself and unequal between the States. It had been argued, he said, that negroes ate the food of freemen and therefore should be taxed; but horses ate the food of freemen and therefore they too should be taxed. It had been asserted, he continued, that by counting slaves in the estimate for taxes Congress was proposing to do no more than the States themselves did—slaves being always estimated in the tax levies. But the cases were not parallel, for in the Southern States slaves were ubiquitous, whereas they were not so found in the North. Finally, the original resolution of Congress to proportion quotas according to population was a temporary measure and related to monies heretofore emitted, whereas the States were now entering into a new compact and were standing on fresh unbroken ground. But he could not at this time induce his hearers to agree with him and the Article went back to the house unchanged.

His first stand for the landless states was made when Article XVII came up giving each State but one vote. Franklin had warmly opposed the Article; he wished the vote to be according to the taxable population; let the smaller Colonies pay the same quotas as the larger, he is reported to have said, and then they shall vote equally; but if they received an equal vote without bearing equal financial burden he for one believed a confedera-

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tion based upon what, according to Mr. Adams, he called "so iniquitous a principle" was doomed to short life. He cited the history of England and Scotland; at the time of the Union Scotland had made the same objection that the smaller States were making now; whereas experience had proved that no unfairness had ever resulted to Scotland; her advocates had prophesied that as in times of old the whale would swallow Jonah, but he thought the prediction had been reversed in the event and Jonah had swallowed the whale, "for the Scotch had in fact got possession of the government and gave laws to the English." He regretted the original agreement of Congress to vote by Colonies and was for voting in all cases according to the number of taxables.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Witherspoon rose at once to the double bait of Biblical and Scottish allusions, and the more quickly because he was opposed to Franklin's general view, however important the grain of truth lurking in his allusion to Scottish infiltration of English politics. Following his custom, and in anticipation of the difficulty of harmonizing so many varying opinions of what the confederation should be, he had prepared a speech on the necessity of such a compact and was watching for an opportunity to deliver it. Franklin's reference to the futility of the present fundamental Article gave him his chance. The opening portion of the speech is in his *Works*<sup>4</sup>; it is summarized at some length by Jefferson<sup>5</sup> and briefly by Adams,<sup>6</sup> both Jefferson and Adams indicating that in the debate Dr. Witherspoon added extemporaneously to his prepared remarks. In spite of Franklin's assertion that a confederacy based on equal votes without equal burdens would not last, President Witherspoon opposed any alteration of the Article and believed a lasting confederation would be made. To confess it unlikely was to dampen the ardor of the people and weaken their hands.

I confess, said he, it would to me greatly diminish the glory and importance of the struggle, whether considered as for the rights of man-

<sup>3</sup>Jefferson, *Writings*, I, 44, 46; Adams, *Works*, vol. II, pp. 496, 501.

<sup>4</sup>Vol. IV, p. 253.

<sup>5</sup>*Writings*, vol. I, p. 47.

<sup>6</sup>*Works*, vol. II, pp. 496, 500, 501.

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kind in general, or for the prosperity and happiness of this continent in future times. What would it signify to risk our possessions and shed our blood to get ourselves free from the encroachments and oppression of Great Britain, with a certainty, as soon as peace was settled with them, of a more lasting war, a more unnatural, more bloody, and much more hopeless war among the colonies themselves?

Some of us, he declared, consider ourselves as acting for posterity at present, having little expectation of living to see all things fully settled and the good consequences of liberty taking effect. But how much more uncertain the hope of seeing the internal conflicts of the colonies settled upon a lasting and equitable footing!

The chief danger lay at present, he believed, in dissension among the Colonies and bribery from outside. But what a force would be added to the arguments of seducers if they could say with truth that sooner or later "we might be subjected, the greatest part of us, to the power of one or more of the strongest or largest of the American States?" If the Colonies were to be independent States, separate and disunited after this war, "we may be sure of coming off for the worse."

Citing the Helots of Sparta and the fate of the Roman provinces as examples in his contention that the weaker inevitably became the vassals of the more powerful, he named in illustration of his preference the East India Company which voted by individuals and not by proportion of stock, and the Provinces of the Netherlands which also voted individually. In questions of war, said he, the smaller States were as much interested as the larger and therefore should have equal voice. As for Franklin's historical allusions, he declared that the union between England and Scotland was an incorporating and not a federal union, and Scotland had suffered in that her inhabitants had been drawn from her by hopes of places of employment; nor was it an instance of equality of representation, because while Scotland was allowed nearly one-thirteenth of representation her people paid only one-fortieth of the land tax. But whatever differences of opinion as to details might exist he insisted that a confederation be agreed to quickly. There would never again be an opportunity like the present one when common danger gave a common ground of union.

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If we shall find it impossible to agree upon the terms of this confederacy, what madness is it to suppose that there will ever be a time, or that circumstances will so change, as to make it even probable that it will be done at an after season? . . . So certain is this, that I look upon it as on the repentance of a sinner—every day's delay, though it adds to the necessity, yet augments the difficulty and takes from the inclination.

What if the confederacy were later altered or did not last? Shall we establish nothing good, he demanded, because we know it cannot be eternal? Shall we live without government because every constitution has its old age and its period? Because we know that we shall die, shall we take no pains to preserve or lengthen life? Nay, rather, "it only requires the more watchful attention to settle government upon the best principles and in the wisest manner that it may last as long as the nature of things will admit."

And then came this strikingly forward-looking conclusion which the speaker begged leave to present, though at the risk, as he said, of being called "visionary and romantic:"

I do expect, Mr. President, a progress, as in every other human art, so in the order and perfection of human society, greater than we have yet seen; and why should we be wanting to ourselves in urging it forward? . . . There have been great improvements not only in human knowledge but in human nature, the progress of which can be easily traced in history. Everybody is able to look back to the time in Europe when the liberal sentiments that now prevail upon the rights of conscience would have been looked upon as absurd. It is but a little above two hundred years since that enlarged system called the balance of power took place; and I maintain that it is a greater step from the former disunited and hostile situation of kingdoms and states to their present condition, than it would be from their present condition, to a state of more perfect and lasting union. It is not impossible that in future times all the states in one quarter of the globe may see it proper by some plan of union to perpetuate security and peace; and sure I am a well planned confederacy among the states of America may hand down the blessings of peace and public order to many generations. . . . Every argument of honor, interest, safety, and necessity, conspires in pressing us to a confederacy, and if it be

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seriously attempted I hope, by the blessing of God upon our endeavours, that it will be happily accomplished.

Dr. Witherspoon's conception of the doctrine of the Balance of Power as evidence of the improvement of human nature may be open to question, and his belief in the theory of human perfectibility is somehow difficult to reconcile with Scottish theology as the wayfaring man understands it; but at least his vision of an international union for the perpetuation of security and peace in one quarter of the globe is a flash of idealism, as unexpected as it is interesting, in a mind hitherto so sternly practical. It marks a new phase in the President's thought, developed since taking sides in the American quarrel.

A year later Congress was still debating Article XVII and on the afternoon of October 7, 1777, the old arguments on representation were once more advanced; but Dr. Witherspoon clung to his point and fought proposals to allot one vote to each 50,000 white inhabitants, or to each 30,000; he opposed a substitute that votes be based on taxes levied and paid; and finally when the original form of the article was reported—each State to have but one vote—he at last recorded himself in the affirmative and had the satisfaction of seeing his position adopted.

A week after this when Article IX was debated again and it was moved that the share of public expenses to be borne by each State be proportioned to the value of all land within each State granted to or surveyed to any person according as such land and its improvements should be estimated under whatever plan Congress might direct, President Witherspoon voted with the Southern members in the affirmative and successfully against the New Englanders, whose eyes were set on their western claims. That afternoon his jealousy for the smaller States came to the front once more when it was proposed that no State be represented by less than two nor more than seven members. Here he voted on the negative and losing side. It is plain that he felt that the time would come, as indeed it did come within the month, when New Jersey might find herself with only one representative present and he did not propose to lose that solitary voice.

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The same watchfulness for the interests of the weaker members of the confederation is evident in his vote on Article XIV. He opposed the attempt made to compel each State to place before Congress a description of its territory and a summary of the grants and treaties on which that territory was claimed, so that the Articles of Confederation might lay down the territorial jurisdiction of each State. He opposed at this time the attempt to authorize the United States to fix the western boundaries of States claiming to the Mississippi, and to lay out new States in the territory beyond the boundaries as circumstances and population might require. He could not admit the premised claims to the western land and he felt that the whole subject would better be postponed until it could be taken up as a separate problem and settled equitably for all. And it was because of the same fundamental position that he refused for the present to agree to the proposition that the United States in Congress assembled should be the last court of resort in boundary disputes and that the procedure in case of such disputes should now be laid down. He asserted that Congress was not yet in a position to assume such a responsibility.

On the other hand he was just as sure of himself regarding the specific rights of the central executive authority. When it was moved later in the same month that no treaty of commerce be made whereby the legislative powers of the respective states should be restrained from imposing such duties as foreigners or their own people were subjected to, he voted with the minority against what he deemed an encroachment on federal prerogative.

President Witherspoon was absent during November, 1777, and therefore did not witness the adoption of the Articles of Confederation.

His speech in July, 1776, on the confederation had indicated his trust in the potential destiny of the new government. A few weeks later—in September—he gave additional evidence of his firm belief in its permanency, in a speech delivered in opposition to any consideration of reconciliation with Great Britain until the independence of the Colonies was formally acknowledged,<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Works*, vol. IV, p. 245.

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which with him was a fundamental premise in all dealings with Great Britain and the other continental powers.

It will be remembered that Lord Howe had arrived from England with a curiously ill-fashioned olive branch. When he capped the climax of a blundering policy by sending General Sullivan to invite Congress to a conference, President Witherspoon opposed acceptance of the invitation. He could not be deceived as to the real object in view—the unconditional surrender of the Colonies; Lord Howe had not yielded one iota; he had not given General Washington his title; he would not treat with Congress as such but had sent a prisoner to tell the colonial representatives that he would be glad to confer with them as private gentlemen; in his eyes they were still rebellious British subjects. What advantage then, asked the President, is there in such a conference? None; for everyone is agreed that we cannot admit a thought of yielding independence. This has been called boasting, while our troops are fleeing before the redcoats; but, continued he, "I found my hopes of success in this cause not on the valor of the Americans or the cowardice of the British, but on the justice of the cause." He rather wondered at the success of the American arms up to this time. Lord Howe spoke as if the contest would be decided by one blow; which was a prodigious mistake—the President instanced the Scottish rebellion of 1745 when the British broke and fled at Prestonpans, and he recollected that he had seen the same thing happen at Falkirk. There was nothing to fear from the first few engagements; on the contrary, Lord Howe had made a tactical error in proposing a conference at this late date—it really looked as if he were afraid. The improbability of the conference leading to peace was shown by several arguments of which he would mention only one, Lord Howe's explicit declaration that he would not acknowledge American independence. There was a time when the Colonies were contending for the restoration of certain principles under the government of Great Britain and were praying for reunion, but early in July they had declared themselves free and independent. Shall this question be re-opened, he demanded. The acknowledgment of independence is a first and indispensable preliminary, and the fact that it is not so recognized by all shows that we have not yet

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acquired the whole idea or habit of independence. Lord Howe himself had said that the Declaration of Independence had rendered his mission abortive—he wished he had arrived ten days earlier. Obviously, any conference with him under present conditions would inevitably compromise the action of July 2.

It had been asserted, however, that the conference was advisable in order to show the public that we were ready to hear anything that might lead to peace. Now, said the President, the contemporary American public consisted of three classes—Tories, Whigs, and the army. Naturally the Tories desired the conference; they were already presuming on it; the proposal had given them renewed vigor, and in cases where the expediency of any measure was doubtful, if he had an opportunity of knowing what his enemies wished him to do, he would on general principles do the opposite. As for the Whigs, multitudes are clear that no conference should be held and those who are in doubt need only to learn the full circumstances to be of the same opinion. As for the army, nothing is more likely to deaden its patriotism; it would impute the conduct of Congress to fear and jealousy; a timorous and despondent spirit would be produced and thus only add to present discouragement.

But in spite of these plain words, and many like them, that fell from other lips in Congress, the conference was held, with what result everyone knows. In Lord Howe's presence Franklin and Adams found excellent occasion for a little courteous sarcasm, and the war proceeded.

A month later President Witherspoon was appointed on his first congressional committee, a minor appointment, but one that must have had singular appeal to him as a Jersey farmer and the owner of valuable live stock. He found himself one of three members to consider plans for providing wagons for public service so that any demands might be speedily complied with and oppression of private persons be effectually prevented. On this committee's report it was agreed that quartermasters in each department be ordered to avoid as much as possible impressing horses and vehicles and that as soon as service would admit they return all horses and vehicles impressed and that no violence be

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done any persons, or their property, who came to camp voluntarily to sell provisions or for other purposes.

On the same date Congress resolved to increase the standing committee on clothing and President Witherspoon was chosen as one of the additional members. This was his first appointment to a standing committee. Subsequently he was able to turn the matter of clothing for the troops to the advantage of a protégé, James Finley, a Paisley weaver who had emigrated from Scotland and had settled at Princeton. To him Dr. Witherspoon gave the use of a vacant floor in Nassau Hall to fill his contracts with the state clothier for New Jersey.

Meanwhile a far more important appointment was awaiting the President. Vergennes, the French foreign minister, had for months been counselling his royal master at Versailles to aid the revolting American Colonies secretly, for political motives, and at last in May, 1776, Louis XVI had authorized the transfer of funds for the purchase of supplies for the Colonies through the interesting medium of Hortalez et Cie., or in other words through Beaumarchais. By midsummer in 1776, Silas Deane had already reached France on a mission to secure a loan and supplies; instructions to further commissioners from Congress were agreed upon; in September, Franklin and Jefferson were appointed with Deane, and when Jefferson declined, Arthur Lee, then in England, had been given Jefferson's place. With Franklin going abroad and other changes taking place in the personnel of Congress, the Committee on Secret Correspondence found itself in need of enlargement, and on October 11, 1776, with Richard Henry Lee and William Hooper, President Witherspoon was added to the committee. As a member of this committee, when it presently became the Committee on Foreign Affairs, he was to perform his greatest service in Congress. Dr. Franklin himself carried to Deane and Dumas the first letters written abroad by the reorganized committee, with Dr. Witherspoon as a signer, informing them individually of Franklin's appointment with Lee, and announcing the new membership of the committee.

President Witherspoon was a warm admirer of Dr. Franklin and throughout the latter's difficult years of service abroad was

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his staunch friend and supporter at home against the petty jealousies that sought often to deprive him of his place as tacit head of the American mission in Europe. Careful scrutiny of the votes in the *Journal of Congress* shows that Dr. Witherspoon carried into the young republic's diplomacy his adherence to the idea of centralized authority, advocating a system with one central diplomatic executive, while other members of the committee continually strove for individual envoys responsible directly to Congress under a de-centralized system.<sup>8</sup>

The situation in Congress during the winter of 1776 is briefly summarized by Dr. Witherspoon in his *Memorial of Facts*. In his opinion, looking back over the whole course of events, the Colonies were never in more critical situation than in December, 1776, when Congress left Philadelphia on the approach of the British and went to Baltimore. There was never greater need for, nor greater anxiety to obtain, foreign aid. Membership in Congress had shrunk and the outlook was worse than dark, but Dr. Witherspoon did not remember "one word of despondency to have fallen from any member or the most distant hint of a desire to make submission to England; but the means of persuading France to interpose effectually were the great subject of deliberation and discussion." It had been already growing clear to the commission in France that secret aid through commercial channels was insufficient for the purposes of the Colonies, and acting on their own judgment they were soon to propose a formal alliance, without waiting for instructions. Meanwhile on this side of the Atlantic, Congress had been coming to the same view. The reasoning as recorded by Dr. Witherspoon in his *Memorial* is that it was plain the Colonies could not be supported without foreign aid; there was no country except France to which application with any probability of success could be made; she was disposed to assist but we had given her no sufficient inducement to intervene; proposals to offer France exclusive trade or freedom from imposts were discarded as contrary to the spirit of independence which meant independence not only from Great Britain, but from every other nation; the reasons for France's delay in assisting America were believed to be due to other

<sup>8</sup> Wharton, *Diplomatic Correspondence*, vol. I, p. 461.

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causes. Dispatches from France strengthening these views, at length, the day before Christmas, 1776, at Baltimore, a special committee of which the President was a member, was appointed to draw up a definite plan for securing the additional foreign assistance so desperately needed. On the twenty-eighth, the very day that the American commissioners at Paris were receiving their first formal audience with Vergennes, this special committee reported and its plan was immediately debated, Congress sitting also the following day, a Sunday, and finally adopting on the thirtieth the plan to send commissioners to Vienna, Spain, Prussia and the Grand Duchy of Tuscany; to induce France to assist the United States openly for certain considerations; and to have the commission to France prepare treaties of commerce and alliance with Spain and Russia.

What part Dr. Witherspoon had in the discussions that led to the steps outlined in the preceding paragraph is not known; but it is safe to assume that his *Memorial of Facts* fairly represents the point of view he advocated, and that he supported vigorously the new instructions that were immediately dispatched to the commissioners at Paris.

Busy though it may have been, the Committee on Secret Correspondence had not absorbed all his time during that winter, and we may consider for a moment some of his other activities. Early in November, 1776, he received leave of absence to take to Princeton for safe-keeping four prisoners recently arrived in Philadelphia, a congressional action difficult to explain save on the supposition that the prisoners were Scotsmen—two at least bore Scottish names—in whom Dr. Witherspoon was interested, and that he paroled them, offering himself as surety and putting them to work on his farm at Princeton.<sup>9</sup> Reference has been made to the large share of committee work dealing with prisoners that fell to his lot. In December, 1776, he was deputed to investigate the case of loyalist prisoners from New Jersey with the result that a number were released from jail; in January and February, 1777, in August, 1781, and July and August, 1782, similar assignments were given him. In January, 1778, he was

<sup>9</sup> In January, 1777, he was allowed expenses for two prisoners he had been supporting at Princeton; and later he had a farmhand who was a former British soldier.

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appointed chairman of a committee to prepare a manifesto on the treatment American prisoners were receiving at the hand of the enemy, and in March of the same year he offered himself as surety for two British officers, prisoners at Princeton, who desired passes to New York or Philadelphia in order to arrange exchanges for themselves. During the war, Princeton, besides sheltering a military hospital, was also a prison camp, and references to the President's dealings with individuals detained there are constantly turning up, invariably in the way of amelioration of conditions. It appears to have been agreed by his congressional colleagues that his experience as governor of a body of young but chronic objectors at college had in some subtle way equipped him for settling the very real grievances of older and more genuine captives.

It was probably for a similar reason that he was given so much committee work dealing with discipline in the army. In view of the disastrous campaign of 1776 and the consequent thinning out of Washington's army, Congress appointed in November a committee of three, among whom was Dr. Witherspoon, to repair to headquarters and assist General Washington in filling up his ranks, and at the same time to make particular enquiry why the troops were not being paid and to redress to the utmost of their power the just grievances of the soldiers. The committee was further charged to enquire into alleged abuses in the medical department and report to Congress. What the committee did at headquarters does not appear; but they lost little time in instituting reforms at Princeton where a hospital was being maintained. Two days after setting out for camp they had appointed an assistant quartermaster and a commissary to take care of the military stores sent to Princeton and especially to look after the sick. They reported to Congress January 4, 1777, on their doings and the report was referred to the Medical Committee.

President Witherspoon's most delicate mission in connection with the morale of the army was performed when the Pennsylvania Line mutinied in 1781 and he was made head of a congressional committee of mediation. He had the good sense to allow General Joseph Reed, President of Pennsylvania, to treat directly with the mutineers—they were encamped at Princeton on

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the edge of the college campus—and to accept his findings, acting only in an advisory capacity.<sup>10</sup> The detailed report of the committee is in Dr. Witherspoon's handwriting and was delivered in Congress on January 24. The disturbance, he wrote in concluding, however unhappy and threatening at first had now afforded an undeniable and pleasing proof of the firm attachment of the soldiers and of the country in general to the American cause; notwithstanding the hardships the army had suffered, and the Pennsylvania Line in particular, there was not the least appearance or evidence of concert with the enemy nor any disposition to listen to overtures from that quarter. The committee suggested that British deserters be prevented from enlisting in the American service and recommended that every State be urged to pay the strictest attention to supplying the wants of the army. Less stereotyped was a further comment: "The inferior officers of the army should be directed in their treatment of the soldiers never to separate severity from justice and to temper severity with mercy." At this point the college president seems to have been reminded by his unacademic fellow-members that a congressional committee report was not the best medium for the expression of abstract principles; and the paragraph was ruthlessly stricken from the version finally presented.

Immediately after his reelection to Congress in November, 1776, Dr. Witherspoon had been appointed chairman of a committee to prepare an address to the inhabitants of America and a recommendation to the States for a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer. The confusion and alarm caused by the approach of the enemy is plainly reflected in the numerous and hurried resolutions of Congress during the week of December 9, and the committee presented the address within twenty-four hours, and on the next day its recommendation for a fast. The address is framed especially "to excite the inhabitants of Pennsylvania, New Jersey and the adjacent States to an immediate and spirited

<sup>10</sup> According to Alexander Garden (*Anecdotes of the American Revolution*, 2d series, p. 213), when the committee was first considering its procedure in the matter, Dr. Witherspoon said he would commence by giving the mutineers a sermon—"religious admonition might be attended with powerful effect." But the suggestion did not appeal to his colleagues.

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exertion in opposition to the army that now threatens to take possession of this city" (Philadelphia). No manuscript copy of either document is to be found among the Papers of the Continental Congress but style and temper of the recommendation as published strongly indicate that Dr. Witherspoon was its author.

Whereas, the war in which the United States are engaged with Great Britain, has not only been prolonged, but is likely to be carried to the greatest extremity; and whereas, it becomes all public bodies, as well as private persons, to reverence the Providence of God, and look up to him as the supreme disposer of all events, and the arbiter of the fate of nations; therefore,

Resolved that it be recommended to all the United States, as soon as possible, to appoint a day of solemn fasting and humiliation; to implore of Almighty God the forgiveness of the many sins prevailing among all ranks, and to beg the countenance and assistance of his Providence in the prosecution of the present just and necessary war.

The Congress do also, in the most earnest manner, recommend to all the members of the United States, and particularly the officers civil and military under them, the exercise of repentance and reformation; and further, require of them the strict observation of the articles of war, and particularly, that part of the said articles, which forbids profane swearing, and all immorality, of which all such officers are desired to take notice.

It is left to each State to issue out proclamations fixing the days that appear most proper within their several bounds.

Tory cynics were accustomed to allege that the high moral tone of this and similar resolutions of Congress were not ingenuous but were planned for effect. It is related that one such observer remarked, when Washington forbade card playing in the army, that the American rebels like all other rebels claimed especial favors from Providence and seldom issued a proclamation "without a pious sentence bringing up the rear." But, continued this gentleman, however easily General Washington "may bait old Witherspoon . . . and some of the other pious ones who are hanging on the rear of his moral forces, when the time comes he'll find he can't fool the Lord with pretended piety or Presbyterian general orders." This choice bit of militant moral criti-

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cism in Moore's *Diary of the Revolution* broaches the old question as to how far "Presbyterian general orders" or other moral forces played a part in the conduct of the Revolution, a question which it is not the province of this book to consider further than to point out that to Dr. Witherspoon the American Revolution was quite as much a moral movement as the struggle between the Popular and the Moderate parties in the Scottish Church had been. It can hardly be out of place, however, to add that while he never claimed Presbyterian responsibility for the Revolution yet these pages set forth at least the story of the significant share that he, a leader of that denomination in America, had in making the claim so plausible.<sup>11</sup> And it is surely unnecessary at this stage of the narrative to do more than suggest that, baited or not, President Witherspoon did his own thinking and hardly depended on Washington or anyone else for his conclusions.<sup>12</sup> Typical as this slur is of much contemporary misunderstanding and intentional misrepresentation of Dr. Witherspoon's actions, it is nevertheless a striking commentary on the spiritual qualities of many official public documents of the period; and in those which the President and "other pious ones" helped to compose in the next few years, the crusty British officer quoted above doubtless found little cause to change his opinion of what might be termed Congressional proclamatory style.

The British military successes in the campaign of 1776, which had made Vergennes in France stay his hand and had driven Congress from Philadelphia in December, gave President Witherspoon a task of which the fulfilment swept the country with a wave of indignation at the facts presented. Reports of the conduct of the enemy in its victorious campaign through New York

<sup>11</sup> The question has been discussed with his usual brilliance and charm by Trevelyan in his *American Revolution*, part II, vol. I, chap. XVI, and is treated in Dr. W. P. Breed's little book *Presbyterians and the Revolution*, the seventh chapter of which on "Presbyterian zeal and suffering" is composed chiefly of a quotation from the tenth chapter of Gillett's *History of the Presbyterian Church*, vol. I, and reads like a catalogue of eighteenth century Princetonians.

<sup>12</sup> As illustrating his fearless independence of mind may be cited an incident in April, 1779, when the appointment of a French officer as inspector of Southern troops came before Congress. Dr. Witherspoon alone of thirty-one members of Congress voted in the affirmative.

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and New Jersey had reached Congress, and in January, 1777, a committee was appointed to institute enquiry and take testimony. The committee, of which the President was the most active member, proceeded at once to New Jersey and made Princeton its headquarters. Its report delivered in April was spread on the minutes and ordered published in the newspapers in full, with the affidavits.<sup>13</sup> Much of the actual testimony was gathered by Dr. Witherspoon himself and is in his handwriting, the documents being still among the Papers of the Continental Congress; and he wrote most if not all of the report. Congress later voted that four thousand copies of the latter be printed in English and two thousand in German for distribution through the States, but no copy is known to exist and it is doubtful that the report was ever so published.<sup>14</sup>

Congressional life even in those dark days had its occasional hours of relaxation and Mr. Adams' diary gives us one or two glimpses of his New Jersey colleague in lighter mood. At Baltimore in February, 1777, for example, he was a dinner guest at Mr. Lux's estate "Chatworth," about half a mile out of town where his host "lived like a prince." A little later on a Saturday night at "Mrs. Page's over the bridge" he was one of a group consisting of the two Princetonians, Dr. Rush and Jonathan D. Sergeant, the two Lees, Mr. John Adams, Dr. Brownson and Elbridge Gerry, who had supper together in a room with George III's picture hanging on the wall upside down, a contemporary Baltimorean fashion, says Mr. Adams, in families that owned a copy of the monarch's portrait. Under this "topsy turvy king" at Mrs. Page's were tacked lines whose conclusion ran as follows:

<sup>13</sup> See *New Jersey Archives*, 2 ser., vol. 1, pp. 347, 363, for examples.

<sup>14</sup> Mr. Ford, *Journal*, vol. IX, p. 1085, has noted an interesting comment by Franklin in a letter to David Hartley, February 2, 1780, in which he states he was expected to make a school reader of the report with illustrations, but balked at the idea. Aside from the general reprehensibility of the enemy's conduct, Dr. Witherspoon's personal activity had been enlisted by the fact that New Jersey had suffered most by enemy conduct. The whole matter had come to a head in the brutal murder of the Reverend John Rosborough, a chaplain in the Continental Army and a graduate of Princeton in the Class of 1761. Governor Livingston of New Jersey addressed his legislature on the subject in February, 1777. (*New Jersey Archives*, 2d ser., vol. 1 p. 301.)

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—See his head  
Placed where the meanest of his subjects tread.  
Like Lucifer the giddy tyrant fell;  
He lifts his feet to Heav'n, but points his head to Hell.

The talk that evening in the presence of upset royalty must have been as "high" as on that morning in September, 1774, around Dr. Shippen's breakfast table at Philadelphia. The next day President Witherspoon preached on the edifying text "redeeming the time," with some of his fellow Congressmen among his hearers. The effort is not included in his collected writings but Mr. Adams' comment as usual is interesting:

An excellent sermon. I find that I understand the Doctor better since I have heard him so much in conversation and in the Senate; but I perceive that his attention to civil affairs has slackened his memory; it cost him more pains than heretofore to recollect his discourse.<sup>15</sup>

The sermon was unquestionably an old one and it should have occurred to Mr. Adams that in view of the preceding night's conviviality the preacher had scarcely had sufficient opportunity to review his notes—if he possessed any.

Whether or not Dr. Witherspoon grew a little rusty in the pulpit as a result of his new occupations, he seems to have been at no loss when lecturing to his colleagues in Congress on the elements of economics. Dr. Rush in his *Historical Notes*<sup>16</sup> has recorded some of the President's views on the subject. Congress was debating in November, 1779, whether it should recommend to the States the plan for fixing the prices of labor, manufactures, imports, and provisions, which had been adopted by a convention of four New England States. Dr. Witherspoon opposed the proposal. The enemy he said, had published the Connecticut Act for Regulating Prices, as it was called, to show in what distress the Colonies found themselves and he for one always avoided doing the things an enemy wished him to do. To recom-

<sup>15</sup> *Works*, vol. II, p. 435.

<sup>16</sup> *Pennsylvania Magazine*, vol. XXVII, pp. 137, 140.

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mend the adoption of the Act to all the States would be to spread further the impression of distress. Prices would be just if the quantity of money and the scarcity of supplies bore an exact proportion to one another; the increase of prices began first with luxuries, next with necessaries, third with manufactures, and then with grain; and the reason that grain was last was because it was plentiful compared with money. It is beyond the power of despotic princes, said the President, to regulate prices; laws are not almighty; tea and salt are higher in proportion to other commodities because the supply is more limited; in Pennsylvania salt was regulated at fifteen shillings per bushel, but was sold at sixty; in Virginia, where there was no limitation, it sold at ten. If the price of one commodity were regulated, he declared that Congress would have to regulate the price of all. As a matter of fact, Congress exempted only salt and military stores from limitation of price. Salt being "of indispensable necessity to all ranks of people and often difficult to be procured," it was recommended that "well disposed and public spirited" citizens who were "blessed with plenty and affluence" form voluntary associations to procure "a plentiful supply of the said article" and to reduce its price, "that the poor may be furnished therewith on the most reasonable terms"—a recommendation that curiously anticipates, at least in spirit, the measure taken to meet the scarcity of certain staples during the period of the recent World War, and one that obtained as little real success.

The views on price-fixing which Dr. Witherspoon expressed in this debate, he advanced at greater length and anonymously as a "Jersey Farmer" in a letter to General Washington on the latter's plan for a market in camp.<sup>17</sup> He was disappointed in the plan because it proposed to fix prices, and he set forth arguments against the proposal not very different from those used by modern antagonists of government price-fixing.

Fixing the price of commodities has been attempted by law in several states among us, and it has increased the evil it was meant to remedy, as the same practice ever has done since the beginning of the world.

<sup>17</sup> *Works*, vol. IV, p. 281.

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To punish men for selling at higher prices than legal, and to confiscate their goods if they will not sell at all, has some meaning to it though little wisdom; but to publish a list of fixed prices as an encouragement to a weekly market is a new strain of policy indeed. If people are willing to sell at these or lower prices is not that enough? If they are not willing to sell how shall they be made willing to come to the market? Perhaps the prices listed were believed to be reasonable, but what constitutes a reasonable price? If it be that which is proportioned to the demand on the one side and the plenty or scarcity of goods on the other, I agree to it; but I affirm that this will fix of itself by the consent of the buyer and seller better than it can be done by any politician upon earth. If Washington meant anything else, it would not matter whether it was reasonable or not; for if it is not *agreeable* as well as reasonable, you might have one market day, but not a second.

There are some things, continued the Jersey Farmer, which are not the object of human laws, and such are all those that essentially depend for their success upon inward inclination. . . . It would be much to the advantage of many lawgivers and other persons in authority if they would carefully distinguish between what is effected by force and what by persuasion, and never preposterously mix these opposite principles and defeat the operation of both. Laws and authority compel; but it is reason and interest that must persuade.

Price-fixing by authority is not only impolitic but it is in itself unreasonable and absurd; so many circumstances are to be taken into account to secure equality or justice that they cannot all be attended to—the plenty of one kind of provision and the scarcity of another, the distance of one place and the nearness of another, changes of conditions in the course of a few days or weeks, good or bad roads, good or bad weather—these and a hundred other things which cannot be foreseen actually govern “and ought to govern” prices at markets. . . . if “tenpence per pound is a just price for veal at present I am certain it must be too much a month hence when veal will be much more plentiful; and the grass not yet come on. . . . If it is reasonable to pay one shilling per pound for any meat on a good day, I shall expect more if I go out in a storm; if not, I will stay at home on a bad day, and so you must starve one week and pamper the next.”

“Such are restraining circumstances. He who is nearest and has goods in plenty, by selling cheap will moderate the demands of him who comes from far. If you pay very dear for an article one day, the news spreading brings in large quantities and the price falls; and so it happens in every case. Thus it is out of one’s power to tell what is a

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reasonable price and by attempting to do it we not only refuse to gratify expectations but treat them with injustice. To fix the prices of goods, especially provisions in a market, is as impracticable as it is unreasonable."

The year 1777 had dawned hopefully enough with the success at Princeton following close on the surprise at Trenton, but the occupation of New Jersey by the enemy had spelled its devastation. It was not surprising then that in February the President asked for a brief leave of absence; "Tusculum" has been occupied by the British, and "the situation of his private affairs," he said, "required his returning home." Soon after his reappearance, Congress voted that the Committee on Secret Correspondence be henceforth called the Committee for Foreign Affairs, and that it have a secretary. Thereupon Mr. John Adams nominated Thomas Paine, supposing him "a ready writer and an industrious man."<sup>18</sup> To this appointment, Dr. Witherspoon immediately objected with an earnestness that surprised Adams. He gave his reasons: he knew Paine and his writings; when he first came over he was on the other side of the controversy; he had later been employed by Robert Aitken and, following the tide of popularity, had turned to the side of the Colonies; he was very intemperate and could not write "until he had quickened his thought with large draughts of rum and water; in short, he was a bad character and not fit to be placed in such a situation." No one, says Mr. Adams, confirmed Dr. Witherspoon's criticism at the time "though the truth of it has since been sufficiently established." According to Mr. John Jay,<sup>19</sup> Paine, as Aitken's reader for the *Pennsylvania Magazine*, in which Dr. Witherspoon had more than a mere contributor's interest, had struck out several passages in articles by the Doctor as being "too free." Apparently Dr. Witherspoon's views had been further advanced than those of the editor. Mr. Jay alleged moreover that Paine's attachment to the American cause was under suspicion more than

<sup>18</sup> *Life and Works*, vol. II, p. 509. The date is erroneously given as 1775 or "not long after." The incident took place April 17, 1777.

<sup>19</sup> William Jay, *Life of John Jay*, vol. I, p. 97.

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once until his indiscreet revelation of secret arrangements between France and the United States placed France in a compromising situation, forced the hand of Congress, and eventually led to Paine's resignation as secretary of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. Mr. Conway<sup>20</sup> quotes Adams' suggestion that some of Paine's earlier writings had been unfavorable to the Colonies but can find nothing to justify the view. The only printed comments on Paine coming from Dr. Witherspoon's pen are a thrust at a vulgarism in *Common Sense*, a criticism of a reference in the same production to the doctrine of original sin, about which Paine theoretically knew little, and an allusion in his essay signed "Aristides" defending the purpose, though not the style, of *Common Sense* against *Plain Truth*, *Cato's Letters* and similar contemporary productions for all of which together, it may be added parenthetically, he said he "would not give a rush."<sup>21</sup>

Dr. Witherspoon's first important appointment on a committee having to do with finances came in May, 1777, when he was one of three members to whom was given the cheerless task of devising ways and means to defray national expenses for the current year. On this committee he began his close association with Robert Morris, who was also a member, and whom he was to support strongly from that time on. In 1778 he was one of the committee to re-organize the Board of Treasury and was also a member of the committee on finance whose comprehensive and constructive report delivered in September was debated almost daily until the end of the year. In October, 1779, he was appointed to address the States on the subject of finances and to devise further ways and means; and when he returned to Congress in 1781 he was constantly employed with financial problems—exchange, commercial regulations, raising money for military campaigns, depreciation, and bills on Europe; and he it was who suggested that an expert accountant be sent to Europe to bring order out of the chaotic books of the American commissioners. His speeches, save in two cases—payment of loan office certifi-

<sup>20</sup> *Life of Thomas Paine*, 3d edition, vol. I, p. 92.

<sup>21</sup> *Works*, vol. IV, pp. 184, 316, 317.

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cates and the state of finances—are not preserved, but it is said that on them was based his *Essay on Money*, published anonymously in 1786, a little volume which was put together at the request of those who had heard the speeches delivered and felt that their clearness and sense would work for the good of a public at that time deluged with worthless pamphlets on the financial situation.

His views seem to have been sound. He vigorously endorsed Robert Morris' effort to control army expenditures and substitute a contract system for the expensive commission method of supply; but it was only after bitter experience had proved the wisdom of his position that his ideas prevailed. He maintained that paper money could not preserve its credit unless kept within bounds and unless its redemption were properly assured. So earnest was he in this contention that for a time his popularity was endangered. After the second emission of paper money he steadfastly opposed any further issue unless supported by corresponding measures for maintaining public credit.

When payment of interest on loan office certificates defaulted, he delivered a speech which contained the following passages:<sup>22</sup>

Public credit is of the utmost moment to a state at any time, but it is all in all in a time of war. Public credit among us has been reduced to the lowest ebb, first by a monstrous and unheard-of emission of paper money, next by an act of bankruptcy, reducing it to sixpence in the pound; then by a table of depreciation. There remained but one thing which preserved us some degree of respectability, that the promises made to lenders of money before a certain period had been kept for three years. But now as a "last and finishing stroke, this also is broken to pieces and given to the winds."

We are endeavouring, he said, to borrow money in Europe; is it not possible, is it not probable that our treatment of our creditors here will soon be known there? Must not this repeated insolvency, neglect, and contempt of public creditors prevent loans in Europe? It is ignorance of our situation and past conduct that alone will make them trust us. "I confess," he frankly admitted, "that if I were at Amsterdam now and had plenty of money, I would give what I thought

<sup>22</sup> *Works*, vol. IV, p. 239.

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proper to the United States but would lend them none" . . . By making some payment to public creditors immediately we should obtain a dignity and weight abroad that would procure money wherever it could be found.

Let us consider next the effect upon credit at home. If our security were good and our credit entire we should find plenty of lenders. Everything of this kind proceeds upon principles which never fail in their effect. We should be much better off for loans at home which in their nature are preferable to those abroad; therefore whatever leads utterly to destroy credit at home does essential injury to the public cause and has an unhappy influence on every internal temporary operation; people will not seek your service but fly from it.

If this proposal is enforced, it will be a hindrance to the payment of taxes and raising supplies. He would not insist on his suggested payment in order however that it would enable many to pay their taxes, but because it would give dignity to public spirit, animate the people, and give them better thoughts of their rulers and prevent murmuring. In a free state much depends on holding the esteem and attachment of the people. They say we are now paying prodigious taxes but what becomes of the money? The army is two years in arrears of pay; public creditors get none of it. A small payment would be much talked of because it would be general, and because of its general good influences would be worth all and more than all the sum spent. In similar cases he had heard it said you must sometimes throw a little water into a pump in order to bring a great deal out of it.

On the other hand what would be the effect of refusal? Creditors have been told we have no funds in Europe; they will speedily hear however of the Dutch loan and it will increase their indignation; they may combine to refuse their taxes; if such an association were formed it would spread and if it became general it would put an entire stop to our proceedings. This prospect is not conjectural; there have already been meetings to enter into concert to refuse payment of taxes. Can we employ the sum mentioned in the motion to better advantage than in satisfying a deserving body of men and preventing evils of so alarming a nature?

Possibly some are comforting themselves that ultimately they will resolve to pay all; they have taken or are taking measures to do so—the five per cent impost, for example. But it will be long before such measures bring money into the treasury and meanwhile the late step of refusing to draw bills had dealt such a blow to loan office certificates that their value is fallen to a trifle. The inevitable consequence

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will be that necessity, incredulity, ill humor will make holders part with them for a mere nothing and thus the greater part will really be in the hands of speculators, and when that time comes it will not be surprising to find someone in Congress proposing a new scale of depreciation and thus public faith will once more be trodden under foot and the few remaining original holders of the certificates will lose them entirely.

President Witherspoon reverted to the subject in his speech on the state of public finances when it was proposed to cease drawing bills on Europe to pay interest on loans, as Congress had pledged itself to do, by its Act of September 10, 1777.

He had little to say against the resolutions as reported by the superintendent of finance; perhaps they were unavoidable. But he wished to see whether anything could be added which might in some degree prevent the evils apprehended or at least exculpate Congress and convince the public that the resolutions are the effect of absolute necessity.

The resolutions are a deliberate deviation from express stipulations and will give the last stab to public credit. The stipulation of Congress as to how the interest was to be paid had been an additional security; the promise of giving bills upon Europe if broken or withdrawn must operate to national prejudice. Consider the state of those who held loan office certificates drawing interest on France; they were without exception the country's firmest, most active, and generous friends and many of them had advanced hard money to help the cause. And the class of people who had lost their money were widows and orphans, corporations and public bodies. Of these he could speak from good knowledge; the trustees of the College of New Jersey in 1777 had directed their committee on finance to put into the loan office all the money that should be paid to them and now they had nearly invested all. Payment of interest had given these early investments value; had lenders suspected that they would be cut off they could have disposed of their holdings for something but as it now stands the country's best friends are being reduced to beggary. What faith can be placed in the governments promises?

He wishes the house would weigh the consequence of this resolution; enemies will accuse Congress of oppression and the grossest fraud; they will have the fairest opportunity to make Congress ridicu-

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lous and contemptible. As for friends—their disappointment and suffering have already been mentioned; whether they will proceed to violence and disorder is impossible to say; but he would very much dread such efforts of despair. Even though they should not take such steps he is certain the measure will produce hatred and contempt for Congress. . . . Undoubtedly it will greatly lessen the respect due from the public to this body and thus weaken its authority in all other directions.

It will lay the foundation for greater and more scandalous steps of the same sort; it will ruin the certificates; multitudes will sell them for next to nothing; when ultimately holders apply for their money it is highly probable that Congress will issue a scale of depreciation. . . .

What would be the effect abroad? Many of the certificates are held abroad and other sovereigns will not suffer their subjects to be plundered. Letters from Vergennes are on file concerning our former depreciation in which he says that whatever liberty we take with our own citizens we must not think of treating the subjects of France in the same way; and it is possible that we may hear upon this subject when the terms of peace are settled. We shall be called upon to pay at its full value all the money, as well as the loan office certificates, held in France, Spain, and Holland. Some may even be in the hands of British subjects; will they not demand payment? . . . By their punctuality in paying interest Great Britain has been able to support an enormous debt; have they ever thought of presenting holders of her certificates when they came to be paid, with a scale of depreciation? The very idea would knock the whole system of public credit to pieces. But the importance of the matter will be felt before the end of the war. We are soliciting foreign loans; with what face can we expect credit in foreign parts or in future loans after so notoriously breaking every engagement hitherto made?

A disposition to pay and visible probable means of payment are absolutely necessary to credit; where that is once established it is not difficult to borrow. If Congress would but lay down a foundation of credit, enough money could be borrowed in this country . . . to purchase property in the cultivated parts of the country is not nearly so profitable as interest on money; anybody knows that it is almost universal in this country, when a man dies leaving infant children, the executors sell all his property to turn into money and put it into securities for equal and easy division. These things proceed upon certain and indubitable principles which never fail of their effect. Therefore you have only to make your payments as soon, as regular, and as

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profitable as borrowers and you will get all the money you want; and by a small advantage over others it will be poured in upon you so that you need not go to the lenders, for they shall come to you.

The President did not follow Congress in its peregrination of September, 1777; perhaps he realized that his colleagues would assemble merely to adjourn; and besides, affairs at Princeton needed his attention. He did not answer a roll call until October 7. Three days before, at the battle of Germantown, the oldest of his three sons, James, a major in the New Jersey Brigade, had been killed in action. President Witherspoon's loyalty to the American cause needed no further evidence of its sincerity.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> James Witherspoon was born at Beith on November 17, 1751, matriculated at the University of Glasgow in 1764, and on his father's removal to Princeton in 1768, had entered College as a Junior, graduating in September, 1770. His occupation during the next three and a half years is uncertain; he seems, however, to have been in Savannah part of this period; but in the spring of 1774 he went to Ryegate and settling on a tract of 600 acres which the President had bought for him, and which is still known as the "Witherspoon Tract," he cleared some 25 acres and erected a dwelling and other buildings. In May, 1776, he was in Princeton for a short visit. During that summer, after returning to Vermont, he probably joined the northern army, for with two other Ryegate men he went north through the woods to obtain intelligence for the American commander at Ticonderoga, penetrating as far as St. Johns, Quebec, according to a letter he wrote to the President describing his adventure and especially, his narrow escape from capture by the British and the hardships endured on the way back. He then seems to have returned to Princeton and later in the year to have joined Washington's army, for in February, 1777, the President informed David, his youngest son, that James was now aide to General Maxwell "and if his life is spared, will be sufficiently provided for in the army." In August he was in camp at Germantown, and there on October 4 he was struck by the cannon-ball which also gave General Nash his mortal wound.

Wrapped in a blanket the young officer was buried with six other American soldiers in a common grave on the main road through the village of Germantown. The remains were disinterred a little later in the presence of his sister Ann and a brother (probably John). They had made arrangements to take the body back to Princeton, but this proved impossible and it was reburied in St. Michaels' churchyard, in Germantown, where a simple headstone marks the grave, bearing this inscription:

HERE  
LIES THE BODY  
OF MAJOR  
JAMES WITHERSPOON  
OF THE JERSEY BRIGADE  
WHO FELL IN THE BATTLE OF  
GERMANTOWN, OCT. 4TH 1777.

Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia*, vol. II, p. 59; *Christian Advocate*, vol. II, pp. 398, 399, 444, 445; Miller and Wells, *History of Ryegate, Vt.*, pp. 39, 40, 239, 567; *New Jersey Archives*, vol. XXVII, pp. 267, 276.

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He was placed on the Board of War during the same month, and on his reelection to Congress that winter was added (December 26, 1777) to the committee appointed to investigate the causes of the evacuation of Ticonderoga, and the conduct of the general officers at the evacuation. Six months later this committee recommended the court martial of General St. Clair.<sup>24</sup>

The ominous color given to the situation by the disaster in the northern department, by the successful approach of the enemy to Philadelphia, and by Washington's defeat at Brandywine and failure at Germantown, was suddenly brightened by the news of Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga. The wretched sequel to that surrender, the needless difficulty and even hardship to which an equivocating Congress subjected the captured army, and more particularly Dr. Witherspoon's share of responsibility therein, admit of no defence and only partial excuse. It is plain that, either in nervous panic over a reckless utterance of Burgoyne, or seizing upon that remark as a welcome chance to repudiate the generous terms of the convention, Congress attached ridiculous weight to the British commander's words. That Dr. Witherspoon deliberately sought the repudiation of the convention is unthinkable. He had given the whole question careful consideration and had prepared on the subject a long speech which, excepting its conclusion, is preserved in his writings.<sup>25</sup> This speech clearly reveals how he argued himself into a position at variance with his better impulses, his jealousy for the safety of the coun-

<sup>24</sup> At his court martial St. Clair publicly accused President Witherspoon of malicious misrepresentation in regard to operations at Fort Mercer. In order to "set the public right with respect to that matter, and to show the baseness of those who have endeavored to turn them to my prejudice," he filed a copy of the directions he issued at the time. He believed the principal agent was "a very reverend gentleman, a Member of Congress, Doctor Witherspoon I mean, who, forgetting the strict regard to truth his clerical character required, and the impropriety of a Member of Congress publicly pre-judging a matter that must ultimately be referred to Congress, has been taking every opportunity (and has had the meanness to do it in taverns as he has been passing through the country) to misrepresent the whole of my conduct, and so far as in him lay, to prevent a fair trial and acquittal should that follow, from wearing off the prejudices against me, which I have good reason to think were raised in the same manner." (Trial of St. Clair, *N. Y. Historical Society Collections*, 1880, p. 169.) Dr. Witherspoon's alleged conduct had no effect on the court martial, for St. Clair was unanimously acquitted of all charges.

<sup>25</sup> *Works*, vol. IV, p. 273.

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try overcoming his private judgment. It is of much moment that every nation preserve its faith and honor in its solemn contracts, he said, and especially for the United States "just beginning to appear upon the public stage;" he therefore hoped Congress would do nothing which would appear "mean, captious, or insidious, whatever advantage may seem to arise from it." On the other hand it was their duty to see to it that the country suffer no injury by deception, or abuse, or insult. It was his opinion on the first of these two principles that Congress should vote that the convention be not broken although he recognized certain irregularities on the part of the surrendered army—colors and minor equipment had not been given up as stipulated; but he would not consider them "such breaches of the convention as would authorize us in justice to declare it void."

Here the President should have stopped; but having eased his mind of these sentiments, he then viewed the situation from the angle of his second principle—justice and caution. He finds Burgoyne declaring that the convention has been broken by the American general because adequate quarters had not been provided for the surrendered officers as stipulated. And he proceeds to extricate himself from his first position in the following manner:

We have here the declared opinion of one of the parties, that the public faith is broken by the other. . . . Therefore we have reason to conclude that if General Burgoyne is of opinion that the convention is broken on our part he will not heed it on his. He would act the part of a fool if he did. . . . If it is really his opinion (and we should wrong his sincerity to doubt it) the consequences are the same with respect to us. . . . What are we to expect from him as soon as he shall receive his liberty and the power of doing mischief?

But it is said that he did not mean us to dread such consequences. All this I believe to be strictly true. It probably fell from him in passion—and very unadvisedly. . . . His folly in this instance is our good fortune. . . . He evidently is a man showy, vain, impetuous and rash. . . . Do you think that such a man would not take the advantage of this pretended breach of the convention to wipe off the reproach of his late ignominious surrender by some signal or desperate undertaking?

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The printed speech ends at this point; but no reader can fail to guess the conclusion. Because of Burgoyne's statement Dr. Witherspoon would take him literally at his word and vote that the convention had been broken. As a member of the committee in charge of the conduct of the war, he advocated the strictly prudent course perhaps, but one that posterity very generally has marked as a blot on the history of the young republic; and he voted for the resolution of January 8, 1778, that the embarkation of General Burgoyne and his troops be suspended until "distinct and explicit" ratification of the convention should be transmitted to Congress by Great Britain, a ratification which of course was an impossibility until the independence of the Colonies should be conceded.

President Witherspoon was absent when the news of the signing of the French treaties reached Congress in April, 1778, and when they were ratified in May. In fact he was absent during most of that spring; but in view of the new alliance, on his return one morning in June he must have served with increased zest as member of the committee into whose care was given a dispatch from General Washington enclosing letters from Lord Howe and General Clinton which accompanied three recent Acts of Parliament and suggested that the latter paved the way to immediate peace. The committee was a safe and trusted one—William Henry Drayton, Richard Henry Lee, Gouverneur Morris, Samuel Adams and Dr. Witherspoon, to whom during the year were referred numerous matters touching upon foreign affairs. Retiring to an adjoining room as ordered by Congress, the committee promptly composed the perfect answer expected. It was brief, formal, and conclusive: the new Acts of Parliament were not essentially different from others on which Congress had already expressed its sentiments; when the King should seriously desire an end to the "unprovoked and cruel" war he was waging, Congress would readily consider such terms of peace as might "consist with the honor of independent nations, the interest of their constituents, and the sacred regard they mean to pay to treaties." The position of the Colonies could have hardly been summed up more tersely or more plainly.

To the same committee was entrusted on June 13 a task

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closely akin to the one just accomplished. On that day an express arrived with a letter from the new British peace commission which was headed by the Earl of Carlisle and accompanied by Dr. Adam Ferguson, professor of moral philosophy at Edinburgh University, as secretary. Two days later, after postponement of a motion that Congress could not "hear any language reflecting upon the honour" of the "good and faithful ally" of these States, the letter was referred to the committee named and its answer, declining to negotiate with the commission, was unanimously adopted and General Washington's action in refusing Dr. Ferguson a passport to deliver the communication from the commission was approved. A by-product of this episode, and more interesting than the foregone conclusion of the committee itself, was the opinion the professor of moral philosophy at Edinburgh entertained of the professor of moral philosophy at Princeton, now turned Congressman. This is found in a paragraph from a letter he subsequently wrote to Dr. Witherspoon's boyhood friend and collegemate, Alexander Carlyle:

It is the fashion to say that we have lost America. . . . I am in great hopes that nothing will be lost, not even the continent of North America. We have 1200 miles of territory occupied by about 300,000 people of which there are about 150,000 with Johnny Witherspoon at their head, against us—and the rest for us. I am not sure that if proper measures were taken but we should reduce Johnny Witherspoon to the small support of Franklin, Adams and two or three more of the most abandoned villains in the world, but I tremble at the thought of their cunning and determination opposed to us.<sup>26</sup>

Dr. Witherspoon would have been flattered by the distinction conferred upon him in these lines, for not even his most enthusiastic American admirers claimed him as leader of the revolting Colonies, although they would have been prompt to admit that he moved in fairly good company even if it were that of "abandoned villains." Professor Ferguson was also misinformed as to the proportion of colonials who were against his government—and his generally inaccurate knowledge of the situation in America is characteristic. But in another respect his statement reflects

<sup>26</sup> Charles Rogers, *Social Life in Scotland*, vol. III, p. 121.

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an opinion not confined to adherents of the Crown but shared by many foreign observers. The assertion that Dr. Witherspoon belonged to a junto in Congress is frequently found in contemporary records. It is implied by Ferguson, besides being referred to in contemporary newspaper correspondence, and was implicitly believed in British circles in New York whence probably Ferguson derived his faulty information. M. Gérard, the first French Minister to the United States, in a passage which is curious enough to merit summarizing, reported it to Vergennes as a fact. Writing from Philadelphia just after his arrival in America Gérard, who sniffed intrigue everywhere, quoted information given him by "*plusieurs personnages principaux*" and told his chief that before the arrival of the French treaty that spring there was a faction in Congress which might have become the more dangerous because it could not have been accused of disloyalty; it was composed of clever and ambitious men, but of mediocre influence, whose plan was to maintain a certain equilibrium so as to be indispensable when capitulation to the British took place, for there were few people then who thought the quarrel could be terminated without some sort of capitulation; a Scotch minister named Wederspun (Witherspoon), the only man of his profession in Congress, was the soul of this party; he united in high degree two qualities seemingly opposed, extreme forcefulness of character and the greatest pliability of mind (*souplesse d'esprit*); Mr. Samuel Adams also belonged to this party; but since everyone is now persuaded that the issue of the quarrel will be honorable and lasting, no further suspicion of them exists.<sup>27</sup> To appreciate how wide of the mark Gérard's information was it is only necessary to remember Dr. Witherspoon's repugnance to the slightest hint of capitulation or compromise. If he belonged to any marked group at all it was the group that refused to consider any proposal short of complete independence. That he was party to a private understanding or held the views he did with expectation of personal advantage either in power or in position, or of becoming "indispensable" at the close of the war, is manifestly absurd. He had been driven into politics by a

<sup>27</sup>H. Doniol, *Histoire de la participation de la France à l'établissement des Etats Unis d'Amérique*. vol. III, p. 267.

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sense of duty and against his preference; he was to quit public life at the earliest opportunity; and it is difficult to see what advantage of power or position was obtainable outside of public life.

At the end of July, 1778, the report of the Board of Treasury advocating a re-organization was considered and after debate referred to a committee of which Dr. Witherspoon was a member with Gouverneur Morris, Mr. Gerry, Mr. Telfair and Richard Henry Lee. Two weeks later these gentlemen reported a plan and after a month's debate further their report with amendments was referred to a reconstituted committee, in which Robert Morris and Samuel Chase succeeded Mr. Gerry and Mr. Telfair. Their revision was adopted by Congress on September 26. To the lay mind, unskilled in the dark matters involved, it would seem as if the difficulty with the new plan was its cumbrousness; it appears to be little else than an over-elaborate system of checks and counter-checks which must have been vexatious in the extreme both to the checkers and the checked. A machine containing so many wheels within wheels could scarcely have been expected to run satisfactorily and it is not surprising, therefore, that three years later Robert Morris was freed entirely from the Board's hindering presence by its abolition.

During the autumn and early winter of 1778 the report which Dr. Witherspoon helped to draw up for the committee appointed in August "to consider the state of money and finance of the United States" was debated almost daily in committee of the whole. The *Journal* necessarily contains no details of the discussions, the committee merely reporting progress, but it must be believed that the President was constantly engaged in defence and explanation of the committee's proposals.

While these debates were proceeding his name occurs frequently enough in connection with matters relating to the country's new ally. When the French envoy, M. Gérard, transmitted to Congress the speech he intended to deliver at his first audience the document was handed over to Dr. Witherspoon, Gouverneur Morris and Richard Henry Lee to draft the reply the president of Congress should make. Their draft proving unsatisfactory, it was passed to a fresh committee in which Colonel

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Joseph Reed and Francis Dana supplanted Lee and Morris, Dr. Witherspoon retaining the chairmanship, and the version the new collaborators produced was used by Henry Laurens as presiding officer at the audience on August 6. When Lafayette sought permission in October, 1778, to return to France the favorable answer he desired and the resolution of thanks for his zeal and services which Congress added were framed by Dr. Witherspoon and Messrs. Drayton, Lee, Morris, and Adams. On Franklin's election in September, 1778, as minister plenipotentiary to France the same committee, with the exception of Dr. Witherspoon, had been again appointed to draft his credentials and instructions; but in October the *Journal* records the fact of President Witherspoon's restoration to the committee, so that he ultimately shared in preparing the papers adopted on the twenty-second and twenty-sixth.

In January he had been appointed chairman of a committee to prepare a manifesto on enemy treatment of prisoners. The committee gathered evidence during the year and at length reported; but there is no draft of the manifesto among the Papers of the Continental Congress, nor does the *Journal* record any formal action. The text of the manifesto is found nevertheless in the manuscript *Journal* for October 30, 1778, in the handwriting of Charles Thomson, the secretary of Congress, and ending with the words "done by unanimous consent." Under the circumstances it is impossible to assign authorship definitely; but the document is full of passages which have ear-marks of Dr. Witherspoon's composition. The closing paragraph is a typical example:

We, therefore, the Congress of the United States of America, do solemnly declare and proclaim, that if our enemies presume to execute their threats, or persist in their present career of barbarity, we will take such exemplary vengeance as shall deter others from a like conduct. We appeal to that God who searcheth the hearts of men, for the rectitude of our intentions; and in his holy presence we declare, that as we are not moved by any light or hasty suggestions of anger or revenge, so, through every possible change of fortune, we will adhere to this our determination.

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During this year the President was also chairman of the special committee to design seals for the Treasury and Navy Departments; and it was fitting that it should fall to his lot on behalf of the State of New Jersey to ratify the Articles of Confederation.

He allowed himself to be returned to Congress for the year 1779 against his will. Attendance was costly and in addition he felt that his presence was sorely needed at Princeton. He accepted reelection on the understanding with his constituents that he would come and go as he pleased. When in his seat he took most active part in the proceedings, but he seldom remained long enough to figure consistently in the debates.<sup>28</sup>

Absent during the latter half of January and a fortnight in February he surely made especial effort to be present on Monday the fifteenth, when M. Gérard held a most important conference with Congress dealing with peace terms. No votes are recorded in the *Journal* of that date so that it is not possible to verify attendance, but Dr. Witherspoon could have left Princeton early enough that Monday morning to reach Philadelphia in time for the audience, and thus have avoided travelling on Sunday. That he was present the next day is shown by the record of votes. To him and four other members were referred on the seventeenth letters from Arthur Lee together with the communications of M. Gérard at the conference, and also the draft of a treaty of commerce with Holland received from William Lee, Dr. Arthur Lee's brother. The committee reported within the week that it was of opinion that Spain was disposed to enter into alliance with the United States and that eventually the independence of the United States must be acknowledged by Great Britain and negotiations for peace be set on foot. If so, the American commissioners would require fresh instructions and the committee therefore submitted a list of articles as essential conditions to be insisted upon in the negotiations and others to be yielded or required on terms of mutual compensation. The President's ab-

<sup>28</sup> He was absent from January 9 to the middle of February; a week at the end of that month; three weeks in May; from June 4 to August 25 he was present only one week but after that was fairly regular in attendance.

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sences prevented him from sharing to any appreciable extent in the protracted discussion of these "ultimata" and in particular the bitterly contested one concerning the Newfoundland fisheries, although in his *Memorial of Facts* he recounts the conferences held with Gérard and the latter's advice that the United States be not "too high in their demands." He even missed seeing the ultimata finally adopted.

Present one day in March, however, he characteristically seconded Gouverneur Morris' resolution that a committee of three be appointed to prepare an account of so much of European intelligence as was proper to publish, and to him accordingly with Mr. Morris and William H. Drayton the task was given. He was a firm advocate of publicity; he believed that much of the British misunderstanding that had brought about the Revolution would have been avoided if Great Britain had been properly informed; he had urged publicity on Mr. John Adams when the latter passed through Princeton in 1774 on his way to the first Congress; in 1778 during the Deane investigation when the Committee on Foreign Affairs was directed to lay before Congress all its papers, he was unwilling that the members should pledge themselves not to mention outside of Congress matters that might appear in the documents. During the debate on the ultimata of 1779 Mr. Jay told Washington that there was as little secrecy in Congress "as in a boarding school," and he alluded to the rules of Congress as being "far too general and perhaps for that reason more frequently violated." Mr. Jay would have classed President Witherspoon among the violators, if a remark by that inveterate chronicler, Dr. Ezra Stiles, may be trusted. The latter records in his diary of this period meeting a Bostonian "so toryfied" that he had not heard "what Dr. Witherspoon communicated at General Washington's table" respecting "the Friendship of Spain, the King of the 2 Sicilies, Holland and Petersburg." This "friendship" was the subject of the long debate in Congress then proceeding.

On May 4, 1779, the President was one of the committee chosen, a member from each State, with the President of Congress, to wait upon the French Minister and offer the congratu-

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lations of Congress on the birth of a princess to the King of France; and he was one of the committee of three who prepared the letter in reply to His Majesty's announcement.

Absent during the unpleasant discussion of the dissensions among the American commissioners in Europe, his attitude on the matter may be inferred perhaps by his seconding, on his return to his seat, Richard Henry Lee's resolution that Congress now proceed to hear evidence exculpating the commissioners. The resolution is undated but is inserted in the *Journal* by Mr. Ford under date of June 10, 1779. If this date be accepted, color is also lent to an interesting tale printed in the newspapers towards the end of June, in an anonymous letter emanating from Philadelphia.<sup>29</sup> It repeats the old fiction that Dr. Witherspoon belonged to a junto, dating back to the First Congress, to control congressional action. For the past year, so the story ran, a club had been formed of New England, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and two or three Southern members who had met regularly to arrange proceedings in Congress; and as an illustration of their activity it is alleged that the night before Arthur Lee's recall was to be voted upon (June 10) an express was sent off for Dr. Witherspoon and Mr. Scudder, who made posthaste to Philadelphia "each of them with as much expedition as if they had been flying before the enemy." Mr. Scudder is recorded in the *Journal* as present on June 10, but Dr. Witherspoon's name does not appear, although he was present if Mr. Ford's dating of the resolution mentioned above is accepted. Both he and Mr. Scudder had voted in May against the recall of Arthur Lee when the house was equally divided; and there is no question as to President Witherspoon's friendliness to the Lee family. His references to Arthur Lee are uniformly favorable, speaking of him in 1781, for example, as "one of the most able, faithful and active servants we ever had, and certainly one of the most disinterested"<sup>30</sup>—high praise with which not everyone agreed then, or will agree now.

<sup>29</sup> *Silas Deane Papers*, vol. III, p. 490, N.Y. Historical Society Collection 1888. The letter was reprinted in the *Baltimore Advertiser*, the *New York Packet*, and the *Virginia Gazette*.

<sup>30</sup> *Works*, vol. IV, p. 269.

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Placed on a committee to take up the New Hampshire Grants controversy he was absent through the rest of June and the whole of July, and on his return from Vermont he resumed his seat only long enough to present a report for the committee and then at once went to Princeton, thus missing the debate in August on instructions for the American peace commissioner, for the commissioner to negotiate a treaty of commerce with Great Britain, and for the American minister at Versailles. The instructions for the minister at Madrid could not be prepared at the time for want of final determination on the part of Congress; but when at length in September it was agreed to send Mr. Jay as minister to Spain, the President evidently sensed the difficulties the envoy would encounter at Madrid, for, a few days before Jay sailed, he offered (October 13) a resolution that the minister be "privately instructed" to recede from the claim of free navigation of the Mississippi if such proved an insuperable bar to the proposed treaties with Spain. The motion was lost, receiving but four votes; and yet a few months later Dr. Witherspoon's defeated proposal was exactly what Congress authorized. There appears to have developed as the war proceeded a difference of opinion as to the value of Spain's services, and modern historians share that difference. Professor Corwin considers Spain's assistance in the light of results, save in 1781, to have been negligible, "when indeed it was not worse."<sup>31</sup> Dr. Witherspoon however, speaking on the floor of Congress in 1782 thought the services of Spain underrated. She had done much, he asserted; she entered the war with the common enemy and the Colonies had derived as much advantage from her exertions as if she had agreed to the treaty of alliance; she aided the Colonies with money, opened her ports to American ships, and admitted the United States to trade at Havana. We are not perfectly satisfied with the reception Mr. Jay received, concluded the President, but "we must not tease Spain with solicitations," and should leave her to judge the time when she will think it proper to comply with our engagements.<sup>32</sup>

Dr. Witherspoon seems to have made a special trip to Phila-

<sup>31</sup> *French Policy and the American Alliance*, p. 211.

<sup>32</sup> *Thomson Papers*, N. Y. Historical Society Collections, 1878, p. 90.

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delphia to be in his seat on September 17, 1779, the day M. Gérard took formal leave of Congress. He had been absent for some time before, and was away for a month immediately after, this date. He was present when Gérard's successor, La Luzerne, on November 17 was given his first public audience with Congress; but his attention for the rest of the session was devoted chiefly to finances.

In October, 1779, he had been added to a committee chosen a month earlier to address the States on finances. The report urged the necessity of punctual payment of the state quotas recently assigned and expressed the belief that the "operation of taxes and other salutary measures" would reduce prices and enable Congress to lessen the quotas or apply a portion of them to the public debt. The recommendation was to prove to a large degree futile, and Dr. Witherspoon seems to have had speedy premonition of this result. On November 17, after La Luzerne had been received in audience, and, as the *Journal* puts it, "had been conducted home," and Congress, plunging once more into finances, had authorized a fresh emission of bills of credit, Dr. Witherspoon moved the appointment of a committee of five to devise further ways and means for supplying the treasury. He was a member of the committee which accordingly reported two days later. But the report found Congress engrossed with the idea of fixing prices and checking a continued rise attributable to "engrossing and advancing," contemporary synonyms for modern "profiteering." It was at this time that the President made the speech in opposition to price-fixing which Dr. Rush recorded, as already quoted, and to which Congress merely gave polite attention. The report of the Committee on ways and means was taken from the table four or five days later and the plan of drawing bills of exchange on Mr. Jay and Mr. Laurens, to be sold at the current rate of exchange, was adopted, and a fresh committee appointed to carry it into effect.

Reference has been made to Dr. Witherspoon's appointment to a committee on the New Hampshire Grants controversy. The task of this committee must have been of more than ordinary interest to him, not merely because by an odd chance three of his

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four associates were graduates<sup>33</sup> of the college whose shattered fortunes he was directing *in absentia*, but rather because the committee's duty would take him northwards and might pave the way to stable political existence for the state of Vermont where his settlement of Ryegate lay. The States of New York and New Hampshire were both claiming the whole of the Grants, part of whose people had formed the commonwealth of Vermont and were acting as an independent State. Congress at this juncture had finally overcome its reluctance to interfere in the triangular controversy and after protracted discussion had voted in the first week of June (1779) that a committee of five repair to the district and find out why the citizens thereof refused to continue citizens of the States hitherto exercising jurisdiction over them. That Dr. Witherspoon fully appreciated the delicacy of the situation is shown by the resolution which he left behind him for presentation on the floor of Congress and which was adopted after he had started on the mission, stating

That it was not the intention of Congress, by their resolution of the first instant nor ought the same or any part thereof, to be construed to hold up principles subversive of, or unfavorable to the internal policy of any or either of the United States.

Dr. Witherspoon and Colonel Atlee made their way to Bennington, Vermont, but Judge Edwards having resigned his seat in Congress could not serve, while Root and Ellsworth arrived only after Witherspoon and Atlee had started home, so that the committee never met as a whole or even in quorum. During their stay in Vermont, however, Dr. Witherspoon and his colleague persuaded Governor Chittenden of Vermont to urge his adherents to abstain from violence and to raise their quota of troops whenever their neighbors were called upon to do so; they "conversed at great length" with all persons of weight at Bennington and made many enquiries to secure a clear understanding of the conflicting claims, to learn the disposition of the people, and to persuade them to an amicable settlement. So runs the report

<sup>33</sup> Jesse Root (1756), Oliver Ellsworth (1766), and Pierpont Edwards (1768). The fifth member was Colonel Atlee.

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which Dr. Witherspoon wrote and delivered to Congress on July 13. As a matter of fact the Congressmen did nothing, and under the circumstances could do nothing, save act as mediators and pacifiers. They had visited Governor Clinton of New York on their way north and a remark of his that he had found Atlee particularly receptive, by inference suggests that Dr. Witherspoon's mind was less open on the subject. He had in fact definite ideas on the fundamental problem at the heart of the whole difficulty which were not favorable to the New York claim and which he had already given hint of and was soon to exploit fully in connection with the question of the western lands. The committee was discharged in September, on the obvious ground that no quorum had met. The Vermont controversy was destined to occupy much attention during the rest of Dr. Witherspoon's membership of Congress and he was to serve on more than one committee in that connection. Statehood, however, was not acquired by Vermont until long after he had returned to private life.

President Witherspoon left Congress in December, 1779 at the end of his term, not expecting to return. In a letter to a friend in Scotland he gives the reasons:<sup>84</sup>

I have now left congress, not being able to support the expence of attending it, with the frequent journeys to Princeton, and being determined to give particular attention to the revival of the college. Professor Houston, however, our professor of mathematics, is a delegate this year; but he tells me he will certainly leave it next November. I mention this circumstance to conform what I believe I wrote you formerly, that the members of congress in general, not only receive no profit from that office, but I believe five out of six of them, if not more, are great losers in their private affairs. This cannot be otherwise; for as none of the delegates are allowed to have any lucrative office whatever, either in their own state or for the United States, though their expences should be fully borne, their time is taken up, and their own private estates are neglected. At the end of the year 1778, I gave notice to our legislature that they must either not chuse me at all, or leave me at full liberty to attend only when I could conveniently. They chose me however, and I made a good deal of use of that liberty in the year 1779; and this year all the delegates were changed but one.

<sup>84</sup> *Works*, vol. IV, p. 335. Letter of March 20, 1780.

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Regarding the general situation in America, he has these comments to make:

As to public affairs, it seems to be yet uncertain whether we shall have peace soon. Greatly do I and many others in America desire it; and yet, were our condition ten times worse than it is, nothing short of the clear independence of this country would be accepted. I observe, by your letter of the 19th of March last year, that you had a high opinion of your successes at St. Lucia, in Georgia, and against the French trade. I believe before the end of the campaign, there was little reason to boast of your success upon the whole. I mentioned to you in my last how obstinately the court of England continued in erroneous opinions respecting America; and now I think that obstinacy has become incurable. It is plain that they still harp upon the same string, that a few leading men in congress stir up the people, and persuade them to continue the contest. Allow me to assure you that this is one of the most absurd and groundless opinions that ever was formed. The congress is changing every day. There is no instance in the whole contest, in which the public opinion did not go before their resolutions. To go back to the very beginning—the declaration of independence was forced upon the majority of the then congress, by the people in general; and, in consequence of subsequent elections, every six months that I have been in congress has weakened the party that was suspected of coldness upon that subject; and now perhaps I may say it is annihilated.

I am not only fully sensible, by a general knowledge of the country in this and other states, that the public mind is entirely on the side of liberty, and for the independence of America—but I could mention a great many facts and circumstances as evidences of it, stronger than could well be imagined, and indeed which have turned out stronger than even my expectations. One circumstance is alone decisive upon this subject, which is well known to yourselves, that the moment your army leaves any part of the country, it is not only lost to you, but returns so strongly to the interest of congress, that all the persons known to have been attached to you are obliged to fly with terror and confusion. But there is another strong circumstance, the universal attachment of the people to the French alliance. In vain have your partisans endeavored to alarm the people with the fears of popery and arbitrary power. It makes not the least impression even upon the common people.

Please to attend to the circumstance I am going to mention; be-

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cause it surprised myself when I observed it. There are always, you know, little feuds and contentions, jealousy and emulation, in every society and in every association. Both in congress and in the country, I have observed that when one set or faction wants to make the other odious, they charge them with being cold to the French alliance, and ungrateful to them for their services. This to my knowledge has been the subject of mutual reproaches, when I do not believe there was any truth in it on either side. Would you think it—some have seriously attempted to persuade me that the New-England delegates were cold to the French, and inclined to the English; to which I answered, that I well knew the contrary, but that they were of an independent spirit, and would not easily submit to unwarrantable influence, either from the French or the English. I mention all this singly with this view, to shew you the bent and inclination of the public mind.

I will mention another circumstance to you. The distress of this country by the depreciation of the money, has been very great. Many have suffered great losses; not a few have been utterly ruined. Yet I never could perceive that this altered the inclination of the people as to the public cause in the least. Nay, notwithstanding the dreadful complaints made against particular classes of men, such as forestallers and engrossers, commissaries and quartermasters, yet I am persuaded that any body who should but propose to return to submission to England for relief from their depredations, would be torn in pieces.

During the year 1780 he devoted himself to his college duties and also served in the New Jersey State Council or Senate, and in December, 1780, he was returned to Congress. How he was induced to accept reelection is not recorded, but it is safe to surmise that on the one hand New Jersey felt, from the point of view of her own interests, that his experience and sagacity rendered his presence in Congress imperative, while on the other hand the President realized that vital questions of administration at home and of diplomacy abroad, on which he had pronounced views as representing his State, were approaching settlement, and that therefore it was his duty to accept reelection. Events proved that the year 1781 was one of the most important in the period. The Bank of North America was founded; national powers for Congress were proposed such as it had not possessed under the Confederation as interpreted up to that time; the formation of government executive departments was agreed to, and

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an effort at a federal judiciary was made; while the mission to France was enlarged and historic instructions were framed for it—in the formulation of which the President was to play a most extraordinary part.

He had not been back in Congress a week before he was given the task of drafting, with his old pupil James Madison and with Mr. Duane, a commission and a set of instructions for an envoy to Russia which were promptly laid before Congress and adopted, Francis Dana being appointed to the post.

In support of the plan for the coming campaign agreed upon by General Washington and the French commanders, Congress had voted to send an envoy extraordinary to the Court of Versailles to seek the needed funds, a decision Dr. Witherspoon sought to have reconsidered, involving as it did inevitable confusion, if not conflict, with the mission already at Paris. Congress declined to reconsider and a few days later selected young Colonel John Laurens for the task,—one to which he was inadequately fitted by his youth and lack of experience. Dr. Witherspoon's opposition must have had weight however, for presumably with the object of reconciling his fears to the wishes of Congress, he was made chairman of the special committee sent to confer with La Luzerne regarding young Laurens' mission, and to secure his advice.

Meanwhile news had been received of the capture on the high seas by the British in the autumn of 1780 of Henry Laurens, and his imprisonment in the Tower of London on the charge of high treason. Dr. Witherspoon seconded the resolution calling for a committee to consider the case and, as a member thereof, wrote the report presented in March, 1781, pointing out that Mr. Laurens, a former President of Congress, instead of being treated as a prisoner of war had been placed in close confinement; that the United States "are and of a right ought to be free and independent" and their citizens ought to receive the same treatment when taken prisoners as subjects of other independent States, and that the independence of the United States had been virtually acknowledged by Great Britain so far as treatment of prisoners and the conduct of war were concerned; and that, therefore, Congress should at once express its resentment against the

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present infraction of rights and take effectual measures to prevent its recurrence. The committee accordingly proposed in reprisal that (an unnamed prisoner) be put "into secure and close confinement" and be treated as Laurens.<sup>85</sup> This retaliatory report was referred to General Washington and eventually Congress voted to table its recommendation. The incident illustrates nevertheless the President's keen jealousy for the dignity and rights of the new government. Indeed, his jealousy for the national dignity is marked in all his congressional work during this year (1781), so far as that work can be traced in the *Journal*. In his financial proposals especially is this evident. Late in January Congress in committee of the whole had resolved to recommend

<sup>85</sup> The President did not resort to Congress when his son John was captured at sea in the following year. John Witherspoon, Jr., was born at Beith, Scotland, July 29, 1757. He was graduated from the Nassau Hall Grammar School in September, 1769, delivering the Latin Valedictory. Entering the freshman class that year, at commencement, 1771, he won as a sophomore in open competition, the first prize for reading Greek and Latin, Aaron Burr, Jr., the future Vice-president, and Henry Lee, Jr., the future "Light Horse Harry," winning second and third prizes respectively. In his junior year he took the second prize for Greek and Latin reading, but at graduation in 1773 won no honors.

He studied medicine and in the summer of 1775 entered service, accompanying General Washington when the latter went to Boston. In July and August, 1776, he was stationed at New York at the General Hospital and in August, 1777, was at the hospital at Trenton. He is listed as a surgeon in the hospital department from 1778 to 1780. In September, 1779, the French minister Gérard, asking Congress to allow the young physician a leave of absence to go to France, speaks of him as "a surgeon in the service of the United States." He sailed in October to purchase medicines and instruments. He next appears as surgeon on the American privateer *De Graaf* which was captured by the British early in 1781, and he was taken to England as a prisoner on the man of war *Celemene* and was severely treated. President Witherspoon wrote in June, 1781, to Franklin at Paris to procure his release and supply him with enough money to get home. The ensuing correspondence is among the Franklin papers in the Library of Congress. Franklin was able to arrange the release in September, young Witherspoon reaching Paris the next month and receiving, with a charming letter from Franklin to his father, the additional funds the latter had forwarded.

On return to America he made Princeton his residence, and was placed on a town committee in the summer of 1782 to carry out resolutions to prevent trade and intercourse with the enemy. He was still in Princeton in the fall of 1783. By the curious ill-fortune that seems to have beset the President's children, an estrangement took place between this son and his father, the causes of which are not known. It is said that he settled in St. Stephens Parish, South Carolina, where connections of the family lived, but no traces of him have been discovered. He was named by the President in 1794, when drawing his will, as one of his remaining children, but is believed to have been lost at sea in 1795.

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that the States levy a tax of five per cent on all imports, the tax to be paid, however, to federal agents and not to state officials, and the revenue accruing to be used for public purposes by Congress. This resolution was amended a few days later to ask the States to pass laws granting to Congress the power to levy such a tax and was still under discussion when Dr. Witherspoon, with mind made up on the real issue underlying these timid resolves, offered a motion that went to the heart of the difficulty, moving that it was necessary that Congress be vested with the right to oversee the commercial regulations of each State so as to avoid discriminations and partiality, or injury to the national interest; and that furthermore Congress should be vested with an exclusive right to lay taxes on imports within a certain period and for a specified purpose. But this attempt to provide a national revenue was too advanced and his ambitious motion secured the support of only four States. The original form of the resolution of January prevailed.

At least, however, he was recognized as a man of fearless ideas, and that spring in May (1781) he was appointed chairman of a committee to devise further ways and means to defray the expenses of the ensuing campaign and for the better regulation of public finances. He reported on the fourteenth proposing that the States repeal their laws making any kind of paper money legal tender, that the Treasurer of the United States draw on the several States for arrears, that debts of the United States be liquidated as might be or funded as loans if creditors preferred, that the States issue no more bills of credit upon their own account and recall as soon as possible what were still outstanding, that the superintendent of finance obtain a sum of hard money "for the most pressing exigencies of the public affairs," and finally and most important of all, that the United States take into consideration the line which they would guarantee to each State as its western boundary and declare the remainder the property of the United States as a fund of credit for the common interest and defence. Here again were constructive proposals which if adopted were likely to start the government on the road out of its financial quagmire. Little progress toward rehabilitation of national credit, or the creation of national funds would be made as long

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as each State handled finances in its own way and disregarded the claims of the United States; but meanwhile if sovereignty could be gained over the vast western land vaguely claimed by various States, it was obvious that the government would have at hand an imposing source of revenue. After several days of debate, and after the report had been returned to the committee for further consideration, it was adopted by Congress, with the exception, however of the potentially vital paragraph as to the western boundaries. On this point Dr. Witherspoon had again been in advance of his time. The hour had not yet arrived when the majority of his colleagues should bring themselves to face that particular problem.

Late in the same month the committee reported approval of Robert Morris's plan for a national bank of the United States, whereupon Congress gave the proposal its endorsement, at the same time recommending to the States to forbid the establishment or existence of other banks during the war, and voting that the notes of the national bank should be receivable for all taxes, payments, duties, and debts, and that it be a felony to counterfeit them or to convert any of the bank's funds or other property to private ends.

But Dr. Witherspoon was not willing to let the question of the western lands be lost to sight, and on June 27, as chairman of the committee on ways and means already mentioned, he reported a resolution<sup>86</sup> on the Virginia, New York and Connecticut cessions and the memorials of the Illinois and Wabash companies, that owing to the conditions annexed and to other circumstances the committee felt it inexpedient for Congress to accept the cessions as they stood. Therefore, repeating the earlier suggestion, the committee proposed that Congress name a date on which to consider the western limits beyond which it would not extend its guarantee to the States, and to ascertain what vacant lands belonged to the United States in common for the general benefit. It was in addition recommended that as soon as this were done a committee should be appointed to prepare a plan for dividing and settling the said territory, and for disposing of it so as to discharge the debts of the United States contracted in the war.

<sup>86</sup>The resolution in his handwriting is among the Papers of the Continental Congress.

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Without further ado Congress pigeonholed the resolution by postponing consideration. And here the problem of the western lands rested for the time being.

The culmination of President Witherspoon's work in the Continental Congress was now approaching, in the preparation of the famous Instructions of June, 1781, whereby the United States, to use Professor Corwin's phrase, "surrendered to France their diplomatic autonomy." When the President remarked during the debate that "what we do now will be often mentioned in after times," he was more than prophetic. The Instructions and the policy creating them have not ceased to be attacked and defended from that day to this.<sup>37</sup>

The *Journal* of Congress reveals plainly enough that the President guided the debate leading to the Instructions,<sup>38</sup> the latter are in his handwriting; he defended them not only at the time of their adoption, but repeated his support of them whenever they were discussed during the remainder of his stay in Congress; and so controversial did the whole episode seem to be to him that he subsequently took the pains to write the *Memorial of Facts*, explaining how Congress was induced to direct the American commissioners to be ultimately guided by the Court of Versailles. Unfortunately this document, like so many of the Witherspoon papers, is incomplete, but what it lacks can be supplied from records of his speeches.

Professor Corwin has analysed the complicated circumstances leading to the Instructions and the finesse with which La Luzerne persuaded Congress, without dissent but not without misgivings, to adopt his suggestions. For the French Minister the vote was a personal triumph; but for President Witherspoon it was no less a victory. Mr. Corwin gives as the chief reason governing the decision, besides confidence in France, the common American belief that the fate of the United States rested

<sup>37</sup> The most recent and scholarly consideration is found in Professor Corwin's authoritative *French Policy and the American Alliance*. It is a pleasure to acknowledge the indebtedness of this chapter to several passages in that book.

<sup>38</sup> Another witness is Madison. Recalling two years later, the debate on the Instructions of 1781, he names in a note to his manuscript the personnel of the committee that framed them, and adds "Mr. Witherspoon was particularly prominent throughout." *Writings*, vol. I, p. 417.



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almost entirely with France and therefore Congress could hardly do better "than vest France outright with the trusteeship of American interests."<sup>39</sup>

Whatever the continental diplomacy underlying La Luzerne's efforts, President Witherspoon appears to have reached his own conclusions after the coolest sort of consideration. It was a case of facing embarrassing but undeniable facts and framing a course of action accordingly. His personal sentiment for France played little or no part in the process. That he was in constant communication with La Luzerne must be taken for granted; he was one of the few members who could converse with the French Minister in his native tongue; and there are indications that more than once he gave close heed to suggestions made during the debate by the representative of France; but by no manner of means can it be said that he blindly followed La Luzerne's leading, or was merely his mouthpiece.

In his *Memorial of Facts* he enumerates the indebtedness of the Colonies to France for recognition, for troops, and money; Mr. Adams, charged with the peace negotiation, had fallen into a difference of opinion with Vergennes in which he was at fault; Congress had either to recall him or restrict his powers, and of the two evils Dr. Witherspoon chose the latter as less of a reflection on the national dignity; he was satisfied that the national security at least could not be injured; France was bound only to maintain our independence in government and commerce; beyond that she had the right to judge whether she would or would not continue the war for other objects claimed by the United States; the American ministers were not restrained from urging anything they thought proper in order to obtain all that the United States wished; could they have done more, asks the President, if they had been left quite at liberty? Finally, Congress did the only thing in its power to safeguard the various sectional interests that emerged by adding more members to the commission and from different parts of the country, thus removing suspicion and fear that the interest of one part would be sacrificed to that of another as might have been the case had one plenipotentiary alone been retained to conduct the negotiations for

<sup>39</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 306.

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peace. As will appear later, Dr. Witherspoon ridiculed this last idea when it was first brought forward. Madison's version of the controlling reasons agrees with Dr. Witherspoon's in the main and is found in his report of the debate of December, 1782, on a motion to revise the Instructions of June, 1781, and release the American commissioners from the obligation to conform to the advice of France.<sup>40</sup>

These being the considerations governing the President's course, the debate itself may now be followed.

On May 28 a committee of which Dr. Witherspoon was a member, and which had been appointed at the request of La Luzerne to receive important communications he wished laid before Congress, reported in great detail the substance of its interviews with the Minister, announcing that a further loan had been agreed to by France and that there was strong probability of mediation by the courts of Vienna and St. Petersburg, urging the necessity of meanwhile placing a curb on Mr. Adams' use of his plenipotentiary powers, and emphasizing the need of the greatest exertions at this time on the part of the American federation, inasmuch as every success now gained by the American army would infinitely facilitate the negotiations of the American plenipotentiaries. Pending the conclusion of the conferences with the French Minister the report was re-committed.

A few days later (June 1) the committee reported the draft of a letter to the several States, which Congress agreed to, proclaiming the welcome news of overtures for peace and calling upon the States for their final supreme exertion, an exertion proportionable to the truly critical situation and complying unequivocally with the demands of Congress for provisions, men, and money. If these are supplied, said the draft, "we have the most pleasing prospect of putting a speedy and happy issue to the war, by driving the enemy out of their present possessions in every part of these States." The committee was confident the States would put forth strenuous efforts to accomplish such results and be prepared to accept peace on no other terms than independence. On June 5 and 6, the committee's report on La Luzerne's announcements was further considered and Congress

<sup>40</sup> *Writings*, vol. I, p. 298-9.

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voted that the mediation proposed by Russia and Germany be concurred in, but that no treaty of peace be considered which did not effectually secure the independence of the United States, and leave in full force and validity the existing treaty with France. In view of the proposal of mediation President Witherspoon drew up a "Memorial and Manifesto of the United States of North America"<sup>41</sup> addressed to the mediating and other powers in Europe. It is a dispassionate and carefully framed presentation of the case of the American Colonies and reveals how fully the President had assimilated the American point of view during the twelve years of his residence in the New World. A native born colonial perhaps would have allowed himself more rhetoric, more feeling; but his statement could not have been clearer or more dignified. The document is the President's apologia for the American Revolution and for that reason, besides being one of the few political papers among his writings that has come down to us entire, is important enough to summarize.

It begins with a brief statement of the causes that led to the planting of the Colonies in America, "the spirit of curiosity and enterprise which was so prevalent in Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries," the hope of riches, and lastly, "the iron rod of sacerdotal tyranny" at home. The settlers solicited charters and formed their governments on different principles, but in one factor they all agreed: "they considered themselves as bringing their liberty with them and as entitled to all the rights and privileges of freemen under the British Constitution." The foundation stone of that liberty was that freeholders or proprietors of the soil should have the exclusive right of granting money for public uses, and they proceeded upon that plan. "With respect indeed to the whole of their internal government, they considered themselves not as directly subjects to the British government, but as separate independent dominions under the same sovereign, and with similar coordinate jurisdiction. . . . This was their opinion many years before the late unjust claims and oppressive acts which gave birth to the bloody conflict not yet finished."

They willingly "submitted to Britain's enjoying an exclusive right to their commerce, though several of the acts of the British Parliament upon this subject they always looked upon as partial and un-

<sup>41</sup> *Works*, vol. IV, p. 217.

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just. Some of these . . . would not probably have been submitted to, but that the rigid execution of them at this distance was in its nature impossible." In the opinion of the Colonies, the benefits to Great Britain from exclusive commerce with America and the taxes thus raised on her own subjects were more than their share of the common treasure necessary for the defence of the empire. Notwithstanding, in extraordinary emergencies they complied with requisitions and advanced sums which in one or two instances Britain herself considered above their ability and made restitution or compensation.

The reason for this long and patient acquiescence was the attachment the inhabitants of America had to Great Britain as their parent country:

"They gloried in their relation to her; they were zealous for her honor and interest; imbibed her principles and prejudices with respect to other nations; entered into her quarrels, and were profuse of their blood for the purpose of securing or extending her dominion. Almost every city and county in Great Britain had its counterpart which bore its name in the new world; and those whose progenitors for three generations had been born in America, when they spoke of going to Britain, called it going home."

Such was the state of affairs when unwise counsellors to the British King thought of raising revenue without consent of American legislatures. The first attempt was the Stamp Act, so odious over the whole land that in short time it was repealed. Parliament by the Declaratory Act, however, showed it intended to maintain the so-called right, and it was not long before an Act was passed imposing duty on tea, glass, etc., which by the smallness of the duties was "plainly designed to steal upon us, gradually and if possible imperceptibly, the exercise of their pretended rights." The Colonies rose against its execution. "Not only every Colony, by its representative body, but every county and almost every corporation or other subordinate division, publicly declared that they would defend their liberty at the risk of their estates and lives." Meanwhile the British government was determined on unconditional submission and thus the rupture took place.

As to the justice of the cause, "if any impartial person will read the Declaratory Act stating that . . . Parliament has the right to make laws binding upon the Colonies *in all cases whatsoever*, and which is now producing its proper fruit, he must be convinced that . . . we should have been in no respect different from conquered tributary States, subject to a foreign country, and the Colonial Assemblies

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would have become both useless and contemptible." Writings in England that the Colonies were represented in Parliament are and will remain "a disgrace to reason as well as an insult to American understanding."

The troubles in America were said to have been raised by a few seditious persons and the consequences of a scheme to set up an independent rule: "This unjust and indeed absurd accusation may be refuted by a thousand arguments—the predilection of the people of America for the people, fashions and government of Britain, the absence of any person or persons in America of sufficient influence to effect it, the state of the Colonies when they began to grapple with the power of Britain, no step taken to obtain foreign aid, no provision of arms, ammunition, or warlike stores of any kind, the country exposed, naked, and helpless, before the enemy."

Reconciliation, with the security and preservation of our rights, was the wish of every soul; but each succeeding petition was treated with fresh and greater insult and was answered by new Acts of Parliament which will be a stain upon the annals of the kingdom. To crown all, the last petition sent by Congress to the King, beseeching him "to appoint some mode by which our complaints might be remedied and a way paved for reconciliation, was treated with absolute contempt and no answer given to it of any kind . . . We were declared rebels; and . . . no alternative left us but either to go with ropes about our necks and submit ourselves not to the King but to the kingdom of England, to be trampled under foot, or risk all the consequence of open and vigorous resistance."

The latter alternative was chosen and independence was declared, with the full approbation and at the ardent desire of the people at large. "The extent and growth of the Colonies seemed in the nature of things to call for such a separation long before; yet it would not probably have happened for many years if it had not been forced upon us by the conduct of our unkind parent herself."

After the Declaration of Independence, Lord Howe brought a commission for giving peace to America, but as he had not the liberty to acknowledge us by open treaty so the substance of what he offered was pardon upon submission. So important a step as the Declaration of Independence could not be recalled and the armament sent against us in 1776 rendered it more necessary than ever.

Dr. Witherspoon was sorry to take notice of the conduct of the war: "It would be for the honor of humanity that it could be buried in

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oblivion. The many instances of persons murdered in cold blood, the barbarous treatment of prisoners, multitudes dying of starvation, many impressed on British ships of war or sent to Britain to rot in prison, houses and towns wantonly burnt and the country devastated, to which may be added hiring the Indians to fall upon the back settlements."

At last it pleased God to incline the heart of the French King to give relief by entering into a treaty with the United States which gave "a new turn to our affairs, and a new dignity to our cause." The terms of that treaty, favorable to us and honorable to our ally, "cannot fail to add the bond of gratitude to that of justice and make adherence inviolable." Soon after, commissioners came out to offer terms; we were offered freedom from taxes and even "a species of independence itself," upon condition of breaking our faith with France and uniting our force with that of Great Britain. These proposals were ample confession that the demands of America were just and the circumstances and time of their making show they could not be accepted with any regard to justice, gratitude, or policy. Could we be guilty of a direct breach of faith when the ink was hardly dry on the treaty with France? Could we instantly forget favors so earnestly solicited and so generously bestowed? Could we, who had not entered an offensive and defensive league with France except for the present struggle in our own behalf, throw ourselves into the arms of an hostile nation and promise to make war with her against our benefactors?

"Upon the whole, since the American Colonies were, from their extent and situation, ripe for a separation from Great Britain, and the nature of things seemed to demand it; since their growing power added to that of Great Britain would give her such a dominion of the sea as must be dangerous to the liberty and commerce of other nations; since by her own acts of oppression she has alienated the minds of the Americans and compelled them to establish independent governments, which has now taken place; and since these governments, which are distinct though confederated, wholly settled upon republican principles, and fit only for agriculture and commerce, cannot be an object of jealousy to other powers, but by free and open intercourse with them are a general benefit to all; it is hoped that the revolution which they have effected will meet with universal approbation."

From La Luzerne, whose chief, Vergennes, had with difficulty secured Spain's active participation in the war, Dr. Witherspoon

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must have received, in addition to what Gérard had told Congress, fresh light on Spanish territorial claims in case the Colonies won their independence; for immediately after the passage of the motion accepting mediation he moved on June 6,<sup>42</sup> seconded by his colleague from New Jersey, Professor William C. Houston, further to instruct the Minister negotiating on behalf of the United States that as to disputed boundaries reference was made to previous instructions from which "the desires and expectations of Congress" would be easily perceived; but, continued the further instruction "we think it unsafe *at this Distance* to ty you up by absolute and peremptory Directions upon any Subject than the two essential Articles above mentioned" (i.e., independence, and the integrity of the French treaty). "You will therefore use your own Judgment and Prudence in securing the Interest of the United States in such Manner as Circumstances may direct. . . ." Further, the minister was "to make the most candid and confidential Communications upon all Subjects to the Ministers of our generous ally the King of France, to *undertake nothing without their Knowledge and Concurrence*, and make them sensible how much we rely upon his Majesty's Influence for effectual support in every thing that may be necessary to the present Security and future Prosperity of the United States." The italics are in the manuscript motion in Dr. Witherspoon's handwriting. But Congress did not approve the additional instruction as to boundaries; it failed of adoption and in further debate was with the entire report recommitted. The next day (June 7) Dr. Witherspoon, for the committee, resubmitted the motion with the following "Additional and secret Article of Instructions with Respect to the Boundaries of the United States:" first, the Minister was to use his utmost endeavors to secure the limits fixed by descriptions in previous instructions; second, failing this, peace was to be made without fixing the northern and western boundaries, leaving them for future discussion; and third, if that too proved impracticable and boundaries must be ascertained, as advantageous a settlement as possible in favor of the United States was to be obtained. Of these additional and

<sup>42</sup> The resolution in his handwriting is among the Papers of the Continental Congress.

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secret instructions, which also are in Dr. Witherspoon's handwriting, the first was adopted unanimously, the second was safely carried, while the third, receiving the votes of only five States, was lost.

The debate was continued on June 8 and the first part of President Witherspoon's original motion of the sixth being again reported by the committee, Virginia through the mouthpiece of Madison offered an additional provision that the Minister do not recede from the former instruction of Congress as to boundaries except so far as a western line was concerned, which the mover proceeded to describe; but his State was the only one to favor his proposal. Undaunted, Madison offered another amendment which provided that the Minister do not agree to any cession of territory lying on the southeast side of the Ohio and this met the fate of its predecessor. Then Mr. Bland, also of Virginia, took up the fight for his State and moved to strike out all after the phrase "desires and expectations" of the United States in Dr. Witherspoon's motion, but was no more successful than Madison.

The original Witherspoon instructions of June 6 were then adopted; and an attempt to reconsider the vote on the third additional and secret instruction having failed, the President, perceiving that he now controlled a majority, promptly had the first and second secret instructions of the day before reconsidered and voted down, and the original form of the instructions adopted. June 9, on the President's further motion, another additional instruction was passed unanimously to the effect that if difficulty arose in the course of the peace negotiations on account of Great Britain's reluctance to make formal acknowledgment of the independence of the United States, the American negotiator was at liberty to agree to a truce or to any other concession as might not affect the substance of what the United States were contending for, and "provided that Great Britain be not left in possession of any part of the thirteen United States."

At this point (June 9) came the suggestion from the committee that additional plenipotentiaries be joined to Mr. Adams, a proposal for which Dr. Witherspoon was prepared and which he combatted in a speech preserved in his writings. With the pur-

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port of this speech Congress agreed, declining at the time to increase the personnel of the commission.<sup>43</sup>

Dr. Witherspoon's *Memorial of Facts* gives the confidential history of the transaction at this point. La Luzerne had intimated to the committee that the secret instructions, although made more definite at his request, were not yet sufficient for the present emergency; he read to the committee letters from Vergennes "upon the subject of Mr. Adams, complaining of him in the strongest terms and expressing fears of the negotiations being marred by his stiffness and tenaciousness of purpose;" it was even suspected by the committee that France wished Congress to recall Mr. Adams and appoint someone else, although no hint of this was made by Vergennes or suggested by La Luzerne; Mr. Adams' unfortunate disagreement with Vergennes, says Dr. Witherspoon, was due to an excess of well meant zeal, and the sacrifice of "a Minister of unquestionable integrity could not be submitted to merely because he had had more zeal than good manners." Therefore it had been proposed that a clause be added "that he *do nothing without the consent and approbation of the Court of France*" (italics are Witherspoon's). But La Luzerne was still unsatisfied; the new clause was merely negative; Mr. Adams might indeed now do nothing himself, but he might still obstruct every measure and effectually prevent anything else being done. When this was reported to Congress, continues the *Memorial*, "the matter appeared exceedingly delicate and diffi-

<sup>43</sup>The President after alluding to the warmth of the debate, insisted that the appointment of only one commissioner would conduce to "more precision, more expedition, more uniformity, and more certainty of agreement with others and consistency with himself." Mr. Adams having long been in Europe had no doubt "been turning his thoughts, and making enquiries upon the subject ever since he went there, so that we may suppose him pretty ripely advised." As for the alleged advantage in the council of several as against one, he felt that this meant only distribution of responsibility and possibly a division of opinion which would of itself be the cause of danger. As for the necessity of representation from various parts of the country he could not see what circumstances could "be peculiar to one part of the country more than another" in a negotiation of this kind. If it concerned internal government, taxation, or interstate commerce, it would be different; but when "it is only to make peace for the liberty and protection of all, there seems to be little right in it," (*Works*, IV, 267). Professor Corwin has pointed out (p. 302) how this question after all did concern various groups in Congress representing various interests; and President Witherspoon himself very soon discovered sufficient grounds for changing his mind.

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cult. It was discussed at great length. All the objections against removing Mr. Adams were argued in their full force; but on the other hand, it appeared humiliating if not dangerous to deliver ourselves entirely to the Court of France. However, after full deliberation it was agreed that he should *be ultimately guided by the opinion and judgment of the Court of France*" (italics again Witherspoon's).

On June 11 Dr. Witherspoon's committee reported that it had conveyed to the French Minister the substance of the Instructions of June 9, and now wished to incorporate certain amendments, all of which were approved. The debate thereon, if any, is not recorded, but the effect of these amendments was without exception to place the American representative more completely than ever under the direction of the French Foreign Office, and La Luzerne's hand is plainly discernible.

It is regrettable that Dr. Witherspoon's *Memorial of Facts* is not complete, for he might then have explained his change of attitude on the question of enlarging the commission. It is quite evident that further conference with La Luzerne had won him over to a compromise, for on June 11 his committee moved reconsideration of the question of enlarging the mission, and in the light of fuller information, so easily was Congress induced to reverse itself and add others to Mr. Adams as negotiators for peace, that the yeas and nays were not even called for.<sup>44</sup> As a result Jay, Franklin, Henry Laurens and Jefferson were added to the mission and at length on June 15 the famous Instructions as a whole, framed in the first instance by Dr. Witherspoon to control Mr. Adams, were adopted to govern the new commission.<sup>45</sup>

The President was absent the first three weeks of July, 1781, but when he returned was immediately made chairman of a committee appointed to receive further important communications which the French Minister informed Congress he wished to make. On July 23 he reported the substance of the audience with the Minister. The latter explained the causes delaying the meas-

<sup>44</sup> See *Journal*, XX, 626.

<sup>45</sup> It may be well, as Professor Corwin reminds his readers, to remember that the Instructions had no influence after all on the negotiations leading to the peace of 1783. Their fate may be followed in his volume.

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ures the King of France had taken for a naval campaign; he intimated that Holland was open to approach and offered his services as an intermediary; he suggested that Congress send an envoy to Holland with suitable instructions: and he alluded to the favorable attitude of Russia. This report was referred back, and early in August Dr. Witherspoon reported resolutions expressing the gratitude of Congress to the King of France for his friendship and regard, accepting his offer of interposition with Holland, and directing Mr. Adams to go to the Hague to propose a treaty of amity and commerce, consistent with the terms of the treaty with France. The committee was ordered to frame definite instructions for Mr. Adams and on August 16 these were introduced by Dr. Witherspoon and approved.

The Board of War injected academic matters into Congressional diplomatic deliberations that summer by presenting to Congress bills from Dr. Witherspoon and Colonel George Morgan of Princeton for tuition and maintenance of three Indian students at the College of New Jersey. They were sons of Delaware chieftains and had been at Princeton since the spring of 1779 attempting, under the guardianship of Colonel Morgan and at government expense, to assimilate an education in the college grammar school. The curious and pathetic story of this totally unsuccessful educational venture may be found in the *Princeton University Bulletin*<sup>46</sup> for May, 1902, and mention of it here has place chiefly as illustrating the inefficiency of the government's financial administration and of the predicaments in which Dr. Witherspoon's multiplied activities often placed him. The report of the Board of War was referred July 31 to the Board of Treasury "to devise ways and means for furnishing Colonel George Morgan with the sum of one hundred and thirty-seven pounds currency of New Jersey in specie," for the settlement of the bills. But the Board of Treasury was not so easily to be parted from its money, and a week later retorted that Dr. Witherspoon was holding a "large sum in specie" due the United States which had been deposited with him in 1778 by exchanged North Carolina prisoners of war to discharge demands of the United States in return for subsistence, and the Board suggested that this money

<sup>46</sup> vol. XIII, p. 101, etc.

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be applied to the bills in question. Dr. Witherspoon promptly returned the warrant with a protest and several letters, which action was duly reported to Congress in September and was referred to a fresh committee, which in its turn reported in October; and after consideration by Congress the whole matter with the accompanying file of documents was referred to the superintendent of finance to whom Dr. Witherspoon was ordered to account for and pay over the monies he had received from the prisoners, the superintendent of finance thereupon to "take order for the support and education of the Indian youths at Princeton College under the care of Colonel George Morgan, out of the said moneys, or otherwise as he may think expedient"—which action plainly shifted the whole matter on to his already overburdened shoulders. The controversy seems to have been amicably settled in a manner now not quite clear, but the records show that Colonel Morgan thereafter received fairly regular reimbursements from the superintendent of finance for expenses incurred by the government's wards at Princeton. No papers, however, have been found relative to Dr. Witherspoon's accounting for the funds he was alleged to be holding.

Except for this comedy, the College of New Jersey figures seldom in the Congressional record of the time. One or two petitions for relief from quartering of troops in Nassau Hall, or for reimbursement for rentals, or to excuse the officers of the College from military duty are the only occasions when the institution formally appears in the record. But in debate Dr. Witherspoon did not hesitate to use his college experience. For example, in 1777 he pointed his objection to leaving the election of five major generals in the army to the vote of the general officers, by telling his colleagues that once—and only once—he had allowed his Seniors at College to elect their own commencement honormen, and the election had produced so much ill-feeling and confusion that he had ever since kept the appointive power himself. Congress followed the hint.

The condition of national affairs that autumn externally looked so favorable that a day of thanksgiving seemed appropriate, and on September 15 Dr. Witherspoon was appointed chairman of a committee to report a proclamation. Before he brought

17 11  
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18 13



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it in, however, Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown on October 19, and when the President reported his proclamation on the twenty-sixth, it was more than ever timely. The rapidity with which he usually produced compositions of this sort makes one wonder why he delayed this particular paper six weeks. Had he possibly some inkling of important developments in the South? Washington had reported the arrival of the Count de Grasse in the Chesapeake with ships, men and money; and Dr. Wither- spoon had seen Washington and Rochambeau leave Philadelphia the first week of September marching south. Is it an unreasonable conjecture that they had dropped a hint as to the prize for which they were playing, and that the President before penning the proclamation had calmly waited to see whether fortune—or rather Providence—would crown their plans with success.

Whereas, it hath pleased Almighty God, father of mercies, remarkably to assist and support the United States of America in their important struggle for liberty, against the long continued efforts of a powerful nation: it is the duty of all ranks to observe and thankfully acknowledge the interpositions of his Providence in their behalf. Through the whole of the contest, from its first rise to this time, the influence of Divine Providence may be clearly perceived in many signal instances, of which we mention but a few.

In revealing the councils of our enemies, when the discoveries were seasonable and important, and the means seemingly inadequate or fortuitous; in preserving and even improving the union of the several States, on the breach of which our enemies placed their greatest dependence; in increasing the number and adding to the zeal and attachment of the friends of Liberty; in granting remarkable deliverances, and blessing us with the most signal success, when affairs seemed to have the most discouraging appearance; in raising up for us a powerful and generous ally, in one of the first of the European powers; in confounding the councils of our enemies, and suffering them to pursue such measures as have most directly contributed to frustrate their own desires and expectations; above all, in making their extreme cruelty to the inhabitants of these States, when in their power, and their savage devastation of property, the very means of cementing our union, and adding vigor to every effort in opposition to them.

And as we cannot help leading the good people of these States to a

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retrospect on the events which have taken place since the beginning of the war, so we recommend in a particular manner to their observation, the goodness of God in the year now drawing to a conclusion; in which the Confederation of the United States has been completed, in which there have been so many instances of prowess and success in our armies; particularly in the Southern States, where, notwithstanding the difficulties with which they had to struggle, they have recovered the whole country which the enemy had overrun, leaving them only a post or two on or near the sea; in which we have been so powerfully and effectually assisted by our allies, while in all the conjunct operations the most perfect harmony has subsisted in the allied army; in which there has been so plentiful a harvest, and so great abundance of the fruits of the earth of every kind, as not only enables us easily to supply the wants of the army, but gives comfort and happiness to the whole people; and in which, after the success of our allies by sea, a General of the first Rank, with his whole army, has been captured by the allied forces under the direction of our Commander in Chief.

It is therefore recommended to the several states to set apart the thirteenth day of December next, to be religiously observed as a Day of Thanksgiving and Prayer; that all the people may assemble on that day, with grateful hearts, to celebrate the praise of our gracious Benefactor; to confess our manifold sins; to offer up our most fervent supplications to the God of all grace, that it may please Him to pardon our offences, and incline our hearts for the future to keep all his laws; to comfort and relieve all our brethren who are in distress or captivity; to prosper all husbandmen, and give success to all engaged in lawful commerce; to impart wisdom and integrity to our counselors, judgment and fortitude to our officers and soldiers; to protect and prosper our illustrious ally, and favor our united exertions for the speedy establishment of a safe, honorable and lasting peace; and bless all seminaries of learning; and cause the knowledge of God to cover the earth, as the water covers the seas.<sup>47</sup>

The New York *Gazette* that winter printed in its columns an alleged speech by the President on Cornwallis's surrender. It was copied by the *Edinburgh Gazette* of January 8, 1782, and reprinted in 1809 in Sergeant Lamb's *Original and authentic Journal of Occurrences during the late American War*. The speech is

<sup>47</sup> In Dr. Witherspoon's handwriting—Papers Continental Congress, vol. 24, 463—printed in *Journal*, vol. XXI, p. 1074.

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original, but by no possibility authentic; it sneers at Washington and his army; it curses the French alliance; and either of these features alone is sufficient to stamp it as fraudulent. One or two passages—such as the dark picture of the country's general condition, and the suggestion that overtures for peace might now be made—may be genuine; but except for these and similar scattered paragraphs neither content nor style admit of any belief whatsoever in the authenticity of the speech as a whole.

President Witherspoon's term came to a close that December and he returned to Princeton probably confident that the surrender of Cornwallis had brought the end of the war actually within sight. In February, 1782, the House of Commons voted against continuing offensive warfare in America, an action promptly followed by the resignation of Lord North and the appointment of his successor Lord Rockingham; in April the Dutch Republic recognized American independence; in May Sir Guy Carleton superseded Sir Henry Clinton in command of the British forces in America and quickly indicated that further active hostilities would not be undertaken; and on the last day of that month, New Jersey returned Dr. Witherspoon once more to Congress to serve until November. He had just been attending the annual meeting of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia at which, as chairman of a special committee appointed for the purpose, he had drafted and brought in a letter<sup>48</sup> from the Synod to the French Minister and had accompanied the moderator of the Synod in presenting it to La Luzerne. The letter began with these words:

The Synod of New York and Philadelphia beg leave to address your Excellency on the auspicious birth of a Dauphin of France and by your means to communicate to your sovereign the interest which they take in every event with which his honour or happiness is connected.

The wish is then expressed that this address may be considered as testimony of the Synod's approbation of the French Alliance; and the assurance is given that the Synod will

<sup>48</sup>The manuscript is in the President's handwriting.

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not cease to pray to the God of all grace that the illustrious ally of these States and his posterity to the latest ages may be distinguished at home and abroad as the supporters of liberty and justice, as the friends of mankind and deliverers of the oppressed.

In its letter of May, 1779, with which it will be remembered Dr. Witherspoon was also concerned, congratulating His Majesty on the birth of a princess, Congress had expressed the prayer that the "Supreme Disposer of events" would long continue to France "the blessings resulting from the administration of a prince who so nobly asserts the rights of mankind." It is a curious speculation whether the President recollected these phrases of his when, ten years from that summer, the news reached America of the tragic fate of the French ruler and his little children, whose entrances upon their pitiful histories Dr. Witherspoon had helped to commemorate. There is no known expression of his feeling toward the French Revolution, although, as a subsequent chapter will show, that event did not pass unrecognized by the republicans of the Princeton campus.

Dr. Witherspoon took his seat in Congress June 12 and immediately proceeded (June 17, 1782) to push the question of peace negotiations by moving that a committee be appointed to report the information and instructions proper to be transmitted to the American Ministers the better to enable them to support the claims of the United States not included in their ultimate demands of June, 1781. But Congress was unready to follow his lead and voted the resolution down, and it was not until mid-summer that the proposal at length was adopted, when the great debate on the western lands came on. It was an easier matter to gain his colleagues' approval of the better regulation of the business of the government and he secured the passage of a resolution appointing committees semi-annually to enquire fully into and report on the condition of the various executive departments. He was able also to secure consideration of an important resolution bearing on the finances of the country. The superintendent of finance had reported that every loan Congress could command for the year had already been anticipated and he could

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not meet the loan office obligations without further funds. The situation was referred to a committee of which Dr. Witherspoon was chairman. The resulting resolution penned by him reads:

Whereas the drawing Bills upon Europe for the Payment of Interest due on Loan Office certificates has been attended by many Inconveniences and the Continuation of it would be inconsistent with the Public Service.

Resolved that the Superintendent of Finance be directed to draw no more Bills on Europe for the payment of Interest due or that may become due on monies lent to the United States, but that he take Measures in future for the seasonable Payment of the Interest on all Loans and of the Duties laid or to be laid on imported Goods in the several States at the Disposal of Congress.

This was referred to the superintendent of finance who in turn reported a similar resolution which was referred to a fresh committee of which Arthur Lee was a member. This committee's concurring resolution being under debate in July, Lee presented a memorial asking that his account against the United States for service in Europe be honored in bills of exchange as in the case of other Ministers. The memorial was referred back to Dr. Witherspoon and Messrs. Lowell and Middleton, who earlier in the month had approved Lee's claim. In the pointed language of Charles Thomson, the veteran secretary of Congress,

notwithstanding the information that there were no funds on which bills could be drawn, notwithstanding a report of a Committee . . . was then before Congress . . . for putting a stop to the drawing of any more bills and notwithstanding the clamours of the holders of certificates which would naturally be increased when they found their interest stopped under pretence that Congress had no funds in Europe . . . and at the same time drawing in favour of one of their members for a sum equal to one fortieth of their whole interest, notwithstanding all this the Committee on July 19 reported that the superintendent of finance draw on Dr. Franklin for the full amount of Lee's claim.

Dr. Witherspoon had written the previous resolution of reference to the superintendent who evidently gave it at least his ac-

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quiescence if not approval, and returned it to Congress July 12, when it was handed once more to Dr. Witherspoon's committee to frame the order at length adopted July 19.<sup>49</sup>

On July 31 a grand committee, Dr. Witherspoon representing New Jersey, appointed to report the most effectual means for supporting the credit of the United States, bluntly informed the House that in its opinion Congress should come to a decision on the land cessions of Connecticut, Virginia and New York. The question was plainly uppermost in men's minds at this time, however they may have preferred to avoid it. The difficulty of obtaining money from the States either by recommendation or pleading had long been chronic; even the federal five per cent tax was not being collected; and the vacant western lands now seemed to offer the only possible solution to a financial situation that brooked no further tolerances. More than a year had elapsed since Congress had declined to consider Dr. Witherspoon's report on the cessions. But Congress as a body was still unwilling to take the question up, and when on July 31 after much discussion, most of which was aside from the point, President Witherspoon moved that a week later the report of the grand committee be considered, he failed by the vote of one State to carry his motion.

Before the matter was next considered the ever rankling question of the Instructions of June, 1781, was reopened and on August 8 a motion was offered that a committee be appointed "to consider and revise the instructions given to our Ministers for negotiating a peace with Great Britain." Madison made a long speech against any alteration of the Instructions; if any member wished to secure further the several objects claimed by

<sup>49</sup>Was this a further illustration of Dr. Witherspoon's friendliness to the Lees? Mr. Lowell, one of the committee, had been opposed to the action but was over-ruled by his colleagues (*Thomson Papers* 68). Mr. Thomson shows how Lee had placed himself on the footing of other public creditors and had no right therefore "to any peculiar favor or indulgence." By passing the matter to the superintendent of finance with power, Congress shifted on to his shoulders the dilemma of incurring either the odium of the public creditors by drawing in favor of Mr. Lee, or the resentment of the latter by a refusal. This is Mr. Thomson's conclusion (*Papers*, 69). It should be added, however, that Lee asked only what had been accorded to other ministers whose accounts had been settled, with the difference that he had complicated his accounts by expenditures on behalf of the state of Virginia.

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the United States he had no objection to consider them, provided there was no encroachment on the Instructions; and he gave notice that he would move postponement of the present motion and in its place offer another to the effect that a committee be appointed to consider and report the best means to secure the objects claimed by the United States, but not included in the Instructions of June, 1781. In this attitude Madison was supported by President Witherspoon who in seconding the motion to postpone made the speech already referred to, recalling the circumstances in 1781 leading to the adoption of the Instructions, reminding Congress of the dilemma in which it had found itself at that time through Mr. Adams' conduct, and how in order to save its dignity it had increased the number of the commissioners; and he concluded with the observation that as American confidence placed in France was a mere compliment and not a discard of any real security, he opposed withdrawing it and therefore supported Madison's motion. Postponement being agreed to, Madison then offered his resolution to appoint a committee on the further claims of the United States, being again seconded by his former preceptor. It was now the opposition's turn to move postponement of consideration, but Dr. Witherspoon warmly defended Madison's proposal. He seemed to admit, says Mr. Thomson's record, which is followed here, that France had desired the committee to fix the boundaries but that it could not be done at the time so as to satisfy all the States; he observed that the happiness of the people on this side of the Allegheny Mountains had been a sufficient object to induce them to enter into the war; that some of the States had their boundaries fixed and determined; that the State he had the honor to represent was one of these; that it had not entered into the war, nor would it, he believed, be willing to continue, for the sake of boundless claims of wild uncultivated country; especially as they were a matter of dispute and would undoubtedly occasion much contention among the States to whom the country, if ceded, would of right belong; that what related to a treaty of commerce would come within the objects of the present motion, however, and that he was therefore against postponement. He carried his point; the postponement was negatived, and Madison's motion to appoint



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a committee coming up was carried and both he and Dr. Witherspoon found themselves so appointed.

They reported a long resolution on August 15 the purport of which was that a file of documents, collected by a former committee in support of claims not included in the peace ultimatum of 1781, be turned over to the Secretary for Foreign Affairs to transmit to the commissioners for their use to communicate to the King of France so much as they saw fit, representing to him that Congress had caused the compilation of the documents in the belief that he would find in them clear proofs of the validity of the American claims.

The intention of the committee was that the documents should be forwarded without having Congress pass any opinion on their contents, by which procedure they would not go as instructions, but merely as materials of evidence, and the conduct of the ministers would be influenced by them no farther than their judgment directed. Contrary to the committee's plan, however, the file, known as "Facts and Observations in support of the several claims of the United States not included in the Ultimatum of the fifteenth of June, 1781," was called for and read the next day. When the secretary, reaching the end of the citation of grants and charters, came to a clause reading

if the vacant lands cannot be demanded upon the preceding grounds, that is upon the titles of individual states, they are to be deemed to have been the property of His Britannic Majesty immediately before the revolution and now to be devolved upon the United States collectively taken.

he was interrupted by Mr. Lee with a motion to expunge; and the match was set to the fire. Heated debate was at once precipitated.

Professor Corwin has shown the evolution of contemporary American opinion regarding the disposal of the western lands. At the outset favoring the view that these lands were subject to the disposal of Congress, with the rise of the principle of state sovereignty opinion veered to the narrower view that the lands were the property of particular states; but from 1781 on, "the prospect developed that States credited with ownership would

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surrender their claims to the Confederacy at large. Once more the interest of all States in seeing the American title established became what it originally had been." For this change back to the broader national sentiment it may be fairly claimed that no member of Congress was more responsible than President Witherspoon. The broad national view had marked his attitude toward all questions of policy from the very beginning of his presence in Congress; it was a view he had never lost an opportunity to emphasize. To him the disposal of the western lands was a question of national policy and not a question merely of individual state claims or rights. According to him, at the declaration of the independence of the Colonies the title to the western lands had devolved on the American people as a nation, and this position he with members of other States, whose boundaries like New Jersey's were fixed and determined, forcefully reiterated in the present debate. Members whose States claimed territory to the Mississippi, or whose western boundaries were undefined, just as forcefully opposed him. Finally, a vigilant parliamentarian on the floor raised the point of order that the reading of the report was for information only and not for debate and that, therefore, both the motion of Mr. Lee and the present debate were out of order and no vote could be taken until the entire file of documents was read. The reply was made that this technical objection should have been raised earlier and it was now too late to inject it. But to put an end to discussion for the present adjournment was called for and carried.

On the twentieth, the "Facts and Observations" having been read to their end, the report of Dr. Witherspoon's committee was amended to read that the documents be referred to the Secretary for Foreign Affairs to be transmitted to the Ministers negotiating peace, for their information and use. Mr. Lee then moved to except the passage already quoted and the main debate came on. Mr. Lee's arguments were those of the individual States; the claims to the western territory rested solely on the titles of the individual States; Congress had no authority but what it derived from the States; these individually were sovereign and independent and upon them alone devolved the rights

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of the Crown within their respective territories; the sovereignty of the Crown could not devolve upon the United States in Congress assembled since no such body legally existed; whence was the sovereignty of the United States derived? did it really exist? Finally, should Congress put an argument in the mouths of the Ministers which they might use to their own advantage? One of the Ministers had a claim on some of the lands in question and one of the Ministers of France was likewise interested. Dr. Witherspoon at this point sought to have a vote taken without further debate; the Ministers in supporting the American claims to the western lands were first to urge the titles of the several States; failing this they were to urge the argument of the clause to which Mr. Lee objected; to omit this clause meant that if the claims could not be supported on the stated grounds they were to be relinquished entirely. Mr. Lee repeating that the amendment was intended to remove an argument which the ministers might use to their own advantage, Dr. Witherspoon came gallantly to the defence of the absent representatives of the nation. He challenged the suggestion that the Ministers would be unfaithful; if Franklin, to whom Lee had referred, was interested and would take advantage of it, let his recall be moved; he (Witherspoon) would second the motion. The "Facts and Observations" as they stood required that the Ministers should in the first place urge the titles of the several States; if these prevailed the end was obtained and the argument in question would not be brought forward. But if arguments "drawn from old charters, charters granted at a time when the extent and limits of this country were without charters and titles interfering with one another, whose limits were so extravagant that it was thought proper to curtail them in a former treaty, if arguments from this source should be found of no weight with the mediating powers of Europe (and he believed this would prove to be the case), would anyone wish to preclude our Ministers from using an argument which would carry weight, an argument drawn from general security, the force of which had been admitted in former treaties and would be admitted by every disinterested power in Europe?"

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The several States, he went on to say, were known under the style and title of the United States. This nation was known to be settled along the coasts to a certain extent; if any European power was admitted to establish colonies or settlements behind them, what security could they have for the enjoyment of peace? What a source of future wars! Was not this the principal argument urged by Great Britain against France at the breaking out of the last war? Whether the uncultivated wilderness on the frontiers should belong to one state or another was a matter of little concern to the European powers. The only argument that would weigh with them was whether it was necessary for the security of the United States that other nations should be excluded from that country, and particularly Great Britain, the enemy of these states. He was, therefore, against the amendment.

Further discussion followed, and notice having been served that the yeas and nays would be called for by the proposers of the amendment, a parliamentary manoeuvre by which the whole of the "Facts and Observations" would go into the *Journal* and Congress would have to take action upon them, thus making them instructions and not merely information as the committee had desired, on motion of Dr. Witherspoon the report was referred to a fresh committee of which again he and Madison found themselves members.

Before they reported however, the question emerged from a totally unexpected quarter. A petition signed by "a number of inhabitants of a tract of Country called Kentucky" was read, setting forth that they had settled a tract west of the Alleghenies, that Virginia had recently granted tracts there, claiming jurisdiction, and had undertaken to form them into counties, that owing to the distance—eight hundred miles from the seat of government at Richmond—jurisdiction could not be exercised with justice and energy, that they were in danger of losing their rights if they had to appeal to Richmond to contest the last grantees, that they had taken oaths of allegiance and considered themselves citizens of the United States and not of Virginia, that the charter under which Virginia claimed the country had been dissolved and that in consequence the country belonged to the Crown, and that by the Revolution the rights of the Crown devolved upon the United States, and that therefore they prayed

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Congress to erect them into a separate and independent State and admit them into the Union.

Lee was on his feet at once; the countenancing of such a petition was an insult to Virginia; the only thing now to do was to refer it to Virginia; the petitioners were citizens of Virginia and the Legislature of that State was their proper court of appeal. What right, he asked, had Congress to interfere? The assertion that the rights of the Crown had devolved upon Congress was a groundless, extravagant, and idle supposition; Congress had no powers or rights but what the Confederation gave it; the United States individually were in existence before Congress was; they were sovereign, free, and independent States except in what they voluntarily gave to Congress by the confederation; the rights of the Crown to the vacant lands within any State could not devolve upon Congress, but upon the individual States within which the lands lay.

Mr. Lee was supported by Madison who described the provisions made by Virginia to care for the particular grievances complained of; Virginia and not Congress was the rightful judge in the case; the dissolution of the charter did not break the social compact among the people; the charter was an agreement between the King, the proprietors, and the people; the King by dissolving the charter might succeed to the rights of the proprietors but not to those of the people; these remained untouched. The supposition that the right of the Crown devolved upon the United States was so extravagant that it could not enter into the thoughts of any man; if the right of soil devolved, why not the right to the quit rents and to confiscated estates?

Other members sensed the dangers involved in the question under discussion and hoped it could be put off indefinitely; its further consideration might be attended with the most portentous consequences—one gentleman thought the sword alone could settle it; (and he was not far wrong). Others however, while recognizing the serious nature of the question, were not for leaving it to posterity, but for thrashing it out at once. If the people of Kentucky, said Mr. McKean of Delaware, had sworn allegiance to the United States he would take them by the hand; he was not afraid of Virginia; he hoped no state in the Union

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would ever become so great as to give laws to the rest, nor that any would be suffered to acquire so much power that the others could not control it. Such sentiments were in accord with the feelings of President Witherspoon who seems to have been saving himself while the debate grew more heated. He now at last arose with a speech which is not preserved in his *Works*, but luckily was saved by Mr. Thomson; it is his summing up for the landless States, and marks his broad conception, not only of the rights of the United States, but also of the powers of Congress.<sup>50</sup>

One of the gentlemen from Virginia, he began by remarking, had said that it could not enter into the thoughts of any man that the rights of the Crown devolved on the United States; he supposed this was intended only as a figure of rhetoric, not as an assertion that would be admitted. It certainly could enter into the thoughts of men and had actually entered into his thoughts, and it had entered the thoughts of the petitioners and into the thoughts of very many sensible men at the beginning of the present controversy. The western uncultivated and unappropriated lands belonging to the Crown were considered and spoken of early in the controversy as a fund for discharging the debts that might be contracted by the United States in the war. It would appear a strange whim if a sentiment which occupied and engrossed the minds not only of speculative but of illiterate men and the bulk of the inhabitants of many of the states had not some solid foundation to rest on.

For his part he thought it founded on truth, on justice, on the nature of things, and was warranted by the laws of society. The revolution had been begun and the war carried on by the united and joint efforts of the thirteen States. By their joint exertions and not by those of any one State the dominion of Great Britain had been broken and consequently the rights claimed and exercised by the Crown devolved on all and not any individual States. Why should one State reap more advantage than another? He admitted the consequence that not only the right of the unappropriated soil but also of the quit rents and confiscated estates devolved on the United States. As to the quit rents it seemed to be the general opinion that they should no longer be collected, but that each man should enjoy the portion of land he was possessed of, clear of all incumbrance of quit rents and therefore they were not made an object; with respect to confiscated estates, they

<sup>50</sup> *Thomson Papers*, p. 149.

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were too inconsiderable to excite attention. Had a major part or even one-half of any State joined the enemy and their estates thereby become confiscated he apprehended it would have been a matter of serious discussion whether they should belong to the United States or be appropriated to the sole benefit of the other half of the citizens of the State.

With regard to the powers of Congress, or of the United States collectively taken, they could not be exactly defined in the articles of the Confederation. Cases would arise for which no previous provision could be made. These came under and were decided by the great law of necessity which was admitted as a law of nations. It might happen that a State would grow so powerful and so ambitious as to be dangerous to the other States in the Union. In such a case the law of necessity and of self-preservation might compel the others by a sovereign act of authority to abridge the power of that State and even to divide it into two or more distinct and independent States. He would not undertake to say that the petitioners were within or without the bounds of Virginia, or that it was proper or improper to grant their prayer; but he saw no impropriety in letting the petition remain on the files of Congress and should therefore vote in favor of that question.

Adjournment again put an end to the debate temporarily, but in the first week of September Congress resumed the discussion. After several attempted amendments serving special interests, it became evident to all parties, as Madison wrote to Edmund Randolph describing the debate,<sup>51</sup> that unless a compromise were effected no advantage could ever be derived by the United States "even if their right were ever so valid." The number of States holding the doctrine of individual titles rendered a vote in favor of a federal title impossible to reach whilst the individual States "having both the will and the means to avail themselves of their pretensions" might open land offices, issue patents, and "if necessary, protect the execution of their plans." This situation had its effect on even the most temperate advocates of the federal title and President Witherspoon, himself the leader of the federal group, moved a set of resolutions to the effect that if the States claiming exclusive ownership would cede the western lands to the

<sup>51</sup> *Writings*, vol. I, p. 232.

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United States, such action would create "an important fund for the discharge of the national debt." He recommended that the States which had made no cession consider the matter as soon as possible, that those which had made cessions "not entirely agreeable" to the above recommendations reconsider and report, and that in case States claiming lands had ceded them, none of their Acts regarding private property should be reversed or altered without their consent. These resolves were naturally referred to a committee and the latter reported September 25 virtually in Dr. Witherspoon's words and after amendment in the debate, Congress at length declined the report. When the question was eventually decided in the direction of the President's views, he was no longer in Congress.

During the summer of 1782 the effect of the news of approaching peace on the morale of the country seems to have been feared in Congress and particularly by President Witherspoon and his colleagues on a committee to which had been referred correspondence between General Washington and the British commanders at New York, Sir Guy Carleton and Admiral Digby. Afraid that the country might think Congress had received authentic information announcing peace, it was resolved August 15 on the advice of the committee that the correspondence be published, that Congress consider it "as mere matter of information, inexplicit as to the nature and extent of the independency" to be proposed by Great Britain, and that as Congress had no information on the subject from the American commission in Europe no action could be taken upon it. The committee recommended further that the States be urged "not to remit of their exertions for carrying on the war with vigor, as the only effectual means of securing the settlement of a safe and honorable peace"—a clause with which sounds very like Dr. Witherspoon. Meanwhile, however, it was suggested that General Washington propose to the British commanders the appointment of commissioners to arrange partial exchange of prisoners.

In the midst of the tension caused by the debate on the western land Dr. Witherspoon had reported (September 12) on the project of his friend Robert Aitken, the Philadelphia printer, to issue an edition of the Holy Bible; and on his recommendation it

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was voted that the United States in Congress assembled highly approved the pious and laudable undertaking of Mr. Aitken "as subservient to the interest of religion as well as an instance of progress of arts in this country;" and hereby authorized him to publish this recommendation in the manner he should think proper. The committee had watched his work from time to time—he had memorialized Congress in January, 1781, on the subject—and had secured recommendations from the chaplains of Congress, the Reverends William White and George Duffield, who certified that his edition of the scriptures contained "as few grammatical and typographical errors as could be expected in an undertaking of such magnitude," and that in view of the demand for this "invaluable book" they rejoiced in the prospect of a supply and hoped it would be as advantageous as it was honorable to the printer who was risking his private means in the enterprise. Half of the committee's hope was realized, but unfortunately it was the wrong half from the commercial point of view, and Mr. Aitken lost the money he spent on his venture.

In the well-known Lippincott-Huddy case which jeopardized the whole movement for peace, and was debated so warmly late that summer, Dr. Witherspoon as a member of the committee, to which the matter was at length turned over, voted for temporizing, meanwhile suspending execution of the sentence of retaliation, until eventually Vergennes asked clemency for the English officer selected to suffer Huddy's fate, and secured his release a few days after Dr. Witherspoon had ceased to be a member of Congress. Shortly before the committee on this difficult case reported, the President had brought in what was to be the last of his proclamations recommending a day of thanksgiving. The text is in his handwriting.<sup>52</sup>

It being the indispensable duty of all nations, not only to offer up their supplications to Almighty God, the giver of all good, for his gracious assistance in a time of distress, but also in a solemn and public manner to give him praise for his goodness in general, and especially for great and signal interpositions of his Providence in their behalf; therefore the United States in Congress assembled, taking into their

<sup>52</sup> Papers Continental Congress, 24ff, 471; *Journal* vol. XXIII, p. 647.

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consideration the many instances of divine goodness to these States, in the course of the important conflict in which they have been so long engaged; the present happy and promising state of public affairs; and the events of the war in the course of the year now drawing to a close, particularly the harmony of the public councils, which is so necessary to the success of the public cause; the perfect union and good understanding which has hitherto subsisted between them and their allies, notwithstanding the artful and unwearied attempts of the common enemy to divide them; the success of the armies of the United States and those of their allies, and the acknowledgment of their independence by another European power, whose friendship and commerce must be of great and lasting advantage to these States; do hereby recommend it to the inhabitants of these States in general, to observe, and request the several States to interpose their authority in appointing and commanding the observation of Thursday, the twenty-eighth day of November next, as a day of solemn thanksgiving to God for all his mercies; and they do further recommend to all ranks and testify their gratitude of God for his goodness, by a cheerful obedience to his laws, and by protecting, each in his station, and by his influence, the practice of true and undefiled religion, which is the great foundation of public prosperity and national happiness.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE ABSENTEE PRESIDENT

THE years of Dr. Witherspoon's congressional service were years of bitter hardship for the College over which he presided. Receiving almost a deathblow at the very beginning of this period, its condition for seven months (November 29, 1776, to July 8, 1777), was one of suspended animation; and its history, while its President was fulfilling the higher duty of national service, is a story of struggle to regain from military occupants the possession of its property, to secure from the Congress at least partial remuneration for the destruction caused by that occupancy, and despite staggering financial losses to repair damage and make collegiate residence and a semblance of academic life once more possible. Before attempting to reconstruct the history of those years, it is well to sketch the condition of the College when the President left it in the summer of 1776.

During the period between his arrival at Princeton in 1768 and his election to Congress in 1776, the College of New Jersey had made creditable progress. The new President had more than fulfilled the expectations of his friends and the experiment of his importation had proved a success. Whatever may be the proper criterion today for judging the vigor of an institution of learning, certainly in the eighteenth century the growth of the student body was one of the fairest tests. And on this score Dr. Witherspoon's administration had fully held its own. There are no eighteenth century printed annual catalogues of students, nor are there any manuscript class rolls prior to 1787, the date of the first volume of the minutes of the faculty in which matriculations were recorded. The only sources for estimating the enrolment of the period are the printed triennial catalogues of graduates, a few official reports, and casual references in correspondence, diaries, and similar personal records.

In the eight years preceding Dr. Witherspoon's arrival, the annual graduation lists had contained on an average nineteen

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names. During the first eight years of his Presidency (1769–1776 inclusive) the average size of the graduating class was twenty-two, ranging from twelve in 1771 to twenty-nine in 1773.<sup>1</sup> As for undergraduate enrolment, in November, 1770, it had been eighty-one, in addition to some twenty-five grammar scholars;<sup>2</sup> in 1772 there were eighty-five undergraduates and forty-five scholars;<sup>3</sup> in the following year the undergraduate body had “considerably increased” and there were thirty-nine in the grammar school.<sup>4</sup> In July, 1773, James Whitlaw, to whom it will be remembered Dr. Witherspoon sold the Ryegate land, and who as a surveyor may be supposed to have been fairly accurate in statements of figures, reported that the college “at present contains upward of 100 students, besides about 80 Latin scholars,”<sup>5</sup> the latter of course being the grammar school pupils. Dr. Witherspoon himself in his description of New Jersey prepared for M. Marbois<sup>6</sup> says that the College “was in a flourishing state before the war, having about one hundred and fifty undergraduates and other scholars.” “There are at this time under my tuition,” he wrote in 1772, “young gentlemen of the first fortune and expectation from almost every province on the continent as well as several of the West India Islands.”

The grammar school had become one of the best in the Colonies—beyond question it was the best in New Jersey—and those at Hackensack, at Baskinridge, at Elizabeth-town and at Freehold conducted chiefly by Princeton graduates, were of no mean reputation. The Nassau Hall Grammar School had possessed a reputation before Dr. Witherspoon’s coming; it enjoyed the unique distinction of being the only school in the Colonies of sufficient importance and permanence to have a Latin grammar

<sup>1</sup> During the following five years (1777–1781 inclusive) the average was six; during the next six years (1782–1787 inclusive) it was eighteen; and during the last seven years of his administration (1788–1794 inclusive) it was twenty-one. These figures show the steady recuperation after the war.

<sup>2</sup> Fitchian, *Journal*, 10.

<sup>3</sup> New Jersey Census. *New Jersey Archives*, 1 ser., vol. XXVIII, p. 325.

<sup>4</sup> Fitchian, 36.

<sup>5</sup> Vermont Historical Society *Proceedings*, 1905–1906, p. 133.

<sup>6</sup> *Works*, IV, 305.

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printed for its own especial use,<sup>7</sup> and one which ran into several editions; but on Dr. Witherspoon's taking charge it had gained greater reputation not only for the efficiency of its teaching, but particularly for the emphasis it laid on the study of English. The method introduced by the President was British and superior to that of American schools both in the amount of ground covered and the thoroughness with which the work was done. What that work was is most easily gathered from the President's public notices which have been already quoted. Its principal quality seems to have been its liveliness and its constant emphasis on accuracy and mental alertness. Drill and exercise were so constant that fluency for example in the use of Latin was in the end almost inevitable. And accuracy and mental alertness were the winning qualities in the prize competitions which Dr. Witherspoon had instituted in 1771.

The college curriculum had also been strengthened, and chiefly in the upper-class years. The emphasis laid on English in the grammar school had been carried on up into the College; the President's lectures on eloquence, which included taste, criticism, and composition, were giving the curriculum a distinction it had never possessed. He had introduced the study of history and French, and in his lectures on moral philosophy—another inclusive term covering ethics, government, politics, and international law—was giving the first course in any American college to expound a definite philosophical system. He was seriously formulating and directing graduate studies, offering special courses for graduates and guiding their reading; and at the same time as professor of divinity he was lecturing to candidates for the ministry. He had failed, it is true, to secure the additional professorships that had been anticipated and so had not strengthened the faculty to any great extent except in so far as he was himself a whole staff of instructors. There were the usual tutors, for the most part freshly graduated from college; but for lack of adequate endowment only one professor, William Churchill Houston, had been appointed. Nevertheless, under the spur of

<sup>7</sup> Ross, *Complete Introduction to the Latin Tongue*. This was a revision of President Burr's *Newark Grammar*.

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the President's example and constant supervision, the teaching in the college had probably never been better.

The equipment and the finances of the institution just before the outbreak of war had been in encouraging condition and it seemed as if funds might soon be obtained for professorships. The report of a committee of the board of trustees dated April, 1775, the last to be made before the beginning of hostilities, shows that besides the four and a half acre lot on which Nassau Hall stood, the College owned part of a lot adjoining the Presbyterian Church in Princeton, two hundred acres of woodland outside the village, one lot in the city of Philadelphia, one hundred acres in Essex County, New Jersey, and one hundred and twenty-eight acres in Morris County. No values are assigned to these parcels of real estate nor to the buildings on the campus. The orrery, one of the marvels of the age, was valued at two hundred and eighty-four pounds and the philosophical apparatus which Dr. Witherspoon had imported from London, at four hundred and sixteen pounds. The library is not assessed nor is its size given, but we know that Dr. Witherspoon brought one consignment of books with him and that two more followed. In a report of losses during the war, made some years later, it is asserted that the library lost two thousand volumes, not including broken sets. These figures show a substantial increase over the 1300 given in the printed library catalogue of 1760.

During the preceding five years (1770-1774 inclusive) Dr. Witherspoon had gathered for the College the respectable sum of £7,468; receipts from college fees and room rents had netted in round figures £2,450; interest, cash, and old lottery accounts received had amounted to £2,167, which sums added to the capital owned in 1769, £3,762, reached the total of £15,847. Salaries during the same period had absorbed £4,191 and some £3,300 had been spent on the orrery, old debts, and "the apparatus" (which seems to have included books for the library). The clear assets of the College in 1775 were estimated to be double what they were when he assumed the Presidency. It was further claimed that a balance of £625 and a few shillings was still due from Dr. Witherspoon, a claim of which we shall hear again.

In general then it seemed in 1776 that the College was in

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better condition than ever before, with good prospect of continuing progress. But whatever dreams its friends may have had at that time were soon to be shattered. In the fourteen years covering the War and the period immediately following, the resources mentioned in the 1775 report were to suffer through depreciation, bankruptcies, and bad debts, a shrinkage of sixty-six per cent, and this in spite of fresh donations. Equally severe was to be the damage suffered by the buildings and equipment.

As rental for the occupation of Nassau Hall by continental troops the College in 1779 received from the government seven thousand two hundred and fifty pounds in depreciated paper currency, estimated to be worth in hard money only one hundred and eighty-seven pounds; in 1796, after the President's death, the New Jersey Legislature voted a grant of six hundred pounds per annum for three years; but beyond these sums the College received no compensation whatever for the losses it sustained during the Revolutionary War. That it recovered as well as it did, or indeed that it recovered at all, during the decade following the war—the last decade of Dr. Witherspoon's life—is eloquent testimony not only to the generosity of its friends and their confidence in the President, but also to his own splendid energy and unflagging courage.

When Dr. Witherspoon rode away from Princeton in June, 1776, to take his seat in Congress he left the College in charge of Professor Houston and two tutors, and for the next few years, although he kept as closely in touch as he could with it, his attention to its affairs was necessarily sporadic. Fortunately his duties in Congress instead of totally preventing visits to Princeton often facilitated them. During the whole period of his service in Congress he contrived never to miss a Princeton commencement nor a trustees' meeting, and he was usually on hand for term openings. During the second half of the year 1777 Professor Houston and one tutor with the President's periodical assistance conducted the little teaching that was done; in 1778 Houston and a tutor were alone; in 1779 either the President or Mr. Houston was on hand, and a tutor was engaged for the winter term. Samuel Stanhope Smith joined the faculty in December, 1779, and in 1780 he and Witherspoon were alone, Houston having

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taken the latter's place in Congress; in 1781 the instruction of the College was maintained by Smith and Houston with the President's occasional assistance, and after that year tutors were again added to the staff. During these years the enrolment was never too large for two instructors to handle.

The disaster that the closing days of 1776 had in store for the College and village was scarcely a bolt from the clear sky. Princeton, town and gown, was marked for trouble. The first call for a New Jersey provincial congress had been sounded here in April, 1775; in August and September of that year the committee of safety representing the usurping provincial government had its headquarters at Princeton, and after the adjournment of the provincial congress the committee had resumed its sessions at Princeton in January, 1776. At the tavern stables express riders were kept in constant readiness to relay dispatches between Congress and General Washington. In August of 1776 the organization of a new state government took place at Princeton and the first legislature under the new state constitution convened in Nassau Hall, holding its sessions in the college library room; here in September William Livingston was inaugurated first Governor of the State; and here in October the Great Seal of the State was adopted—the earliest of all the American state seals, antedating even that of the United States. Happenings like these were sufficient to stamp the village as the rebel capital of New Jersey.

As for the College, the name of whose building was a parole among American troops,—with a President who had taken so active a part in the measures leading to independence, who had voted for separation, who was as notoriously keen on the colonial side as any man in America, who had sons actually in American service, and whose trustees, faculty, pupils and friends had thoroughly earned a reputation for disloyalty<sup>8</sup>—such an institution could anticipate nothing but the severest retaliation when once the enemy should reach it.

American troops had been stationed at Princeton in Septem-

<sup>8</sup> For example, of fifteen leading Presbyterian ministers named by Dr. Charles A. Briggs (*American Presbyterianism*, p. 352) as taking an active part in the Revolutionary struggle, thirteen were either graduates or officers of the College.

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ber, 1776, and had probably been passing through the village all summer.<sup>9</sup> The presence of the State Legislature and of the soldiery, the clatter of hard-riding messengers, and the constant military traffic on the high road outside the college gate, must have been sufficiently distracting to boys in classrooms; but when, at commencement that year, the undergraduates learned that a quorum of the board could not be obtained "on account of the difficulty of public affairs" (as the trustees, minutes explain it), and that degrees accordingly could not be conferred, they must have begun to realize that they were living in perilous times. A private commencement was held; the candidates went through the programme without an audience, no account was published, and the handful of trustees present agreed to accept the faculty's recommendations for degrees and to confer them at the next meeting, set for November but not held, as it turned out, until May of the following year.

Dr. Witherspoon presided at this commencement and was in Princeton again during October and the beginning of November. While there, he issued his customary notice regarding the opening of the next term,<sup>10</sup> and on November 6 the annual assigning of rooms took place as if nothing were happening that was likely to put an end to the peaceful pursuit of learning. But the term was destined to be short. By the eighteenth the American army was in full retreat across New Jersey; every rider galloping past Nassau Hall with dispatches from General Washington was the bearer of bad news; and it required no abnormal gift of prophecy to guess that the day of reckoning was at hand. The village lay in the very path of the oncoming British.

It will be remembered that early in November a congressional committee of which Dr. Witherspoon was a member had been sent to Washington's camp to devise some method of filling up his fast thinning ranks. The President found Washington at Newark retreating, with the British at his heels. On his return, halting at Princeton he reluctantly chose the prudent course de-

<sup>9</sup>H. C. Alexander in his *Life of J. A. Alexander*, vol. I, p. 15, is manifestly in error in asserting that on July 22, 1776, "two stories of the college were full of Hessian soldiers."

<sup>10</sup>*New Jersey Archives*, 3 ser., vol. I, p. 217.

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scribed in the diary of an anonymous undergraduate in this language:

On the twenty-ninth of November, 1776, New Jersey College, long the peaceful seat of science and haunt of the Muses, was visited with the melancholy tidings of the approach of the enemy.

This alarmed our fears and gave us reason to believe we must soon bid adieu to our peaceful Departments and break off in the midst of our delightful studies; nor were we long held in suspense, our worthy President deeply affected at this solemn scene entered the Hall where the students were collected, and in a very affecting manner informed us of the improbability of continuing there longer in peace; and after giving us several suitable instructions and much good advice very affectionately bade us farewell. Solemnity and distress appeared almost in every countenance. Several students that had come 5 and 600 miles, and just got settled in College, were now obliged under every disadvantage to return with their effects or leave them behind, which several through impossibility of getting a carriage at so confused a time were obliged to do, and lost their all.

As all hopes of continuing longer in peace at Nassau were now taken away, I began to look out for some place where I might pursue my studies, and as Mr. J. Johnson had spoken to me to teach his son, I accordingly went there and agreed to stay with him till Spring. Next day I sent my Trunk and Desk to his house and settled all my business at College.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the warnings of the summer and early autumn, despite even the private commencement, it was in all probability the first time that the reality of war had struck home in most of those boyish minds. It had been easy during recent years to face commencement audiences of admiring friends and favor them with patriotic orations; it had been highly diverting to turn out with the local militia company in May, 1775, and salute the cavalcade of New England and New York delegates to the Continental Congress as they passed through Princeton; even the presence of the State Legislature in Nassau Hall and of Ameri-

<sup>11</sup>The complete diary is published in the *Princeton Standard* for May 1, 8, and 15, 1863. The experience of only a few days proved to the young student the impossibility of remaining in the neighborhood, and casting his educational plans aside he joined the army and saw immediate service.

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can troops in the village earlier in the year had been little more than an added excitement, a welcome relief from the monotony of college routine; but having to flee for one's life was a very different matter. It need not be thought that Dr. Witherspoon's students had failed to live up to their oratory. His political prominence in the spring and summer of 1776 had not gone unheeded by them, nor had they allowed their actions to fall short of their ambitious platform declarations. Taking literally the President's own dictum in the *Druid* for May that "when liberty, prosperity, and life are at stake, we must not think of being scholars but soldiers," under the leadership of a Senior, William Richardson Davie (afterwards a general, and eventually the Governor of North Carolina) a company of volunteers, whose muster roll has not come down although some of the names are known, had been formed from the undergraduate body and had marched to Elizabeth, New Jersey, to enlist. President Witherspoon and his faculty had not sanctioned the step, so Alexander Garden recalls,<sup>12</sup> as it did not seem that the country yet needed the services of college boys. But as Professor Houston himself had in February accepted a captaincy in the Second Battalion of the Somerset militia, the President perhaps did not feel like adopting drastic measures to restrain undergraduate truancy. He believed that several of the company had enlisted in a spirit of adventure and he expected to see many of them return to college in due time, as in fact they did when they found themselves discharged at camp. It was perhaps in view of this incident and in response to Dr. Witherspoon's own motion that Congress in August, 1776, voted that the members of the college faculty should be excused from military service and should devote themselves to their college duties. Houston resigned his commission in August because of his increased college responsibilities owing to the President's absence.

For many of the students, however, who had gathered at Princeton in November for the winter term, the closing of the College so shortly after the session began presented a serious situation. Eighteenth-century undergraduate letters show how transportation was ordinarily arranged; horses used to be en-

<sup>12</sup> *Anecdotes*.

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gaged months ahead; James Madison in piping times of peace had even considered having his horse sent up from Virginia. But in the prevalent panic of November, 1776, farmers were hiding away their live stock and would not hire out their horses; private individuals were securing their valuables; the village was being deserted; and the student diarist already mentioned tells of the attempts made to impress Mr. Johnson's wagons and horses for public service. Having dismissed the College, President Witherspoon gathered up a load of his belongings and with his family hurriedly left Princeton. "We carried nothing away of all our effects," he wrote in January to his son David, "but what could be carried upon one team. Benjamin Hawkins drove your mother in the old chair, and I rode the sorrel mare, and made John Graham drive the four young colts."<sup>13</sup> The cavalcade made its way to Pequa in Pennsylvania where Dr. Witherspoon left his wife for the winter with the family of the Reverend Robert Smith, father of Professor S. S. Smith who had recently married Ann Witherspoon, while he pushed on to rejoin his congressional colleagues at Philadelphia.<sup>14</sup> As it was, the students, and assuredly the President, got away none too soon. One boy of sixteen, James Ashton Bayard, son of Colonel John Bayard, of Philadelphia, was caught by the British on his way home, and it was only through the intercession of his mother and the intervention of Washington himself that he escaped being hanged.<sup>15</sup> In the old graveyard at Princeton is a stone with this inscription:

In Memory of  
Guy and Paul Rupert  
Students of the College of New Jersey  
who departed this Life January, 1777  
Their Blood is on the Hands of the British.

<sup>13</sup> *Christian Advocate*, II, 443. Letter dated Baltimore, January 8, 1777. Dr. Witherspoon in this letter mentions "a very full and particular account" of his flight which he had written to his son-in-law, Professor S. S. Smith of Hampden-Sidney; but this has not survived. He repeats the news of Washington's coup at Trenton and the rumor that he had defeated the British at Princeton. Benjamin Hawkins, mentioned above, was at this time a Senior in College; he was the future Governor of North Carolina.

<sup>14</sup> Frances, the younger daughter, later in the winter joined her brother David at Hampden-Sidney, Va., whither he had accompanied Professor Smith. Her two older brothers were in service.

<sup>15</sup> *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, vol. XVI, p. 60.

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Indeed, able-bodied collegians seem to have been safe from neither friend nor foe. John Trottmann, a seventeen year old fellow-student of Bayard, spending his vacation in Philadelphia that September had been seized by an American pressgang and forced on board the "Andrew Doria," an armed brigantine in the service of the Continental Congress. In the roadstead of St. Eustatius in the Dutch West Indies, this young Princetonian a few weeks later had at least the satisfaction of hearing and seeing what was probably the first foreign salute to the American flag.<sup>16</sup>

On the morning of December 2 Washington and his broken army came hurrying through Princeton, leaving a rear-guard of 1200 men who rejoined the main army five days later. For on the seventh the British arrived, quartering themselves in the empty college building, the church, and most of the houses in the village and neighborhood, and posting batteries at every country road that entered the main street. Then began what an anonymous eye-witness called their "twenty days tyranny."<sup>17</sup> A brigade consisting of the 17th, 55th and 40th regiments constituted the British force in Princeton, the 40th being quartered in Nassau Hall. It is said that the basement was used as stables. A brigade of Hessians arrived on December 28 but could have had little share if any in the ravages suffered by the community, and the damage done cannot fairly be charged to them. The enemy remained until early in the morning of January 3, 1777, and by that time, as Dr. Benjamin Rush wrote from Princeton four days later to Colonel Richard Henry Lee, the place was

indeed a deserted village; you would think it had been desolated with the plague and earthquake, as well as with the calamities of war; the college and church are heaps of ruin; all the inhabitants have been plundered; the whole of Mr. Stockton's furniture, apparel, and even valuable writings, have been burnt; all his cattle, horses, and hogs, sheep, grain, and forage, have been carried away by them; his losses cannot be less than five thousand pounds.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> His story is found in the *New England Magazine* for July, 1893.

<sup>17</sup> *Brief Narrative of British and Hessian Atrocities*, Princeton, 1906.

<sup>18</sup> Lee, *Memoir of R. H. Lee*, vol. II, p. 164. Dr. Rush was Mr. Stockton's son-in-law and presumably had accurate sources of information.

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The last phase of the battle of Princeton on January 3 took place at a little ravine half a mile southwest of Nassau Hall. Retreating toward the rear campus, part of the British forces sought refuge in Nassau Hall whence they had so confidently issued early that morning; and when, as it is said, Captain Alexander Hamilton's artillery fired a few round shot at the building and a small band of American militia burst open one of the rear doors, the occupants promptly surrendered. Washington burned the store of hay he found in Nassau Hall and having destroyed "such other things as the shortness of the time could admit," moved on eastward leaving behind him the British wounded.<sup>19</sup> Cornwallis arriving later in the morning from Trenton detailed five privates and a surgeon to tend them and shortly after, from New Brunswick by a flag of truce sent an additional surgeon with medicines.<sup>20</sup>

Late in January as chairman of the congressional committee on British and Hessian atrocities Dr. Witherspoon made Princeton his headquarters and found ample opportunity to estimate the damage suffered by the community. Obtaining leave of absence from Congress in February to give his private affairs some needed attention, it was after this visit that he wrote to his son David a letter describing the damage his property sustained.<sup>21</sup> He found he had suffered what he later characterized as a "dreadful stroke;" all his sheep were destroyed, although some fourteen of his cattle had been saved; not many of his books, however, were gone, and but little of his standing furniture. Whether soldiers were quartered at "Tusculum" or not is not known, but evidently Dr. Witherspoon's man had been so faithful and careful about the farm that although the President was, as he said, "the object of the enemy's distinguished hatred" he had escaped on the whole better than he expected. There is no evidence that his residence suffered pillage as Sir George Trevelyan picturesquely alleges.<sup>22</sup> He never filed a claim for damages although the Somerset Book of Damages in the State Library at Trenton con-

<sup>19</sup> Letter to President of Congress, January 5, 1777.

<sup>20</sup> Washington to Cornwallis, January 7, 1777; Rush to R. H. Lee, January 14, 1777.

<sup>21</sup> *Christian Advocate*, II, 443. Letter of February 2, 1777.

<sup>22</sup> *American Revolution*, vol. II, Part 2, page 31.

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tains the claims of many other Princeton citizens. Had he fallen into the enemy's hands there is little doubt, as he remarked in his letter to David, that he would have suffered the fate of another Princetonian, the Reverend John Rosborough who at Trenton was struck down in cold blood by Hessians, under the misapprehension that they were settling scores with the President of the College of New Jersey; but his own casual report of his losses does not leave one with the impression that "Tusculum" suffered to any very large extent. Dr. Rush had not greatly exaggerated conditions in Princeton, and is corroborated by the records in the Somerset Book of Damages and by the comments of the anonymous eye-witness already mentioned. Fences were gone, orchards and standing timber had been levelled or burned, houses and barns were wrecked.<sup>23</sup> And Trevelyan's account in general of the damage done to the College is not inaccurate. As for Nassau Hall, the whole building was wrecked and polluted. It had suffered to some extent during the summer and autumn of 1776 by visitations of American troops; Washington's rear-guard undoubtedly used it in December; the three weeks stay of the British had furthered the injury which the last phase of the battle and the subsequent American occupation of the building had completed. General Putnam reached Princeton late in January, 1777, with a considerable force; in May, General Sullivan arrived with 1500 men, to which body additions were made from the south, and Nassau Hall remained a military post until June. Despite the resolution of the board of trustees that Dr. Witherspoon should move in Congress "that troops shall not hereafter be quartered in the College," in the following October Nassau Hall was taken over as a military hospital and was so used until the end of November, 1778, for besides being a center for the distribution of clothing and other supplies, Princeton was also a most convenient point for the concentration of British prisoners and captive loyalists. Quartermaster Robert Stockton of Princeton reported that between November, 1778, and September, 1780, excepting two rooms assigned by Dr. Witherspoon to the tailors of the New Jersey Brigade and occupied by them from October, 1779, to April, 1780, Nassau Hall was seldom used

<sup>23</sup> *Brief Narrative.*

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by troops; but not until 1782 did the college authorities regain sole and complete possession.<sup>24</sup>

No contemporary description of the condition of the building after the battle has come to light save Dr. Rush's figurative assertion that it was a heap of ruins. The most detailed accounts are those given by Dr. Ashbel Green in his manuscript biography of the President, in his own autobiography, and in his address on Witherspoon's administration delivered before the Nassau Hall Alumni Association in 1840. These accounts, it should be remembered, describe the building as it was in May, 1782, when Green entered college and after Nassau Hall had been for five years and a half occupied by the military. From his statements it is clear that the brief cannonading to which Nassau Hall had been subjected by the American artillery at the battle of Princeton had contributed greatly to the ruinous appearance reported by Dr. Rush. The destruction wrought by at least three shots from Hamilton's efficient battery, was plain even in Green's day, while "the whole building" he says, exhibited the effects of the American artillery. One ball had made a conspicuous hole in the south wall in or near the projection containing the prayer-hall; another had entered the window of a room on the south side of the building west of the projection and had pierced the partition wall separating the room from the long corridor or "entry" running through the length of the building; a third had entered the prayer-hall and, according to a tradition well accredited in 1782, had struck out the head of the portrait of George II—that it destroyed the picture admits of no doubt.<sup>25</sup>

But Hamilton's artillery was responsible for only part of the damage done. The furnishing and other contents of Nassau Hall and of the kitchen building were virtually a total loss; even the

<sup>24</sup> Library Princeton University, Report of Robert Stockton; *Princeton Press*. August 13, 1858, letter of Robert Stockton accompanying report; petition of board of trustees July 15, 1777; minutes of the board May 30, 1781; *New Jersey Archives*, 2 ser., vol. II, contains numerous references to the use of Nassau Hall for military purposes.

<sup>25</sup> The statement made by the Marquis de Chastellux, who visited Princeton in 1780, that the British had carried off the portrait, is unquestionably a foreign traveller's misunderstanding. The local version of the portrait's destruction is given official stamp by the trustees in their resolution of September, 1783, ordering the Peale portrait of Washington to be placed in the frame that had held King George's likeness.

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college pump had to be rebuilt. Woodwork of every kind had been used for kindling; the library of over 2000 volumes, many of them quartos and folios, had been rifled,<sup>26</sup> some of the books being subsequently found in North Carolina carried thither, we are asked to believe, by British troops. The majority of the lost volumes were burned or otherwise destroyed by the troops during the winter of 1776-1777. The valuable experimental apparatus which Dr. Witherspoon had imported was reduced to a few jars, a small telescope, and an electrical machine. The Rittenhouse orrery at first had escaped harm, for Cornwallis intended to carry it back to England as a prize of war and had set a guard over it; but his American successors in Nassau Hall had been less considerate and in clumsy curiosity to see the wheels go round had ruined the delicate mechanism.<sup>27</sup> The prayer-hall was wrecked; its benchlike pews, the rostrum, the high pulpit, all had vanished in smoke. As for the organ, fingers more accustomed to musket triggers than to ivory keys had not only crushed the life out of the instrument but had torn away its very vitals; nothing was left but the case, and we wonder why that was spared.<sup>28</sup> The portrait heads of British sovereigns given by Governor Belcher had disappeared and the Governor's own full length portrait, another of his gifts, was likewise missing.<sup>29</sup> His carved and gilded coat of arms, originally surmounting the picture, still hung on the wall. The basement and the third floor when Ashbel Green first saw Nassau Hall in 1782 were "entirely uninhabited and uninhabitable," except that in the east end of the basement on the north side Dr. Witherspoon had fitted up a room for the grammar school and opposite it on the south side another room for the college dining room. The kitchen was in the steward's house

<sup>26</sup> Sergeant Thomas Sullivan of the British 49th Regiment of Foot, speaking of the College says: "Our army when it lay there spoiled and plundered a good Library that was in it." (*Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. XXXII, p. 54).

<sup>27</sup> Sir George Trevelyan (*American Revolution*) is mistaken in ascribing the destruction of the orrery to British vandalism. Its own friends were its worst enemies.

<sup>28</sup> "There was an organ and a nice Chapel in the College," says Sergeant Sullivan, with a fine sense for his tenses.

<sup>29</sup> "The trustees, being extremely sorry that the picture of his Excellency Governor Belcher which hung in the college Hall, has been destroyed during the late war," etc., is the language used by the Board in October, 1783, when ordering a committee to secure either another original or a copy.

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adjoining the east end of the building. Moreover, on the third floor in the projection over the main entrance a small room was being used by the Clisophic Society. The American Whig Society was not revived until later. The library room on the second floor contained in 1782 the remnant of the library and the fragments of the experimental apparatus. Enough rooms had been repaired on the first and second floors to accommodate the two score students then in college; but the rest of the building lay waste, a desolation of soiled walls, gaping windows, broken partitions, fallen ceilings, and heaps of plaster and filth; and this probably had been the condition of the building in January, 1777, when Dr. Rush saw it after the battle.

Dr. Witherspoon visited Princeton again in March, 1777, and undauntedly set about plans for reopening the College whether Nassau Hall were fit or not to receive students. From Philadelphia he issued notice that undergraduates should hold themselves in readiness to assemble punctually on May 10,<sup>30</sup> the regular date for the opening of the spring term, proposing "by assiduous application to recover what had been lost by the public confusion," but warning students that the opening session would probably not be held at Princeton but at some safer place, notice of which would be issued. The term, however, did not open on May 10, and two weeks later the trustees met at Cooper's Ferry (Camden), New Jersey, to consider whether it was expedient or not to collect the students and endeavor to proceed with their instruction, finally resolving that if the enemy left the State Dr. Witherspoon was to gather his flock at Princeton and continue their education as best he might, and if more students came than he could instruct himself he was to obtain such assistance as was needful. With Mr. Stockton and Dr. Spencer he was also to determine what repairs were indispensable for the convenience of the students and to have them made, but to go no further than absolutely necessary to save the building and to accommodate such undergraduates as might respond to the call; and the President was again instructed to move in Congress that hereafter no more troops be quartered in the building.

He accordingly drew up the following memorial a few weeks

<sup>30</sup> *New Jersey Archives*, 2 ser., vol. I, p. 322.

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later and presented it in Congress, where it was referred to the Board of War:

To the honorable The Congress of the United States of America—  
The Memorial of a Committee of the Trustees of the  
College of New Jersey—  
humbly sheweth,

That your Memorialists were lately appointed by the Board of Trustees to inspect their public Building at Princeton, to make what repairs might be absolutely necessary, and to collect the Students in order to their proceeding in the course of their studies; That your Memorialists have already collected a number of the Students who have began their course; but your Memorialists are discouraged from proceeding in the repairing on the College, for that every party of the Continental Troops, marching thro' this place, take possession of it as Barracks; and partly thro' wantonness, and also under pretence of not being supplied with fire Wood, are daily committing the greatest ravages upon the Building, in breaking up the floors, and burning every piece of Wood they can cut out of it; Your Memorialists do therefore most humbly pray, for the sake of promoting the public education of the youth of this and other States, who come here, that your honorable House will be pleased to add that no Continental Troops do hereafter presume to enter the sd College & use the same as Barracks; but that to supply the want of this public Building, the Quarter Master (whom we hope will be appointed to be resided in this place) be directed to hire some of the vacant Houses & out Houses of the Owners thereof for the reception of the Troops, in their Marches: and that the Legislature of this State be requested by their honble House, to make provisions for the payment of the rents; whereby the public burthens will fall more equally on the inhabitants.

And your Memorialists shall ever pray &c  
Princeton 15th July 1777

JNO WITHERSPOON  
ELIHU SPENCER  
RICHD STOCKTON<sup>31</sup>

A resolution in the President's handwriting among the Papers of the Continental Congress seems to have been adopted by Congress at this time although not appearing in the *Journal*:

<sup>31</sup> *Papers Continental Congress*, 41, vol. VII, p. 6.

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That a Person be elected at Princeton to act as an Occasional Quarter Master & Commissary for forage with Directions to hire empty houses & otherwise with the Assistance of the Magistrates to provide quarters for any troops that may be passing through that Place so that none may be suffered to quarter in the College unless one or more Magistrates find it absolutely necessary and in that Case said quartermaster shall take effectual care that no Damage be done.

John McComb and Colonel Jacob Hyer, both of Princeton, were suggested and in August it was voted that the former

be authorized to act as quartermaster at that place, for such detachments of the army as may be passing that way, till the quartermaster general shall give further directions on this subject; and that he take care that no damage be done to the college at that place.<sup>32</sup>

In June 1777, once more from Philadelphia, the President had summoned his pupils to meet him at Princeton, this time on July 8. They were to take all possible pains to bring textbooks, and he sanguinely hoped they had been pursuing their studies privately as well as circumstances would allow and that on their arrival at Princeton they would apply themselves "with extraordinary diligence to recover the ground that had been necessarily lost." July 10, from Princeton,<sup>33</sup> he announced that the College had been duly re-opened as advertised and college exercises had been resumed for the first time since November, 1776. Tardy undergraduates were asked to bring their books with them as none could be bought at Princeton. Professor Houston and himself were both on hand, although the President did not remain more than a few days.<sup>34</sup> Recitations were held in his house inasmuch as repairs on Nassau Hall were at a standstill, not even the broken windows having been replaced. The building was moreover being used as a hospital. A tutor having been engaged, he and Mr. Houston carried on instruction when the President was away. The President was back for a week in August as his absence from Congress and a letter to his son David show.<sup>35</sup> In accordance

<sup>32</sup> *Journal of Congress*, vol. VIII, p. 615, August 6, 1777.

<sup>33</sup> *New Jersey Archives*, 2 ser., vol. I, p. 408.

<sup>34</sup> *New Jersey Archives*, 2 ser., vol. I, p. 427. Textbooks were supplied ordinarily by the steward; but there was no steward at this time.

<sup>35</sup> *Christian Advocate*, vol. II, p. 245.

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with previous decision, in September no public commencement exercises were held and degrees were conferred at the following meeting of the board.<sup>36</sup> In April, 1777, the board had adjourned until April, 1778, thus indicating that it had no expectation of sitting in September, 1777. Recitations continued to be held in the President's house through the winter of 1777-1778 and the spring and summer of 1778, while the few attending students boarded in the village. In the announcement of commencement 1778 it was stated that the residence requirement for a bachelor's degree would be waived, and not only those who had attended "constantly or occasionally, but those who had studied at home," provided they sustained examination, would be admitted, if qualified, to their degrees. The class of 1776 had been graduated twenty-seven strong; that of 1777 had numbered only seven; that of 1778 only five.

The director general of the hospital had assured the President in August, 1778, that all the sick would be removed from Nassau Hall in a few weeks, and it was hoped by the college authorities that students might then again occupy their rooms. The sick were removed as promised but the building was left "in so ruinous a state as to be very unfit for accommodating the scholars."<sup>37</sup>

The grammar school had been re-opened in April and had been running ever since. Commencement exercises that September were held in the prayer-hall in the presence of the Governor, the state council and assembly. Only a handful of trustees was present; the programme, however, was as timely as ever, the Latin salutatory being on "Civil Discord," and another oration having "Horrors of War" as its subject; Dr. Witherspoon delivered an exhortation to the class, and degrees were conferred.<sup>38</sup> The next term opened in November with a complete schedule of recitations although full college orders were not resumed until 1782.

Taking advantage of his arrangement with his constituents Dr. Witherspoon seems to have spent most of the spring of 1779

<sup>36</sup> *New Jersey Archives*, 2 ser., vol. II, p. 436.

<sup>37</sup> *New Jersey Archives*, 2 ser., vol. II, p. 325, 437.

<sup>38</sup> *New Jersey Archives*, 2 ser., vol. II, p. 488.

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at Princeton. The board resolved in April to apply to the State Legislature for a reduction of the quorum of the board from 13 to 11 and for permission to change the amount of clear annual income the corporation was allowed to hold, from £2000 sterling, to the value of 30,000 bushels of wheat, and it was further resolved to petition that the faculty and students be exempted from military duty, Dr. Witherspoon being commissioned to draw up and present the petition.<sup>39</sup> It was agreed to continue to the President and Mr. Houston their antebellum salaries, while they in turn were to give as much attention to the course of instruction as they could, until the building were repaired and the state of public affairs permitted them to conduct classes "in a more compleat manner." It was agreed to repair the roof of Nassau Hall as soon as possible and glaze the broken front windows—a concession to appearances,—and then to repair the rooms on the main floor; but nothing more than essential repairs to the roof was to be undertaken unless the board were successful in obtaining payment from Congress for damage done by American troops.

Dr. Witherspoon's own statement of the situation is worth quoting at this point:<sup>40</sup>

Nassau Hall, Princeton, New Jersey.

April 23, 1779.

The many inquiries that have been made by Gentlemen at a distance, render it necessary to give information to the public of the past and present state of the College here. Every promise in former advertisements has been fulfilled. In the summer of 1777, as soon as the enemy

<sup>39</sup> *The New Jersey Gazette* of January 14, 1778, contains a letter by "Cato" protesting against compulsory military service for undergraduates in the College of New Jersey. After stating his reasons for this attitude the author, who it is suspected was Dr. Witherspoon, continues "Considering these things, I flatter myself that our superiors will not, for the comparatively trifling service which the collegians are capable of rendering the public in the capacity of soldiers, continue the present embargo upon the seat of muses; nor compel the arts and sciences, against which none ought to wage war, to wage war against any." *New Jersey Archives*, 2 ser., II, 14.

In the preceding issue of the *Gazette* "Cato" had announced his intention of writing from time to time his opinions on public affairs, and in that issue published his conception of the duty of representatives in the New Jersey Assembly. No article by "Cato" appears in Dr. Witherspoon's collected works.

<sup>40</sup> *New Jersey Archives*, 2 ser., vol. III, p. 324.

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left the State, the instruction agreeably to notice was begun: the Trustees having empowered the President to employ such teachers occasionally as should be necessary. Accordingly such of the scholars, as conveniently could, returned, and were carried on according to their standing and the Seniors of that year received their Degree of Bachelor of Arts at Commencement, as usual. The same was the case through the winter following and the summer of 1778, when there was a private Commencement; but the attendance was difficult and inconvenient, the College being occupied by the Publick as a barrack or hospital, and the recitations from necessity in a room of the President's house. Last summer the College was entirely given up to us, but in so ruinous a state as to be very unfit for accommodating the scholars. Several, however, lived in it all the winter session, and the recitations were in College. Now we have the pleasure of acquainting the Publick that tradesmen have been at work for some time repairing the fabrick; that a good part of the windows are put in; that we expect the roof will be made entirely sound in a few days; and that chambers will be fitted up sufficient, it is supposed, to receive those who may come for the summer session, which begins on the tenth of May. As to boarding, it is not yet practicable to get a steward for the College, but boarding for those who lodge in College may be had in families in town at such rate as the times will admit. The Publick may depend upon the instruction being carried on and that always one or other of the Subscribers, if not both, will be upon the spot.

The Grammar School which was begun in April last year, has continued ever since, and is in a thriving condition, there being near thirty boys in it. The school, after a vacation of two weeks, nearly elapsed, will be opened on Monday next the twenty-sixth instant. Great care is taken in this school to make the scholars accurate in the grammar and syntax, and by frequent periodical exercises to perfect them in reading, spelling, and pronouncing the English language; a branch of education of the first importance and yet often shamefully neglected.

To encourage the early and punctual attendance of the Students, the same rule will be observed as in former times at the end of every vacation, viz., that after the first day of meeting no regard will be paid to the standing of the scholars in the distribution of the chambers, but those who come first will have their choice of such as are vacant.

JOHN WITHERSPOON  
WILLIAM CH. HOUSTON

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From Dr. Witherspoon's financial statement for the year 1779 it would appear that in May of that year he received from Charles Pettit, continental deputy quartermaster general, the sum of twelve hundred and fifty pounds, and in September and November further sums of three thousand pounds each. These amounts are described by a committee of the trustees as rental for Nassau Hall and in no sense reimbursement for the damage done; furthermore the payments were made in depreciated money which in November, 1778, was worth twenty-six to one, having steadily fallen from twelve and a half to one in May, and sixteen to one in August. These payments nevertheless enabled Dr. Witherspoon to take up repairs. His accounts for January, 1779 show that a beginning had been made with the windows, nearly three hundred pounds being spent for glass and labor. For nails alone during the spring of that year he paid out close upon four hundred pounds, for carpentering some six hundred and seventy-five, and for lime for plastering three hundred and fifty. Since the death in January, 1777, of Mr. Sergeant the treasurer, a committee of the board had managed the finances of the institution, but in April, 1779, Professor Houston was elected to add the treasurer's duties to his own, and the trustees pledged themselves to exercise their utmost efforts to obtain benefactions. Emissaries were sent through New England and Pennsylvania, and a memorial for their use was drawn up by the President and Mr. Stockton, of which no copy has been kept. In September, 1779, the President paid for six hundred pounds worth of boards, significant of the damaged flooring of Nassau Hall, while for glass, putty, and brushes he disbursed in September and November over fourteen hundred pounds. The labor of "glazing the college" is charged at two hundred and fifty-five pounds, and in December "nails and oyl" absorbed another six hundred.<sup>41</sup> All payments were of course in depreciated money.

For the greater part of the year there were not more than ten undergraduates in attendance but commencement was held as usual and six were graduated.<sup>42</sup> At the commencement meeting of the board Dr. Witherspoon's son-in-law, Samuel Stanhope

<sup>41</sup> MSS., Princeton University Library.

<sup>42</sup> *Stiles Diary*, vol. II, p. 384, and *New Jersey Archives*, 2 ser., vol. III, p. 671.

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Smith, was elected professor of moral philosophy and in December he arrived at Princeton to take up his work. To him Dr. Witherspoon relinquished half of his own salary of four hundred pounds and gave him the president's house on the campus, while he himself moved out to "Tusculum." In Dr. Smith's hands he also left the administrative details and duties to which his own absence prevented him from giving proper attention.<sup>43</sup>

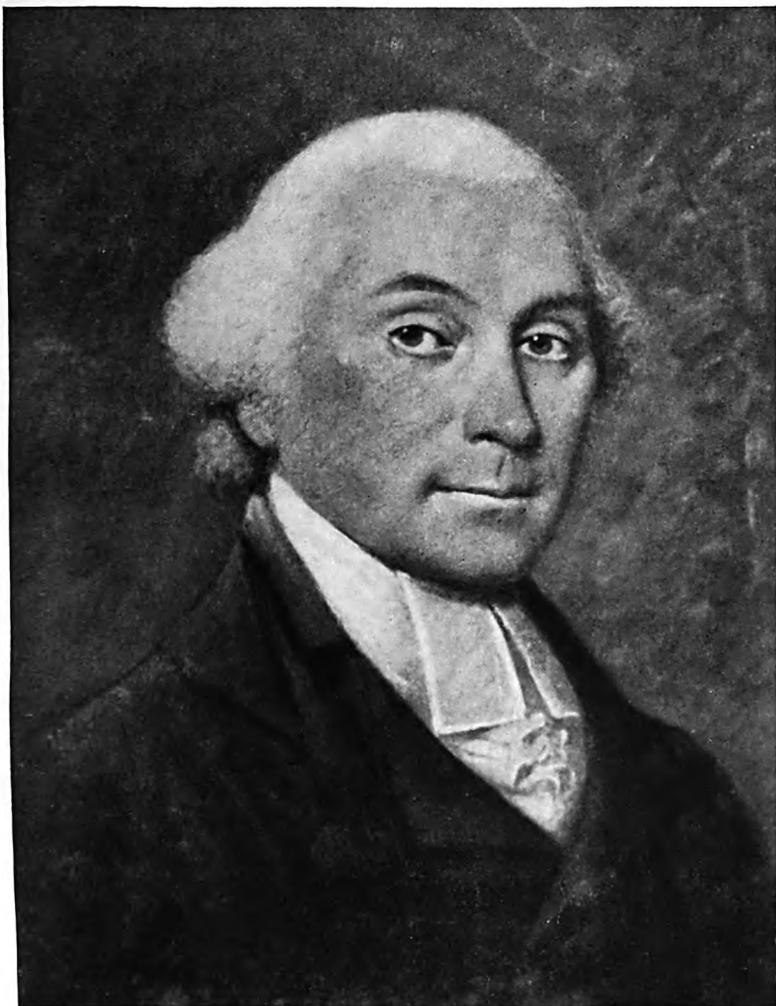
Dr. Witherspoon left Congress, as we know, at the end of 1779 with the intention of devoting himself henceforth to the College and to his farm; and in February, 1780, he marked his return to academic life by issuing in the *New Jersey Gazette* an open letter to the public which, besides being an advertisement of his grammar school, is one of his most important statements of the principles of elementary education and methods of instruction.

It looked, he said, as if the College were once more set straight on its way. With the grammar school recovering from the desolation of war and pupils coming in from various parts of the country and even from the West Indies, he thinks that public attention may once more be directed into educational channels,

<sup>43</sup>Dr. Smith was born March 16, 1750, at Pequa, Pa., where his father, the Reverend Robert Smith, conducted a well-known academy. After graduation from Princeton in 1769, he taught for a year at Pequa, then returned to Princeton as tutor, remaining three years and studying theology under the President. Contemporary college verse indicates that his courtliness and elegance puzzled the undergraduates, such qualities being unexpected of tutors and theological students.

Receiving his license he went in 1774 to Virginia and was instrumental in organizing Hampden-Sidney Academy, being elected first principal in 1775. Before leaving Princeton he had married Ann Witherspoon, the President's oldest daughter. He had the physical graces that Dr. Witherspoon lacked, being unusually tall, with a sonorous voice and a handsome face. A strikingly beautiful pastel portrait of him in his prime was bequeathed to the University by the late General Alfred A. Woodhull of Princeton. He was famous for his oratory, fashioning his style after the elaborate French manner. He succeeded Dr. Witherspoon in the Presidency of Princeton and held office until 1812. In his administration the sciences of chemistry and natural history were introduced into the curriculum, the chairs then created being the first of their kind to be founded for undergraduate instruction in an American college. Besides this impetus to scientific studies, Dr. Smith's administration was marked by important additions to the faculty, by the erection of new buildings, and by a large increase of enrollment. He was extremely popular with his students, and maintained correspondence with them after their graduation and even after he resigned the presidency.

He preserved his erect stature and his good looks, and is mentioned in contemporary letters, and was long remembered, as one of the stateliest figures that ever headed a Princeton academic procession. He died at Princeton in August, 1819.



SAMUEL STANHOPE SMITH  
*From the Pastel by James Sbarpless*

LIST  
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and there are things of much importance to be said to school masters and to parents. "This would not have been done in a newspaper if it had been possible to find any other way as easy, speedy, and effectual."

Schoolmasters are entreated to be as careful as possible to make the boys intended for college accurate in their preparatory studies; if boys enter college "ill founded in classic learning," it will be impossible to remedy their defects, and often it will seem very hard "to reject them for the fault of their teachers, and not their own." There is greater need than ever of attention to this point, as students may now enter the junior class, when they devote most of their time to the sciences, and although "they are kept reading a part of their time in the higher classics" yet it is plainly impracticable to devote attention to grammar and syntax. Therefore it is desired that "effectual pains be taken, and early," to teach the rules of syntax, for which he suggests Rudiman's *Grammatical Exercises* for beginners, and Mair's *Introduction* for the more advanced. But any book

will do well enough in the hands of a skilled master. It ought to be remembered that it is of much more consequence to make them understand the grammar and structure of the language well, than to make them by force of memory or application, translate passages of the classics either in poetry or prose.

Secondly, "it were to be wished that masters, instead of pushing boys forward to the higher classics, or making them change their books often," would not only perfect them in construction, but at the same time give them extended vocabularies by using easy books that they can understand such as Corderius, Erasmus, Aesop and *Selectae Veteri Testamenti Historiae*, "all of which were written or collected by great men, in order to facilitate the instruction of youth." In addition to this, there should always be translating from English into Latin as well as from Latin into English.

For want of this, nothing is more common than to meet with boys who say they have read Vergil or Horace who yet cannot speak three sentences in Latin upon the most common subjects, and cannot ex-

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plain two pages of Corderius or Erasmus unless they have read them lately; nay, will very simply answer, if they be desired to do it, that they have not read them of a long time. This is just as absurd as if in arithmetic they should say they could do the rule of three, but had forgot numeration and addition. . . . I am persuaded that were boys taught the whole construction of the Latin Language from such books as Corderius or Erasmus' Colloquies, and could they express everything readily in classic Latin that might be expressed by the words to be found in these books, they would be better Latin scholars than many who have finished their college course.

Thirdly, he urges masters to teach boys to read and pronounce Latin properly. "They should from the beginning be made to lose their place in the class as certainly for a false quantity as for a wrong word."

Fourthly, masters are requested, by frequent or rather periodical exercises in reading, spelling, speaking and writing, to make the scholars accurate in their knowledge of their mother tongue.

Certainly this is of the first importance, and will be thought so by all parents whose approbation is worth seeking for. You will say this ought to be done in English schools; undoubtedly it ought; but what knowledge they acquire there ought to be preserved and increased in every stage of their progress. There is an advantage in a grammar school and college for this purpose.

He concludes his lecture to schoolmasters by remarking that the art of teaching any science whatever to advantage, is built upon two great principles. 1. That the learner should be made as perfect as possible in one thing before he be carried forward to another. 2. That the steps of transition should be as easy and gentle as possible. The first will not be disputed by anybody; but there are masters who carry boys through the grammar with anything less than half learned, so that in their lessons they are stammering and guessing, saying one word right and two wrong, by which the master's time is wasted, and yet the profit of the scholar very small.

The second principle is as just as the other, "but of much greater compass, variety, and difficulty in the application." And

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he illustrates by the method "now frequently taken in teaching the art of writing." Writing masters have analyzed the whole into a series of simple strokes, and after these are learned perfectly they are joined together

with the utmost facility as well as accuracy. Something of this kind should be constantly in the view of the master of a grammar school, and he is the most accomplished teacher who can make the steps by which the pupil proceeds the most easy, natural and obvious.

Dr. Witherspoon then proceeds to give to parents "a few advices." First, they should not attempt to force their children. The general desire with parents seems to be to have their children "taught in as little time as possible in the grammar school, and entered as high as possible in the classes in college." Nothing can be more preposterous; it is "more honourable as well as pleasant" for a boy to be at the head of one class than to be at the bottom of one immediately superior to it. Besides it makes their work difficult, and their improvement or success uncertain. If parents wish their children's education to be soon finished "that they may not arrive at the stature of men before they have completed the work of boys, it is a most laudable purpose; but the true way to obtain it is to begin early, that they may have time to be taught in a proper and effectual manner." If it is too late to do this he recommends altering the object of instruction, and instead of giving them a regular course, "making them perfect in some of the most essential branches and omitting others."

Secondly, children should be regular and constant in attendance. They should not be called home on trifling occasions or allowed to go home on frivolous pretences. It gives them an idle turn, takes their minds off their books, breaks the thread of their instruction, and throws them behind their class, which "extinguishes their emulation, and often produces a despondent indifference and sloth." They casually say "that they will study hard to make up the time . . . but experience tells me that the very reverse is commonly the case."

Lastly, parents are urged to support the moral discipline of the college. "I look upon it as certain that the past prosperity and success of the College has been capitally owing to the strict at-

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tention paid to this circumstance by the trustees from its first foundation." If home discipline differs from that of the College it is obvious how harmful this is for the boys:

We say they shall not be suffered to play at cards or dice, to swear or speak profanely, or take their diversion abroad on the Lord's Day, and withal endeavour to persuade them that these causes are the road to perdition. But when they return home to their parents, all these things are done frequently, openly, and without reserve. Perhaps I shall hereby expose myself to the reproaches of that honourable class of men the Free thinkers of the age; this gives me very little concern.

Some parents even admit that children and youth should be kept from these practices in a seat of learning, though they make no scruple of defending the same indulgences in persons of riper years:

The consistency of this I leave them to make out at their leisure, and shall only say, that at any rate those parents who approve of the system of education practised, should for their own sakes, be very cautious of counteracting or defeating it either by discourse or example.

In the summer of 1780 two articles signed by "Aristides" appeared in the *New Jersey Gazette*,<sup>44</sup> one on the murder of Mrs. Caldwell, wife of the Reverend James Caldwell of Elizabethtown, New Jersey, by a British sentry, and the other on the alleged humanity of the English nation. These two papers bear strong indication of having come from Dr. Witherspoon's pen, besides being signed by one of his pseudonyms. His knowledge of the bitterness with which the British army had waged war in New Jersey, the abundant historical references, the quotation from Montesquieu and the repetition of arguments confessedly his, together with the general style, all support the theory that Dr. Witherspoon was the author of these two articles. They do not appear, however, in his collected *Works*.

The Marquis de Chastellux visiting Princeton that summer has left an interesting account of the institution and its President. On reaching Princeton, a town of "about sixty or eighty houses, all tolerably well built," his attention was

<sup>44</sup> *New Jersey Archives*, 2 ser., vol. IV, p. 531, 660.

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immediately attracted by an immense building which is visible at a considerable distance. . . . As this building is remarkable only for its size, it is unnecessary to describe it; the reader will only recollect . . . that it is situated towards the middle of the town, on a distinct spot of ground, and that the entrance to it is by a large square court surrounded with lofty palisades. I dismounted for a moment to visit this vast edifice, and was soon joined by Dr. Witherspoon, President of the University. . . . In accosting me he spoke French, but I easily perceived that he had acquired his knowledge of the language from reading, rather than conversation, which did not prevent me, however, from answering him, and continuing to converse with him in French, for I saw that he was well pleased to display what he knew of it. . . . I conversed therefore with him the President and from him I learnt that this college is a complete university.

Then follows a partly erroneous description of the course of study and a statement of expenses, as the Marquis remembered them.

This useful establishment has fallen into decay since the war; there were only forty students when I saw it. A handsome collection of books had been made; the greatest part of which has been embezzled. The English even carried off from the chapel the portrait of the king of England, a loss for which the Americans easily consoled themselves, declaring they would have no king amongst them, not even a painted one.<sup>45</sup> There still remains a very beautiful astronomical machine; but as it was then out of order, and differs in no respect from that I saw afterwards in Philadelphia, I shall take no notice of it.

Being anxious to follow the traces of General Washington in a country "where every object reminded me of his successes," the Marquis passed

from Parnassus to the field of Mars, and from the hands of the President Witherspoon into those of Colonel Moylan. They were both equally upon their own ground; so that while one was pulling me by the right arm, telling me, Here is the philosophy class; the other was plucking me by the left, to show me where one hundred and eighty English laid down their arms.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> This is the erroneous account of the fate of the picture already mentioned.

<sup>46</sup> *Travels in North America*, London, 1787, vol. I, p. 160-4.

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At the celebration of the Fourth of July in 1780 at Princeton, after the outdoor exercises "the company adjourned to the College Hall where a discourse was delivered by the President, in which he considered: (1) The importance and the necessity of Independence at the time it was declared; (2) The events of providence in the course of the contest; and (3) The duty of all ranks in the present crisis."<sup>47</sup> The address has not been preserved but this outline printed in the newspapers indicates that Dr. Witherspoon used most of his material again at the Thanksgiving Day exercises of 1783.

Elected in 1780 to the state legislative council or senate, he took his seat at the opening of the session late in October and during the month that followed was actively employed. His most important assignment was the preparation of the draft of a memorial to Congress on finance, pursuant to the resolution of a joint conference of the two branches of the legislature. The draft was brought in on November 18 and agreed to by the council. It is a frank statement of New Jersey's constant acquiescence in and support of public measures; the hope is expressed, however, that Congress will suggest to other states the propriety of a uniform ratio between continental currency and the "new money" of Congress of the preceding March. New Jersey has constantly supplied its share of supplies for the army, but has seldom received anything but certificates in return, and as the population of the State consists principally of farmers this situation works a hardship. Moreover, New Jersey is always called upon first for supplies although the citizens have reduced their private stores to a very scanty allowance and are often compelled to see provisions and forage impressed and taken from them and their families reduced to want. It is hoped that Congress will require the other states to forward their full share of supplies and thus relieve New Jersey of a burden which will otherwise become intolerable.

Reelected to Congress a few days later Dr. Witherspoon was present in the Council on November 23 for the last time, and his seat was declared vacant. Meanwhile he had been leaving no stone unturned to fill up his college rolls. While at Trenton, for

<sup>47</sup> *New Jersey Archives*, 2 ser., vol. IV, p. 506.

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example, he wrote the following letter of condolence to the widow of General Woolford, and it was through no fault of his that the characteristic suggestion it contains proved fruitless:

By Major Nevil passing this Way I beg leave to express my Sympathy with You & Your Family on the Death of my Worthy Friend of which I am just informed. I pray that God almighty who has said he will be a Father to the Fatherless, & a Husband to the Widow may not only support You under this heavy Trial but sanctify it to You & Your Children for your present & future Benefit.

Major Nevil informs me it was the particular Request of General Woodford that his Son should finish his Studies if therefore you see it proper to send him back here You may expect all possible Attention from me & my Son in Law Mr. Smith to his Improvement. I wrote You before upon this Subject & therefore shall only refer you to the Bearer, and am

Madam, Your most obedt. humble Servant

JNO. WITHERSPOON<sup>48</sup>

A plan to regulate the work of graduate students and lead them to the higher degrees was brought before the board of trustees in May, 1781. It proposed to confer the higher and intermediate degrees in theology and law after some method similar to that practised in European universities. The plan has not been preserved. Although presented by Dr. Smith and Mr. Houston, its provisions without doubt received the sanction and supervision of the President if he did not actually draw them up himself, being the only man on the ground who had any first hand knowledge of European higher instruction, and having instituted graduate study at Princeton as early as 1768. The plan was referred to a committee which reported favorably a few months later; but further consideration was desired and for the next three years the plan was discussed intermittently by the board but definite action deferred. Undoubtedly it required better financial equipment than the College yet controlled and the administration clearly saw that its first duty lay toward the undergraduate department, and nothing came of the movement to formulate these, the earliest plans for organized graduate

<sup>48</sup> Presbyterian Historical Society.

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work at Princeton. Dr. Witherspoon had sought graduate students as soon as he assumed the Presidency, and his desire was not without a certain measure of fulfillment. Although Princeton in his day did not confer, and since his time has not conferred, degrees in course in theology,<sup>49</sup> and the only degrees in course ever granted in law were those conferred during the brief existence of the Princeton law school in the middle of the nineteenth century, yet during Dr. Witherspoon's time graduate students in both law and theology were commonly in attendance. Because of the absence of annual catalogues of the period it is impossible to give the exact total but the names of at least a score are known. Evidence of the presence of such students is found in Fithian who writes in his *Journal* in November, 1770, that "resident graduates" assisted at his entrance examination; in February, 1773, Oliver Reese, a theological student writes to Fithian that he has preached before Dr. Witherspoon "and the graduates," and a note to a sermon by Dr. S. Stanhope Smith of January, 1795, preached a few months after Witherspoon's death, informs us that the discourse is published "at the request of the students in theology and law."

Militia being still quartered in Nassau Hall, in May, 1781, the board petitioned the State Legislature to put an end to the practice, coupling the petition with one further to reduce the trustees' quorum:

To the Honorable the Council & Assembly  
for the State of New Jersey now met in  
general Assembly at Princeton.

The Petition of the Trustees of the College of  
New Jersey

Sheweth

That your Petitioners have long had the Charge and Care of an important Seminary of Learning at Princeton in this state, known by the name of the College of New Jersey—

That the derangement of the Funds as well as destruction of the costly and valuable Building erected for the reception of the Students

<sup>49</sup> Save apparently in the case of the Reverend John Joachim Zubly of Charlestown, S. C., who presented in 1774 for the doctorate in divinity a learned but curious "Exercitatio Theologica de Nuptiis Virginis superadultae" (Charlestown, 1775).

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(occasioned by the invasion of this State by the Enemy) requires the immediate and careful attention of the Trustees to prevent the entire ruin of the Corporation, to the great Injury of the State in one of its most essential interests—

That from the scattered situation of the individuals of this Corporation, their Meeting is often prevented by means of the large quorum required by the Charter of Incorporation—

Your Petitioners therefore humbly pray the Interposition of the Legislature to reduce the Number of the Quorum to Nine Members, whereof the Governor of the State for the time being to be one, and in case of his absence, the President of the College, or in case of his Death or removal, the oldest Trustee always to be one, or to provide such other remedy as to your Honorable Houses shall seem meet—

Your Petitioners further show that they have laid out large Sums of money for the repairs of Damages done by the Enemy to the Building, but by the continual quartering of our own troops, especially the Militia passing from Time to Time through the town in the sd Building the said repairs have been again thrown down and destroyed, wherefore your Petitioners farther pray that a penalty may be laid on any Civil or Military officer who shall hereafter Quarter or suffer to be quartered any Troops in the sd Building and its appurtenances or to grant your Petitioners such other remedy as in your wisdom you shall think fit.

Signed in the Name of and by Order of the  
Board, in full Meeting

JNO WITHERSPOON<sup>50</sup>

Dr. Witherspoon was finding time to resume writing. The *Pennsylvania Journal* reprinted in February and March, 1781, his three *Druid* papers of 1776, and beginning with the issue of April 11, the President started a fresh series of four. The first of the new essays is a discussion of common sense and lacks the interest of its three successors, which concern another of the President's hobbies, and contain his speculations on the future of the English language in America.<sup>51</sup>

Opening his fourth essay with a paragraph on the manifest improvement made by writers during the past century in their use of the English language, he warns his readers that the situa-

<sup>50</sup> Princeton University Library.

<sup>51</sup> *Works*, vol. IV, p. 168.

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tion of America in this respect is such "as to require peculiar attention." America is at a great distance from Great Britain "in which the standard of the language is as yet supposed to be found."

Every State is equal to and independent of every other; and I believe none of them will agree, at least immediately, to receive laws from another in discourse, any more than in action. Time and accident must determine what turn affairs will take in this respect in future, whether we shall continue to consider the language of Great Britain as the pattern upon which we are to form ours, or whether, in this new emprise, some centre of learning and politeness will not be found, which shall obtain influence and prescribe the rules of speech and writing to every other part.

His expectation is that "being entirely separated from Britain we shall find some centre or standard of our own, and not be subject to the inhabitants of that island, either in receiving new ways of speaking or rejecting the old." Pending the settlement of this point, however, it had occurred to him "to make some observations upon the present state of the English language in America and to attempt a collection of the chief improprieties which prevail and might be easily corrected."

He thinks that the reason the common people in America speak much better than the same class does in Great Britain is that they move more frequently from place to place and are not so liable to local peculiarities of accent or phraseology. On the other hand he finds a marked difference between the "public and solemn Discourses" of gentlemen and scholars in Great Britain and those of Americans of the same social standing.

I have heard, he asserts, in this country, in the senate, at the bar and from the pulpit, and see daily in dissertations from the press, errors in grammar, improprieties and vulgarisms, which hardly any person of the same class in point of rank and literature would have fallen into in Great Britain.

He then gives examples from the collection which curiosity had led him to make, and which he had named "Americanisms," a word which he claims to have coined and which he defines, a

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claim and a definition accepted by the New English Dictionary.<sup>52</sup> He has classified them into vulgarisms, local phrases or terms, common blunders, cant phrases, personal blunders, and the pedantic use of technical terms. He warns his readers not to expect his enumeration under any of these heads to be complete—this was “not necessary to my purpose, which is by specimens to enable every attentive and judicious person to make observations for himself.” Neither is it necessary to the purpose of this book to do more than note that the accuracy of many of the observations the President makes in the rest of the *Druid* series is supported by the work of later and far more scientific investigators. As typical of his “specimens” may be cited “improve” in the sense of “to use,” “chunks” meaning blocks of half-burned wood, “considerable” in the phrase “he is considerable of a surveyor,” “tote” for “carry,” “mad” for “angry,” and the American meaning of “clever” which he declares would certainly “be mistaken when heard for the first time by one born in Britain.”

The last *Druid* essay announces that one more was planned to conclude the series; but this was never published. The *Pennsylvania Journal* for June 20, 1781, contains a communication to the *Druid* listing additional Americanisms, and the *Journal* for June 30 prints a letter from the inevitable disgruntled and critical reader taking the *Druid* to task for inaccuracies and for “Scotticisms” which were just as objectionable as so-called “Americanisms.” The President decided to carry his investigations no further—at least in print.

Meanwhile, the board of trustees was continuing its canvas for funds. Dr. Robert Smith of Pequa collected in the Forks of Brandywine some £238, and the indefatigable Mr. Caldwell, £200 in gold and silver; the trustees ordered certain lots owned by the College to be sold for another £200 and the money applied to repairs. The chief payment on this account during 1780 was £1357 for carpentering made in continental money which Dr. Witherspoon notes in his statement was worth “in hard money at 75 for one,” or roughly £18 sterling. Philadelphia and its neighborhood had proved to be the most fruitful campaign soil, the collection in May, 1779, being £663, in December 1779,

<sup>52</sup> Though with inaccurate date—“about 1794,” instead of 1781.

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£391, and 1780, £765. But repairs were a bottomless pit and the committee in charge reported but little progress. A guinea entrance fee was next required from each new student, the proceeds to be used in borrowing further funds.

This increase in the cost of education did not deter applicants, and at the opening of the winter term in 1781 the *New Jersey Gazette*<sup>58</sup> gave the honor of its first column to a long notice signed by Dr. Witherspoon which contains signs of improving conditions. The College is filling up fast, and it is the belief of the authorities that all the former regulations may now be re-established. Therefore, since a large part of Nassau Hall is already repaired and the rest is expected to be restored without delay, hereafter all students will be required to live in college, and strict compliance with college orders will be expected as regards attendance at prayers, daily recitations, and being in their rooms at night. Grammar scholars will as formerly be permitted to reside with private families. Board at commons is ten shillings a week and no one may board out save by special permission. Tuition is six pounds and room rent two per annum. The grammar school tuition is the same as that of the College, and a matriculation fee of one guinea is required. A student entering college from another grammar school into a higher class than the freshman will be called upon to pay the tuition for as many terms as he thus "slipped over," but a student entering from another college would be admitted to the same standing. All fees and charges are payable in advance semi-annually, and the President's own pocketbook has suffered so much from arrearages and unredeemed pledges made by parents and guardians living at a distance, that he can no longer repeat "so expensive and dangerous a contrivance." He hopes that parents will entrust the management of boys' accounts and expenses to some one in college or in the neighborhood. Students in the past have run into extravagance of dress and incidentals and have set a bad example, have been imposed upon by the unscrupulous, and have brought reproach upon the institution.

Twenty years later during the Presidency of Dr. Smith the same situation led to the enactment of sumptuary laws. It is

<sup>58</sup>October 10, 1781.

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difficult to get any exact idea as to the extravagances to which allusion is made. But an extremely polite letter to young Stephen van Rennsalaer, student at Nassau Hall in the summer of 1780, from a Mr. William Pollard of Philadelphia, does not owe its astonishing figures solely to the fact that the prices quoted are in terms of depreciated currency. Mr. Pollard, who seems to have been a tailor, sends to van Rennsalaer some green cloth, some shalloon, and some buttons. The cloth "is not Superfine, but it is the best that is to be got in Town," wrote Mr. Pollard. Naturally one could not expect the son of the famous New York patroon to wear anything but the best that Philadelphia could provide, especially when he had come to college, so it is said, in his own chaise and with the most luxurious wardrobe that had yet been aired in the frugal atmosphere of Nassau Hall. At any rate, for one and a half yards of the cloth he paid two hundred and twenty-five pounds, for three yards of shalloon seventy-five pounds, and for one and a half dozen buttons sixty-seven pounds, ten shillings, making a total of three hundred and sixty-seven pounds ten shillings for the materials of a single piece of raiment.<sup>54</sup> One shudders to think what the final "ready to wear" cost was. It would also seem that Ashbel Green himself, a minister's son, might have got along with a somewhat less valuable coat than the one he wore during his first year at college in 1782. It had been made for a British officer and had been left on its importer's hands, so that this bargain hunting student secured it for a thousand dollars in depreciated money,<sup>55</sup> which perhaps was cheap for so fine a garment, but appears otherwise. The *Journal of 1786* does not give evidence of undergraduate extravagance, and as the group of students mentioned in it belonged to what must have been the social set in college, it is possible that extravagance had by this time been fairly checked.

The restoration of Nassau Hall, in spite of the best endeavors and promises of the board and its president, was still far from complete. By the spring of 1782 or five years after the battle of Princeton, as we have seen from Ashbel's Green statement, only the middle portion of the first floor and a room or two in the

<sup>54</sup> Princeton University Library.

<sup>55</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 71.

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basement had been rendered habitable. Nevertheless, that autumn it was announced that all college orders were re-established as they had been before the war. A further increase had been ordered in the matriculation fee which now was to be one pound fifteen shillings, while board was correspondingly raised to fifteen shillings a week.<sup>56</sup> The public seemed ready enough to respond to the President's desire for pupils and to pay whatever college fees were demanded; to look after them when they got to Princeton was still the problem. By the time Dr. Witherspoon returned to Princeton in the winter of 1782 after his congressional service was definitely ended he found the funds of the College cut in half, the college enrolment shrunk to a quarter of its former self, and besides having a half-ruined building on their hands which they had no funds to repair, the trustees owed him nearly nine hundred pounds for salary and various official expenses; and he himself was badly out of pocket as the reward of his absence in national service.

<sup>56</sup> *New Jersey Gazette*, October 9, 1782.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE LAST TEN YEARS

THE condition of the College described in the last chapter and the prominence which Dr. Witherspoon had attained during the Revolution were responsible for the fact that although he had planned otherwise the final decade of his life showed but little decrease in his activity. He was sixty years old at the close of the Revolutionary War; his life had been anything but peaceful, the last six years in particular had been years of peculiar strain; and it had long been his cherished purpose, so he wrote to a friend in 1780, to spend the remainder of his days *in otio cum dignitate*. With dignity in the abstract he was adequately equipped, and of honors he had received his full share during the fourteen years of his residence in America, and he was to continue to be the recipient of recognition and distinction; but ease, under whatever interpretation, was not to mark his closing days.

In the first place, he was so seriously handicapped financially that he was compelled to live in strict economy and was often criticised for not meeting his obligations more promptly.<sup>1</sup> In common with other members of Congress he had found public life a grave expense. Ashbel Green believed that the chief source of his embarrassment was the loss he suffered in connection with his Ryegate property. As far as can now be judged, it is certain that none of the exchanges and sales connected with that venture brought any appreciable profit to Dr. Witherspoon, especially in view of the length of time during which he held the property. The fate of one of his Ryegate tracts is alluded to in a letter from his son-in-law, Dr. Samuel S. Smith, to an agent in 1798, and was probably not an exception:

I have bought 1200 acres of land near Newbury of Mrs. Witherspoon being the same that Mr. W. Wallace some time ago bought at collec-

<sup>1</sup> Documents in Princeton University Library show that sales of land were made by his widow to satisfy debts of his, one in particular being of £2000 incurred in 1785.

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tor's sale for taxes and re-conveyed to her for a certain sum. It was formerly the property of Dr. Witherspoon. But he was negligent and forgetful in his latter years & it slipped from him.

Similarly the story of the land he had bought for his son, James, and which he held for ten years after the boy's death at the battle of Germantown, is one of gradual decline. It will be remembered that James Witherspoon had gone to Ryegate in the spring of 1774, and had cleared 25 acres of the 600 in his tract and had erected some sort of dwelling and other buildings. The Vermont wilderness soon won back his clearing and twenty years later few traces of his work remained. In 1798 the ruins of one building could still be seen, half hidden in the dense undergrowth. This tract and a lake in Ryegate township bearing the Witherspoon name now constitute all that is left of the President's association with the place.

He seems to have suffered from a chronic shortness of ready funds. A letter of his in 1775 to the Hon. Daniel Clymer of Philadelphia, enclosing a student's account, asks Mr. Clymer to advance cash beyond the amount of the bill—"as you will understand by this time on Account of my Daughter's marriage which is at hand & my son's setting out in the World, I stand very much in need of Money & it could scarce at any time be a greater favour;" and a postscript adds: "If you will send the money by Monday's Stage, it will be a particular favour."

It is tolerably evident that however much Dr. Witherspoon may have known of the theory of finance he was not successful in its application to his own business. He was speaking from grim experience when he remarked in the *Druid* that "some who are even connoisseurs in economy never can keep their own affairs in tolerable order." For a man whose mind was distinctly practical in most of its workings he seems to have been singularly unpractical and even careless in business dealings where he himself was concerned. We are told by Ashbel Green, that, returning once from Ryegate with a drove of cattle received in payment of rent, Dr. Witherspoon was met by an affable individual who

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volunteered for a consideration to bring the cattle down to New Jersey for him and thus allow their owner to hasten homeward. The proposal was accepted and the President went on to Princeton. But the cattle never reached the shelter of his Tusculum barns and he did not hear of them again. He had even neglected to get the swindler's name.

A similar neglect of elementary business principles is said to have involved his estate in heavy financial loss. Signing a bond for Robert Morris when the latter borrowed money from a person named Leslie for the use of Congress, Dr. Witherspoon made a verbal agreement to pay in cash and not in continental money, for which consideration Mr. Leslie was to waive interest on the loan. After the President's death Leslie claimed and took both principal and interest, no written statement of the agreement having been made.

Even loyalty to old friends seemed to involve him in unfortunate financial complications. An example was his effort to save "Castle Howard," a fine estate on the outskirts of Princeton, belonging to the widow of Captain William Howard, a retired British army officer of wealth and strong pro-colonial feelings. The details of the transaction are not altogether clear, but apparently with a view to evading the New Jersey Confiscation Act this lady and her second husband, Captain Ibbetson Hamer, also a British veteran, on being compelled to leave "Castle Howard" when the British retreated to New Brunswick in 1777, gave the President a power of attorney to sell the property. But the place was seized by the State, its contents sold (the inventory mentions family portraits, a library, and a large organ) and the house rented. Dr. Witherspoon regaining possession, in 1785 sold a portion of the property for £900, of which sum only one installment, £60, appears to have been paid by the purchaser, the Reverend Philip Stockton. In 1788 the Hamers had not yet received a penny and were blaming the President for gross mismanagement, to call it by no worse a name. In 1793, the year before his death, he bought the property back under an Act enabling creditors to recover their just debts from absconders, and part of it was purchased in 1794 by Colonel Erkuries Beatty of Princeton. Wheth-

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er Captain and Mrs. Hamer ever received their money, investigation has not yet revealed.<sup>2</sup>

Leaving out of consideration the drain on his pocket continually caused by his interest in impecunious strangers, particularly if they happened to be Scotsmen, he was a constant sufferer in his financial relations with the College owing partly to unavoidable conditions and partly to his own generous nature. That he contrived to keep the College from total disintegration through the discouraging period of the war and in spite of a national monetary system of which he totally disapproved, was a feat to be marvelled at; and the personal sacrifices which repeatedly marked his administration of the institution's finances and enabled it to tide over desperately hard times can never be too highly praised. In 1779 he had voluntarily relinquished half his salary to secure the services of Dr. Smith, an arrangement which in 1783 he offered to make permanent; for at least two years he accepted depreciated currency instead of the gold the board of trustees had voted he should receive; for several years he allowed himself to suffer by the rule that the President must either dismiss students in arrears for tuition or else make up their deficits himself; and at last he was forced in self-defence to issue warning, as we have seen, that he would no longer meet arrearages but would adopt the other alternative. How many young men he helped though college will never be known, but the frequent references to this characteristic lead one to suspect that few boys had to leave Princeton for lack of means to pay their college bills when Dr. Witherspoon knew the circumstances. A sheet of accounts in his handwriting headed "Notes of Arrears given in to the Com," and evidently the fragment of a report drawn up for one of the trustees' investigating committees, contains ample evidence of the President's generosity as well as his lack of strict business method. The list contains the names of eight students in classes from 1789 to 1791, seven of whom are acknowledged as directly chargeable in part or in whole to himself. One

<sup>2</sup>For the documents relating to this affair grateful acknowledgment is here made of the researches of E. Alfred Jones, Esq., M.A., of the Temple, London, among the loyalist archives of the Public Record Office, the results of which have been most generously transmitted. The deed of sale to Col. Beatty is in the Library of Princeton University.

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boy was to be charged to him for the summer of 1787, so the Doctor's own comment runs, "after that he was to answer for himself & is not now under my Care. Yet if the Winter session of that year is not paid I will assume it." Another name has this note attached: "Joseph Caldwell is a charity Scholar. I do not recall whether I had then determined to support him. Yet I will assume it." A further entry reads: "Will Perrie (Perry) was a charity Scholar at my Expense if his entry is not paid I will assume it." In an earlier list of delinquents whose overdue bills, reached the respectable sum of four hundred pounds, individual accounts to the amount of eighty pounds were later marked as paid off by "Dr. W."

Owing to transactions like these, of which the bookkeeping was obviously careless, and to the President's prolonged absences from Princeton amid the confusions of the war—Ashbel Green entering in 1782 did not see him until six weeks after the term had opened—and also partly because of the unbusinesslike system of handling college funds that was in operation when he assumed office and which he had not been able to change, the financial management of the College during his Presidency easily laid itself open to criticism. When board bills were paid to the steward, tuition bills to the President, and room rent and other monies were handed to the treasurer; when no adequate system of vouchers was maintained and virtually any officer of the College could without warrant from higher authority contract debts, purchase supplies, or order repairs and look to the treasurer for settlement, it is small wonder that the financial affairs of the institution bordered on the chaotic. The following exchange of brief communications between the President and the treasurer, preserved in the Princeton manuscripts, shows that even before the war the payment of salaries was dependent entirely on the state of the treasurer's petty cash. On November 22, 1774, Dr. Witherspoon wrote to Mr. Sergeant:

Sir

I have a written Order for the whole that is due to me to the 29th of September therefore desire to know when I may expect it

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The treasurer replied on the same sheet:

My being able to pay money I suppose will very much depend on Mr. Woodruff's [the steward] paying in tuition money. He has answered considerable in paying Messrs Houston and Grier [the tutors]. I hope to settle with Mr. Woodruff Soon but doubt whether he will have much more Cash to pay or not.

Your most humble Servt

JNO. SERGEANT

Under the circumstances the management was probably as efficient as it ever had been. The trustees enjoyed no reputation as financiers long before Dr. Witherspoon's election; and for that matter to be in a financial condition other than stringent was even then, as it still seems to be, incompatible with the nature of American institutions of learning. But the fact remains that had Dr. Witherspoon's personal accounts not been in such confusion he would have been spared the mortifying position in which he found himself during the last year of his life when a committee of the board, in belated effort to straighten out the tangled money matters of the College, found itself for a time unable to agree with his claim that he did not owe the College several hundred pounds. Fortunately the situation was cleared to everyone's satisfaction before Dr. Witherspoon's death, but the controversy must have weighed hard on him in his blindness and ill health and after his twenty-five years of devoted and generous service.

Even had no controversy arisen over college finances and had he escaped the pinch of private embarrassment, Dr. Witherspoon would not have been allowed to live the peaceful closing years he sought. When he left Congress he immediately took up his share of instruction in college, resuming his lectures, and by way of variety holding some of his classes at "Tusculum;" he continued to preside at Commencement, and once more he occupied the College pulpit in his regular turn. But he was not one of those public figures who lay aside their harness and pass gradually and unnoticed from the scene of contemporary history. Rather was he one of those whose conspicuousness ends only with their lives. Calls to important service in Church and State were still to come to him, and he was to remain the best il-

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illustration of his own firm conviction that public service is one of the chief ends of education and one of the principal duties of the educated citizen.

His first recorded public utterance after the conclusion of hostilities was at the Princeton celebration of the declaration of peace on the official Thanksgiving Day, April 19, 1783, a day spent, according to the cheery reporter of the occasion, "with that festivity, decency, and good order which we hope will ever characterize a free and virtuous people."<sup>3</sup> After the proclamation of peace had been read at the village flagstaff Dr. Witherspoon delivered in the college prayer-hall a thanksgiving sermon on the text "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord," which as his final word on the American Revolution is worth examination.<sup>4</sup> His enthusiastic survey of the war was excusable; he could find many reasons for viewing it through rosy glasses; and it was of course consistent with his calling and with the view of history which he entertained to lay his stress on the providential aspects of the contest. As a sermon, therefore, the effort is admirable; but it is disappointing in its failure to indicate in any way its author's matured political opinion of the Confederation, his attitude toward its present problems, his hopes of its future. Instead, he calls attention to dispensations of Providence shown in the unexpected successes and favors enjoyed by the United States during the war, in the preservation of the Confederation from the difficulties and evils besetting its path, and in the confounding of the enemy's councils so that they actually hastened the very changes they sought to prevent. That the Colonies were unjustly charged with a deliberate concerted plan to break with Great Britain and set up an independent government he proves by the facts that until they had declared themselves independent there was no pre-contract between them, no attempt to enlist foreign aid, and above all no laying in of munitions of war.

<sup>3</sup> *The New Jersey Gazette* of April 23, 1783, contains a full account. The people met at noon at the village flagstaff "on which the American flag was beautifully displayed;" at one o'clock they adjourned to the college hall for Dr. Witherspoon's sermon; at three o'clock public dinners were served at the taverns of Colonel Hyer and Mr. Beekman; at seven the village was illuminated; and at eight the local infantry company fired a salute of thirteen guns.

<sup>4</sup> *Works*, vol. II, p. 451.

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The cooperation of the French he considers a special favor of Providence, and if he ever suspected the existence of any of the age-long underlying reasons for the alliance he gives no indication thereof, although as a member of the congressional committee on foreign affairs during that exciting time, he must have been cognizant of part of the intrigue that went into the formation of that alliance. Above all, the appointment of Washington as commander in chief of the American forces was in his opinion the work of divine intervention. With brief apology, but without mentioning Washington's name, he delivers a calm eulogy of his friend in terms whose truth modern appreciation of the General's character has only emphasized.<sup>5</sup>

As for perils avoided by the Confederation, even the emission of paper money, an expedient which he did not consider himself "obliged either to justify or approve," had not been fatal. Another danger successfully surmounted had been that of anarchy and confusion when government under the Crown came to an end and each State had to frame its own new constitution,—it was done as quietly and calmly, he avers, as the moving of family and furniture from one house into another. The chief peril avoided, however, was internal dissension, a source from which he had apprehended more danger than from any other. Here his fears had been wholly disappointed and his hopes greatly exceeded. It may be taken as perhaps a reflection of Dr. Witherspoon's unswerving faith in the future of his adopted country, and his buoyant breadth of view that ignored petty details, coupled to some degree perhaps with a latent inability, through foreign birth and association, to appreciate fully all the hidden causes of sectional friction in America, that we find him telling his audience that "in our public councils, no mark of dissension in matters of importance has ever appeared; and I take upon me further to say that every year has obliterated colonial distinction and worn away local prejudices, so that mutual affection is at

<sup>5</sup> In contrast with the restraint and sanity of his remarks on Washington one should read the rhapsody of Dr. Stiles on the same occasion at New Haven (Tyler, II, 334.) Dr. Witherspoon used passages from this part of his sermon again in August when he wrote the address of welcome to General Washington from the College and village of Princeton. Other portions of the sermon were also used by Mr. Boudinot as President of Congress in his address at the audience given to Washington at the same time.

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present more cordial and the views and works of the whole more uniform than ever they were at any preceding period." To cite no other contravening facts, the very hall in which he uttered these overoptimistic words was to hear, before the year was ended, a congressional debate on the location of a federal residence which intimated that local prejudices were far from dead or worn away, and that "mutual affection" did not conspicuously mark congressional relations.

He then proceeded to show how the councils of the British had been confounded and how they had hastened their own undoing. Once more he insisted on the ignorance and error under which the British ministry had labored as to dispositions and things American. Failing to see the "strong and rooted inclinations of the people themselves, such as no address or management of interested persons could have produced," those at the head of the government had sincerely believed that the great body of the colonists were on their side and were misled into rebellion by a few factious leaders. They were further led astray by American loyalists. He ventured to assert that "time will constrain everybody to confess that the partisan friends of the English in America have done more essential injury to their cause than the greatest and boldest of their enemies." Of the sufferings and hardships meted out to loyalists he says nothing save to admit in one casual sentence that the adherents to the Crown were "sometimes roughly handled by the multitudes at the beginning of the controversy"—which, to say the least, is scarcely an adequate summary of the treatment they received.

Then he offers his subtlest reason for the failure of Great Britain's advisers. They thought that they had only a few malcontents to punish, and an army to conquer in no way comparable with their own; they forgot that they had the lost affections of a whole people to recover. Every measure taken by Great Britain instead of tending to regain the hearts of the American people had a most powerful influence in producing the contrary effect. As an example he cites the cruelty and severity with which the war was conducted by the enemy—the barbarous treatment of American prisoners—

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we in this State, through which they passed to their homes, can never forget the appearance of the emaciated spectres who escaped or were exchanged from British dungeons or prison ships. Neither was it possible for the people in general but to be struck with the contrast when exchanges took place and they saw companies of British prisoners going home hale and hearty, bearing every mark of their having been supplied with comfortable provisions and treated with humanity.

In the same vein he speaks of the needless devastation and ruin that marked the path of the British army across the country. Upon the whole, nothing to him appeared more manifest than that the separation of the Colonies from the mother country was an act of Providence; every step the British took to prevent it only served to accelerate it, "which has generally been the case when men have undertaken to go in opposition to the course of Providence and to make war with the nature of things." And so he calls upon his hearers to thank God for the present promising state of affairs and he lays it down as their civic duty to testify their gratitude by usefulness in their several stations:

This is the duty of every person, even of the lowest station, at all times. Even the meanest and most unconnected hath still some small bounds within which his example and influence may be useful. . . . In free States where the body of the people have the supreme power properly in their own hands and must be ultimately resorted to on all great matters if there be a general corruption of manners there can be nothing but confusion. So true is this that civil liberty cannot long be preserved without virtue. A monarchy may subsist for ages, and be better or worse under a good or bad prince; but a republic once equally poised must either preserve its virtue or lose its liberty and by some tumultuous revolution either return to its first principles or assume a more unhappy form.

- A double duty therefore results—that of the people who choose their rulers, and that of the representatives to whom is entrusted the exercise of this delegated authority. The people must choose men of high principles; while those chosen are under the strictest obligation to do their utmost to promote religion, sobriety, industry, and every social virtue. And the sermon closes with a

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series of exhortations which, as time has passed, have lost but little of their force:

Let us endeavour to bring into and keep in credit and reputation everything that may serve to give vigor to an equal republican constitution. Let us cherish a love of piety, order, industry, frugality. Let us check every disposition to luxury, effeminacy, and the pleasures of a dissipated life. Let us in public measures put honor upon modesty and self denial which is the index of real merit. And in our families let us do the best by religious instruction to sow the seeds which bear fruit in the next generation. We are one body of federated States. For many reasons I shall avoid making comparisons at present but may venture to predict that whatsoever state among us shall continue to make piety and virtue the standard of public honor, will enjoy the greatest inward peace, the greatest national happiness, and in every outward conflict will discover the greatest constitutional strength.

In May, 1783, Dr. Witherspoon attended as usual the annual meeting of the Synod, and a report on the slender salaries of Presbyterian ministers coming up, he was ordered with Dr. Elihu Spencer and Dr. S. Stanhope Smith to draft a pastoral letter to the congregations of the Synod urging an increase. The letter was adopted and ordered printed, and Dr. Witherspoon published it in the *Pennsylvania Packet* of May 29, 1783, where it appears over the signature of the Moderator John McCrery. It is included in the second edition of Dr. Witherspoon's works.<sup>6</sup> Recalling that the Synod had addressed a Pastoral Letter to its congregation in May, 1775, the opportunity now afforded by the cessation of hostilities to express the Synod's "sentiments on this happy occasion and its advice as to the duty incumbent upon all ranks," was inescapably convenient. After congratulating the congregations "on the general and almost universal attachment of the Presbyterian body to the cause of liberty and the rights of mankind," the letter calls upon its readers to render thanks to Almighty God "in a particular manner" for establishing the independence of the United States of America. The illustrations of divine intervention are those Dr. Witherspoon had used in his sermon at Princeton in April, and the advice as to

<sup>6</sup> Philadelphia, 1802, vol. III, p. 9.

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civic duty is phrased in the same language. But the document as a whole does not rank with its predecessor of 1775. The call to increase pastoral salaries is relegated to one sentence.

As soon as the Synod adjourned Dr. Witherspoon went to Vermont where he seems to have endeavored to expedite the disposal of his Ryegate property by giving General Whitelaw and another representative a power of attorney to sell all his holdings. On his way back in July he stopped at New Haven to visit Dr. Stiles. Had he known what was going on at Princeton he would have halted only long enough to water his sorrel mare. For the members of the Continental Congress, frightened for their lives by a band of mutinous soldiers, had hastily fled from Philadelphia to re-assemble at Princeton. After Colonel George Morgan of Princeton had given the fugitive legislators the hospitality of "Prospect," his farmhouse at the edge of the campus, Vice-president Smith and tutor Riddle offered the Congress the use of Nassau Hall. Here, on his return to Princeton a few days later, Dr. Witherspoon found the government of the United States installed; and here it remained until November.

The visit of Congress metamorphosed the quiet little village into a gay and brilliant capital where on the one hand not unwelcome academic occasions relieved the monotony of official life, and on the other rural hospitalities adopted new standards to suit imported metropolitan tastes. Young Ashbel Green, then a Senior, describing for his father the joint celebration of the Fourth of July by college, town, and Congress, at which he was one of the orators, refers to the general effect of the presence of Congress on the community:

The face of things is inconceivably altered in Princeton within a fortnight. From a little obscure village we have become the capital of America. Instead of almost silence in the town, nothing is to be seen or heard but the passing and rattling of wagons, coaches, and chairs, the crying about of pine apples, oranges, lemons, and every luxurious article both foreign and domestic.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup>H. C. Alexander, *Life of J. A. Alexander*, I, 16. The detailed history of the stay of Congress at Princeton during the summer and autumn of 1783 may be found in Collins, *The Continental Congress at Princeton*, Princeton, 1908.

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In August, when General Washington came to Princeton in answer to the summons of Congress, the faculty of the College and the inhabitants of the village presented to him the following congratulatory address of which President Witherspoon was the author.<sup>8</sup>

TO HIS EXCELLENCY GENERAL WASHINGTON, &C, &C, &C,—

The inhabitants of Princeton & neighbourhood with the president & faculty of the college beg leave to embrace this opportunity of congratulating your excellency on the late glorious peace on your meeting with congress in this place & the present happy & promising state of public affairs.

As the college of New Jersey devoted to the interests of religion & learning was among the first places in America that suffered by the ravages of the enemy so happily this place & neighborhood was the scene of one of the most important & seasonable checks which they received in their progress. The surprise of the Hessians at Trenton & the Subsequent victory at Princeton redounded much to the honour of the commander who planned & the handful of troops with him which executed the measures. Yet were they even of greater moment to the cause of America than they were brilliant as particular military exploits.

We contemplate & adore the wisdom & goodness of divine providence as displayed in many instances in favour of the United States during the course of the war, but in none more than in the unanimous appointment of your excellency to the command of the army. When we consider the continuance of your life & health the discernment prudence fortitude & patience of your conduct by which you have not only sacrificed as others have done person & property but frequently even reputation itself in the public cause choosing rather to risk your own name than expose the nakedness of your country—When we consider the great & unabated attachment of the army & the cordial esteem of all ranks of men & of every state in the union which you have so long Enjoyed & when we consider in contrast the british leaders who have been in Succession opposed to you their attempts to blast

<sup>8</sup>The original is among the Washington Papers at the Library of Congress (Letters to Washington 110, folio 7) and appears to be in the hand of James Riddle, the college tutor; it was published in contemporary newspapers such as the *Pennsylvania Packet*, August 30, and the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, September 3, 1783; a curiously altered version appears in Ashbel Green's editions of Witherspoon's *Works*; the correct text taken from the original manuscript, as given above, may also be found in Collins, *Continental Congress at Princeton*, pp. 103-5.

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each others characters & the short duration of their command we cannot help being of opinion that God himself has raised you up as a fit & proper instrument for establishing & securing the liberty & happiness of these states.

We pray that the Almighty may continue to protect & bless you & that having survived so much fatigue & so many dangers from traitors & in the field you may enjoy many years of repose in the bosom of your grateful country.

Signed in behalf of the whole in a public meeting by

J<sup>N</sup>O WITHERSPOON  
ROB<sup>T</sup> STOCKTON  
JONATHAN DEARE  
JAMES RIDDLE  
JAMES M'COMB  
ENOS KELSEY  
FRANCIS J. JAMES

*Princeton August 25, 1783*

To this address Washington at once replied.<sup>9</sup>

TO THE INHABITANTS OF PRINCETON AND NEIGHBOURHOOD TOGETHER  
WITH THE PRESIDENT & FACULTY OF THE COLLEGE

*Gentlemen:*

I receive, with the utmost satisfaction and acknowledge with great sensibility your kind congratulations.

The prosperous situation of our public affairs, the flourishing State of this place, and the revival of the Seat of Literature from the ravages of War, encrease to the highest degree, the pleasure I feel *in visiting* (at the return of Peace) the Scene of our important Military transactions, and *in recollecting* the period when the Tide of adversity began to turn, and better fortune to smile upon us.

If in the execution of an arduous Office, I have been so happy as to discharge my duty to the Public with Fidelity and success, and to obtain the good Opinion of my fellow Soldiers and fellow Citizens, I attribute all the Glory to that Supreme Being who hath caused the several parts, which have been employed in the production of the wonderful events we now contemplate, to harmonise in the most perfect manner and who was able by the humblest Instruments, as well as by the most powerful means to establish and secure the Liberty and happiness of the United States.

<sup>9</sup> Collins, *Continental Congress at Princeton*, pp. 105-6.

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I now return to you, Gentlemen, my thanks for your benevolent wishes, and make it my earnest prayer to Heaven, that every temporal and divine Blessing may be bestowed on the Inhabitants of Princeton on the Neighbourhood, and on the President and Faculty of the College of New-Jersey, and that the usefulness of this Institution, in promoting the Interests of Religion and Learning, may be universally extended.

I am, Gent'n, &c,

G. WASHINGTON

*Rocky Hill, 25th August 1783*

But it was at commencement in September that Dr. Witherspoon's cup of pride was filled. On the platform in the church where the exercises were held sat the entire Congress, adjourned in special honor of the occasion, the executive officers of the government, the French Minister La Luzerne, and General Washington. Ashbel Green, who was valedictorian of the day, has recorded the President's evident satisfaction with the brilliance of the scene. That this commencement had very definite political significance was the firm belief of at least one person in the audience and probably of others. An English officer named Michaelis who had come from New York to what he called "the Princetown Athens" and was present at the exercises incognito, a few days later wrote out his impressions, which document reached Sir Guy Carleton and by him was transmitted to Lord North.<sup>10</sup>

After paragraphs on the unpopularity of Congress, and on General Washington, Michaelis sketches the influence of President Witherspoon:

An account of the present face of things in America would be very defective indeed, if no mention was made of this political firebrand, who perhaps had not a less share in the Revolution than Washington himself. He poisons the minds of his young Students and through them the Continent.

He is the intimate friend of the General; and had I no other arguments to support my ideas of Washington's designs, I think his intimacy with a man of so different a character with his own (for Washington's private one is perfectly amiable) would justify my suspicions.

<sup>10</sup>A copy is in the New York Public Library among the Bancroft Transcripts, Carleton Papers, America 1783, vol. II, p. 225, etc.

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The commencement was a favourable opportunity for conveying certain sentiments to the public at large (for even women were present). . . . This farce was evidently introductory of the drama that is to follow. The great maxim which this commencement was to establish was the following:—"A time may come in every Republic, *and that may be the case with America*, when anarchy makes it the duty of the man who has the majority of the people with him, to take the helm into his own hands, in order to save his country; and the person who opposes him deserves the utmost revenge of his nation, deserves—to be sent to Nova Scotia. Vox populi vox dei."

These were the very words of the Moderator who decided on the question,—was Brutus justifiable in killing Caesar? Or they thought us all who heard them blockheads, or they were not afraid of avowing their designs. This was plainer English still than the pactum confederationis of the Cincinnati. When the young man who with a great deal of passionate claquerie defended his favorite Brutus extolled the virtue of the man who could stab even his father when attempting the liberties of his country, I thought I saw Washington's face clouded; he did not dare to look the orator in the face who stood just before him, but with downcast look seemed wishing to hide the impression which a subject that touched him so near, had I thought very visibly made on his countenance. . . . The orations of the younger boys were full of the coarsest invectives against British tyranny. I will do Mr. Wetherspoon the justice to think he was not the author of them, for they were too poor indeed; besides they evidently conveyed different sentiments; there was one of them not unfavorable to liberal sentiments even towards Britons. But upon the whole it is but just to suppose that Wetherspoon had read them all.

The Minister of France was not present, though expected; but I have a right to think that *all* or almost all the members of Congress and all the Cincinnati in the neighborhood assisted at this entertainment. The Cincinnati sat together en corps.

Michaelis was one of those who saw in the unpopularity of Congress at this period unmistakable indications of the desire for a revolt against Congress and the formation of a new government of which Washington was to be the head. This was the alleged plan of the so-called "aristocratic junto" which was said to be broadly hinted at, if not openly discussed, in Princeton tap-rooms that summer. Michaelis claims that it was in a tavern that he heard the significant retort to the objection that Baltimore

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was too warm for the federal residence: "By the time it grows warm Congress will sit *nowhere*."

This revolution is near at hand, says he, but I do not venture to affirm that it will affect all America. There is an opposition to it in Congress: (a weak one I believe in number and power, tho' not in abilities, for I think Thomson is at the head of it) besides all the eastern provinces oppose it. The junto Washington, Wederspan [Witherspoon] Marbois, and the Cincinnati beside the clear majority of the people in Congress, and I am confident a majority of the people at large, will certainly carry the point.

Michaelis would have alleged further proof of a secret understanding between President Witherspoon and General Washington had he seen the minutes of the Board of Trustees of the College for that day and the next. It is somewhat remarkable that the Board at no time took official notice of the presence of Congress in Princeton; but on returning from the church after the conclusion of the commencement exercises, the trustees testified their respect for Washington in the following terms:

The board being desirous to give some testimony of their high respect for the character of his excellency general Washington, who has so auspiciously conducted the armies of America.

Resolved, that the Rev<sup>d</sup>-D<sup>rs</sup> Witherspoon, Rodgers & Jones, be a committee to wait upon his Excellency to request him to sit for his picture to be taken by Mr. Charles Wilson Peale of Philadelphia— And, ordered that his portrait, when finished be placed in the hall of the college in the room of the picture of the late king of Great Britain, which was torn away by a ball from the american artillery in the battle of Princeton.

Adjourned till to morrow morning 9 o'clock.

25<sup>th</sup> day; the board met accordingly to adjournment.

D<sup>r</sup> Witherspoon reported that his Excellency Gen<sup>l</sup> Washington had delivered to him fifty guineas which he begged the trustees to accept as a testimony of his respect for the college.

Resolved, that the board accept it; & that the same committee who were appointed to solicit his Excellency's picture, at the same time present to him the thanks of the board for this instance of his politeness & generosity.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, vol. 1, p. 236, September 24 and 25, 1783.

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A year later, the portrait, having been completed, was hung in the prayer hall in the old gilt frame which had held the unlucky likeness of George the Second. There it still hangs, Princeton's most valued and historic painting.<sup>12</sup>

At this commencement meeting of the board Dr. Witherspoon suggested that his proposal of 1779, giving half his salary to Dr. Smith, be made permanent, a suggestion which the board accepted "as an act of generosity toward this corporation." At this time also the report of a special committee on the finances of the institution showed that there was owing to the President the sum of eight hundred and eighty-one pounds, thirteen shillings and three pence.

Although Dr. Witherspoon had no open share in the proceedings of the Congress during its residence in Princeton, he had been too recent a member and was too deeply interested in the government he had helped to create not to have been consulted. We lack documentary evidence, however, save the curious fact that the official congratulatory address from Congress to General Washington extending to him the thanks of the nation for his part in the conduct of the war contains sentences unblushingly borrowed from Dr. Witherspoon's thanksgiving sermon of April. At "Tusculum" the Dutch Minister, Peter van Berckel, was entertained during his brief but exhilarating stay at Princeton in October, and it was Dr. Witherspoon who drew up for the board of trustees the congratulatory address to the Minister which, with the exception of the reference to Washington's gift and the Peale portrait, is the only allusion the College records contain to the presence of that summer's distinguished guests. The text reads:

May it please your Excellency—The Trustees of the college of New Jersey beg leave to congratulate your Excellency on your arrival in this country. The name by which the building is distinguished in which our institution is conducted, will sufficiently inform your Excellency of the attachment we have ever had to the States of the United Netherlands. And the friendship, countenance, & assistance,

<sup>12</sup> "Mr. C. W. Peale having executed a portrait of his Excellency Gen<sup>l</sup>. Washington, according to the order of the board—Ordered that it be hung up in the college Hall agreeably to a former resolution." (*Minutes*, vol. I, p. 245, September 29, 1784.)

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which we have received from Holland call upon us, in the most particular manner to express our gratitude to your constituents, by wishing you all happiness, comfort, & success in your present important mission.

Signed in the name & by order of the Board

JOHN WITHERSPOON, Presdt.

Octo. 22. 1783<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile Somerset County had elected Dr. Witherspoon to represent it in the State Assembly, an election which he accepted in the hope, so Ashbel Green says, of being able to secure State aid for the College. Before he could make any effort toward that worthy object, however, he found himself deputed with Mr. Thomas Henderson to prepare new legislation defining the grounds for divorce and conferring power on the judges of the state supreme court to grant divorce. More in keeping with his legislative experience was his appointment on a committee to prepare a bill for raising and appropriating revenue to pay interest on the national debt, in accordance with congressional recommendation of April. Finally in November he presented a memorial from the trustees of the College setting forth the damages it had sustained not only by injury to its buildings, and the destruction of its library and equipment, but also by the virtual annihilation of its funds, and praying the Legislature to take the College into consideration. No copy of this valuable document has come to light. On its second reading, a committee was appointed to prepare a bill to appropriate to the use of the College such funds as might be levied in the several county courts of the State for the term of two years. That this novel plan did not meet with altogether cordial reception may be inferred from its adoption by the vote of fourteen to thirteen. Evidently the State was not ready to assume the protection of the College. A bill was brought in, however, by Mr. Henderson, who was an alumnus, and was ordered a second reading which was heard on December 10 in Dr. Witherspoon's absence, when it was laid over until the next session and nothing further was done with it. Ill luck had also attended Dr. Witherspoon's effort to regulate divorce. He brought in a bill late in November but it was ordered filed, and

<sup>18</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees.

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although the question was raised again six years later, ten years were to elapse before the first New Jersey divorce law was adopted.

Dr. Witherspoon ceased to attend the Legislature on the last day of November. His service had been unexpectedly cut short, and on December 8 his letter of resignation was laid before the House announcing that he was about to sail for Europe. It has been seen how slow in results had been the effort of the board to rehabilitate the College. Money seemed almost impossible to obtain in America. British coin had built Nassau Hall and it was thought that, if properly approached, those in Great Britain who were charitably inclined toward education and the cause of religion, as well as those who had opposed the government's American policy, would be willing to come to the rescue of an institution whose British affiliations were so strong; and it had been resolved, therefore, to send a mission over to Europe to solicit benefactions. This ill-judged decision was reached against Dr. Witherspoon's approval. But he and General Joseph Reed of Pennsylvania, whose English wife and earlier London associations presumably should have made his way easier, were commissioned to undertake the trip.

Their commission, dated October 22, 1783, was as follows:

The Trustees of College of New Jersey in North-America To the Hon<sup>ble</sup> & Revd John Witherspoon, D.D., President of the said college, late member of the Hon<sup>ble</sup> Continental Congress, & representative in the General-Assembly of the said State

And to the Hon<sup>ble</sup> Joseph Reed Esq<sup>r</sup> late President & Commander in chief of the State of Pennsylvania, Adjutant General of the Army of the United States, a member of the Continental Congress, & one of the Trustees of the said college—

And to each & every of you—Greeting—

Whereas the college of New Jersey was founded by private liberality for the promotion of religion & learning, & had, by the blessing of Heaven, arisen to an eminent degree of reputation & usefulness before the late unhappy war; but being occupied as barracks by the contending armies, its library & philosophical apparatus destroyed, the funds for the support of professors & masters, in consequence of the ravages & events of war, sunk & almost annihilated, the very existence of this benevolent & useful institution is become doubtful, unless

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some certain & effectual relief can be obtained from the friends of virtue & literature, who have not been exposed to such dreadful calamities.

For these reasons, & confiding in your abilities, character & zeal for the said institution, we have authorized & appointed, & by these presents, do authorize & appoint you & each of you to receive from all public bodies & well disposed individuals, such benefactions as they may be pleased to make, for the purpose aforesaid; of which you will render to us a due & regular account—And we do hereby recommend you & each of you to the notice & favour of all generous friends of religion & learning, in every part of Europe which you may visit, for the benevolent purpose herein contained.

Given under the hand of his Excellency William Livingston Esq. Governour & Commander in chief of the said State of New-Jersey & president of our board of trustees, & under the corporate seal of the said College at Princeton the 22<sup>d</sup> day of October & in the year of our Lord one thousand, seven hundred & eighty-three.

Following the procedure of Samuel Davies and Gilbert Tenent in their memorably successful trip on a similar errand twenty-five years earlier, Dr. Witherspoon and General Reed drew up a memorial for general use which is said by Ashbel Green to have been a striking presentation of the condition and need of the College, but of which he neglected to see that a copy was preserved. They sailed from Philadelphia in December, 1783, and after a tempestuous voyage reached London at the end of January, 1784. The British government had been warned of their coming; the London papers announced their arrival; and the rumor got back to America that Dr. Witherspoon had been openly insulted in the streets of the city. But he told Dr. Green that he had never received a formal insult in London or elsewhere, although he had overheard a conversation at the London Coffee House one day in which he was being vituperated, but as he did not know whether the speaker intended his remarks to be heard or not he took no notice of the language. At London Dr. Witherspoon prepared his campaign of personal solicitation by writing to all his old friends, informing them of the object of his trip and seeking their advice as to its best accomplishment. If all the replies he received were of the same tenor with those which have survived he must have quickly realized that his fears as to the success of the mission

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were only too well grounded; for with but one exception the extant replies express wonder that such a mission should have been thought of at that time. His friends assured him that they would be personally glad to see him again, but none save a stranger gave him any hope of securing aid for the cause he represented. Dr. John Erskine wrote that all whom he had approached on the subject declared it "utterly imprudent" not to have consulted friends in Scotland before undertaking the mission. Dr. Rush had enquired six months before as to the advisability of seeking benefactions for his newly established Dickinson College, and had been told that he would not collect enough money to pay his passage. And he goes on to quote Witherspoon's old friend, Dr. Charles Nesbit, to whom he had written in regard to the present project. Nesbit doubted whether there was such a spirit of reconciliation with America as would give any encouragement to Dr. Witherspoon's business; it seemed a great abasement of the dignity of the United States to send a late member of Congress "a-begging in England for any purpose whatever," and Nesbit even raises the interesting question as to the legality of contribution to a foreign seminary of learning unless it were authorized by the Crown. At any rate, he suggested that Dr. Witherspoon be cautious when referring to his losses or to "the Gothic burning of his library." To Witherspoon himself Nesbit wrote in March when the President was contemplating a visit to Scotland. He called attention to the poverty of the country, the stagnation of trade, the rise in rents and taxes; hundreds were willing to emigrate; the court of landholders was doing all it could to prevent emigration; if Witherspoon came to Scotland he would receive innumerable applications from eager would-be emigrants; during the war Nesbit himself had been persecuted as a friend of America, but now he was beset by people who thought he had American connections and who wished to leave Scotland for the new country. In the same vein an old parishioner of Dr. Witherspoon's, after the most tender enquiry for the various members of his family, points out the utter unseasonableness of his visit; had he come to encourage emigration he would have received attentive hearing, but to come from plentiful America, the Mecca of poverty-stricken Scotland, to beg money seemed a reversal of things that

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was both curious and undignified. Dr. Snodgrass of Paisley wrote that the temper of the people was unfavorable for contributions to Witherspoon's object; and the friend of his youth, Miss Anna Hogg, in an otherwise charming letter had no more substantial encouragement to offer than a welcome back to Britain—where he would receive no heartier greeting nor find a sincerer friend than at her threshold.

It remained for a stranger, the Reverend Brian Bury Collins, an English clergyman at Bath, to sound the only hopeful note in the chorus of discouragement. He had never met Witherspoon, but had been converted by reading his writings; and he actually collected between fifty and sixty pounds for the President, in the face of great obstacles—"all the persons I have applied to," said he, in a puzzled way, "seem restrained from showing their usual kindness by prejudice or fear."

Dr. Witherspoon had hesitated to visit Scotland for fear of bodily harm, but Nesbit reassured him; beyond the importunity of prospective emigrants "I think I can be positive you will be in the most perfect safety from insult or ill manners." To Scotland, therefore, Dr. Witherspoon went, visiting Edinburgh, Glasgow, Paisley, Beith, and Greenock, but preaching only in his former parishes. At Paisley he occupied several times the pulpit of his friend, Dr. Snodgrass, drawing on each occasion large audiences.<sup>14</sup> He must have also visited Gifford where were the graves of his parents and where the scenes of his boyhood recollections lay, but we have none of his letters to America of this period. At Edinburgh he did not appear in any pulpit, although there are indications that several would have been open to him. His former rival Dr. Robertson, now His Majesty's historiographer for Scotland, was at the head of the University and, as government friends shaped public sentiment at the Scottish capital, it seemed unwise to court open antagonism. The Moderates still controlled the affairs of the Church, and although many of the participants in the fray of earlier days in which Dr. Witherspoon had taken part had passed away during the last eighteen years, nevertheless, as Dr. Ashbel Green phrases it, "there was still working a portion of the old leaven of ecclesiastical enmity quickened into

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Crichton, *Memorial of Findley*, Paisley, 1821.

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powerful action by strong political resentment." Dr. Witherspoon, therefore, so far as we know, neither asked nor obtained a single donation in Scotland. The visit was purely private and sentimental, and prudence hinted that it must be brief; he remained across the border only two weeks.

It was also evident by this time that he would have to look elsewhere than in Great Britain for the money he was to get and he, therefore, turned his attention to the Continent. Of Franklin and Jay, American commissioners at Paris, he enquired as to the possibility of securing subscriptions in France. Franklin sent back a cool reply utterly discouraging the plan and citing the failure of Dr. Eleazer Wheelock in his effort to secure donations for Dartmouth College the year before. Franklin's chief argument, however, was the one Dr. Witherspoon had heard touched upon by Nesbit—the revelation such a mission made of America's neglectful attitude toward educational affairs:

The very request would be disgraceful to us, and hurt the credit of responsibility we wish to maintain in Europe by representing the United States as too poor to provide for the education of their own children.

For my part, I am persuaded we are fully able to furnish our Colleges amply with every means of public instruction, and I cannot but wonder that our Legislatures have generally paid so little attention to a business of so great importance.<sup>15</sup>

Mr. Jay's reply was less judicial in tone but quite as definite in its deprecation of any plans like those Witherspoon was contemplating. The rank of the United States implied ability to provide for all the common objects of governmental interest, and among these he placed schools and colleges; they should be no longer regarded as private corporations; the government should extend to them its constant care; if the French court should take up the case of the College of New Jersey and make it the fashionable fad of the day, sufficient temporary interest might be awakened to secure some money, but the interest would be brief. As for books, Witherspoon might obtain a few, but as for apparatus the best was manufactured in England. However, if Witherspoon in-

<sup>15</sup>Franklin, *Works*. The original is in the Presbyterian Historical Society.

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sists on visiting Paris, Mr. Jay assures him a hearty personal welcome:

we have been fellow-laborers in the same field, and if you come we will rejoice together in celebrating harvest home.<sup>16</sup>

Whether Dr. Witherspoon crossed the Channel and joined Mr. Jay in a celebration or followed his whimsical suggestion and attempted to make the puritanical College of New Jersey an eighteenth century Parisian fad, we do not know. No record of his movements during the spring of 1784 has been found. But while in London at least he yielded to a London fad and took the opportunity—or was it a touch of vanity?—to sit to James Tassie, the popular Scottish cameo maker, at that time settled in the British capital; and he brought home with him two copies of the medallion likeness reproduced as the frontispiece of this book.<sup>17</sup>

Late in July, 1784, convinced of the futility of his errand and leaving the matter in the hands of friends (who never reported) he sailed once more from Greenock and on September 11, 1784, after a voyage of forty-five days reached New York harbor. When his accounts were examined by an expectant committee of the board of trustees a few days later they found a balance in favor of the College of exactly five pounds and fourteen shillings, and even this could not be called clear profit as the board had borrowed money to pay the President's passage. General Reed had met his own expenses; he was in bad health when he sailed from America and derived no benefit from the voyage; he seems to have been unable to do any work on arriving in England, and he returned to America to die a few months later. Dr. Witherspoon met with an accident on board ship which ultimately destroyed the sight of one eye; and the only pleasant feature of the unfortunate trip was the opportunity it afforded him of revisiting old haunts and of seeing old faces once more.

<sup>16</sup> *Writings*, ed. Johnston vol. III, p. 120, and *Life and Writings*, ed. William Jay, vol. II, 153.

<sup>17</sup> Tassie's cameos were not cut, but were modelled in a paste of which he alone had the secret. A collection of the moulds from which he produced his final works is in the National Portrait Gallery at Edinburgh, and his art was of sufficient importance to give him place in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

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The board at its meeting in September, 1784, heard "with extreme affliction," as well it might, the unsuccessful result of the European mission and determined to make one more application to the charity of the people of America "for whose general use," it declared, "the institution had been founded and to which it was still faithfully dedicated." It was proposed to memorialize all presbyteries in the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, asking that in whatever way they deemed best they would solicit the aid of the people under their respective charges, and agents were appointed to collect the monies thus obtained.<sup>18</sup> But the results were not encouraging, and although eventually enough funds were scraped together to pay the salary of a professor of mathematics, Dr. Witherspoon, like every other college president, never realized the dreams he cherished of seeing the institution he governed amply provided with funds, faculty, and facilities. To cap the climax of this unluckiest year in his life, Christmas Day brought him one of the saddest trials he had yet

<sup>18</sup> A note of desperation lurks in the terms of the memorial drawn up by Dr. Witherspoon and dated October 1, 1784:

"The memorial of the trustees of the college of New Jersey to the several Presbyteries composing the synod of New York and Philadelphia

Shewth

That, among the ruinous consequences of the late war is the depreciation of the continental money, & destruction of the college buildings, the funds & revenues under the care of your memorialists have been almost annihilated. That in order to reestablish these & repair their buildings & to carry on the designs of the institution, application hath been lately made to obtain assistance from the friends of literature in Europe; but, unhappily, your memorialists have from sundry unexpected causes, failed in their foreign sollicitation, & have not obtained even so much as to defray the expences of the undertaking—It is, therefore, become absolutely necessary to make a general application to the friends of religion & learning in the country, who wish success to an institution of such importance to our civil & religious interests—Your memorialists have in consequence deemed it a proper measure to apply themselves to the respective presbyteries belonging to the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, wishing to impress them with a lively persuasion of the necessity of a general exertion throughout all our churches for the support of this college under its present state of depression. Your memorialists must refer to your wisdom the methods most proper & prudent to be pursued in soliciting the aids of the people under your respective charges, & in making such personal, or public applications, throughout your several churches & districts, as shall be judged best & likely to be the most effectual.

By order of the board of Trustees

John Witherspoon President."

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been called upon to suffer—the death of his favorite daughter and youngest child, Frances, wife of Dr. David Ramsay of Charleston, South Carolina. President Witherspoon had ridden in that Sunday morning to preach in the college chapel, and had found a letter from Dr. Ramsay awaiting him; he read it silently at Vice-president Smith's house and, as he read, the tears rolled down his cheeks. Then he spoke quietly to those around him, remounted his horse, and slowly rode home to "Tusculum." Dr. Green says it was the only time that the President was known to break a preaching engagement. Mrs. Ramsay had been married but a year and had died five days after confinement. Dr. Green recollects that shortly after this bereavement Dr. Witherspoon preached a series of sixteen impressive sermons on submission, from the text found in Luke xxii, 42. None of these was preserved, but Green considered them the best series he ever heard and after forty years still remembered their general scope.<sup>19</sup>

The canvas of the congregations in the Synod having virtually failed, another special meeting of the board was called in August, 1785, to adopt measures for reimbursing those who had advanced funds to pay Dr. Witherspoon his arrears in salary, and to defray the expenses of his European trip; and fresh subscription papers were issued asking for contributions in cash, in public securities, or in annual interest thereon, the principal to be paid up in five years; and in the following month the board "pressed with the difficulties of supporting the necessary officers of the College" and considering that tuition and room rent had not been raised in any proportion to the increased cost of living, resolved to raise room rent to two pounds. Money was reached for in all directions, and came in dribblets. The Reverend William Tennent was appointed collector for Maryland only to return a year later empty-handed; one Stephen Cook was appointed collector in Bermuda and never reported. Under such conditions the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws which Yale College at the hands of President Stiles conferred on Dr. Witherspoon that September, returning the compliment Princeton had paid her the year before when the College of New Jersey exuberantly conferred two honorary degrees at once on Dr. Stiles, was an honor

<sup>19</sup> *Christian Advocate*, vol. II, p. 350.

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which Witherspoon would gladly have exchanged for the cash he needed so badly.

In April, 1786, it seemed likely that in the distribution of western lands Congress might be induced to make a grant to the College, and President Witherspoon, Dr. Rodgers and Dr. Beatty were appointed a committee to petition Congress to that effect when they thought it most prudent; but their petition was no more successful than its predecessor of eighteen years earlier, and the discouraging hand-to-mouth existence went on.

But the picture of those days of reconstruction has its pleasanter side. With the quick recovery in enrolment after the war, the normal life of the campus seems to have been easily resumed. As we have seen, Dr. Witherspoon had announced the re-establishment of all college laws and orders. This meant that the characteristic threads of Princeton campus life, unravelled and scattered by the war, would now be re-gathered; the undergraduate's resilient, carefree nature, unconcerned with the burden of responsibility resting on administrative shoulders, made him a willing cooperator; and it came to pass that, before long, the only reminders of the lost years were the proud scars borne by Nassau Hall and the hidden pinch of precarious finance suffered by the administration; the life of the place was completely restored.

Comparison of a letter of Samuel Beach in 1783 with one by Fithian thirteen years earlier shows a daily routine almost identical—rising bell at 5 a.m., chapel at 5:30, breakfast at 8, recitations from 9 to 1, dinner at 1, recitations again from 3 to 5, vespers at 5, supper at 6, and curfew at 9 p.m., when each student was expected to be in his quarters, a rule which even the village taprooms seem to have respected—at least, couplets scribbled by Philip Freneau in his copy of Horace testify regretfully to its observance by Mr. Enos Kelsey, local merchant and tavern-keeper:

Then what my thoughts design to do,  
My hands with all your might pursue,  
Since Kelsey neither Rum nor Wine will sell  
When once they've rung the ev'ning bell!

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Before Dr. Witherspoon's coming to Princeton, campus life had gone far in the process of making; it had been organized by President Burr when the College removed from Newark and occupied its first buildings at Princeton; and during Dr. Witherspoon's long term of office it was wisely fostered and strengthened until it became moulded in the lines it was to follow, and acquired a quality and color it has never lost.

In most respects, life in Nassau Hall after the Revolution still retained its earlier simplicity and almost monastic austerity. There is evidence, however, that undergraduates, as a result of the spirit of the times, took unto themselves more liberties than formerly. Dr. Green says that this was especially noticeable after the French Revolution, when discipline became still harder to maintain. For one thing, more time seems to have been given to exercise, or at least there is more frequent mention of it. "Baste ball" and "prison baste" were played on the campus, shuttle cock in the prayer-hall, hooprolling in the basement. Stony Brook afforded skating in winter and in the hot summer term gave sweltering undergraduates their only chance for bathing. But the attitude of the authorities toward sports in general was expressed in an edict of 1787 forbidding shinny—"a play at present much practised by the small boys, among the students, and by the grammar scholars with balls and sticks;" it was "low and unbecoming to gentlemen and scholars," besides being attended with danger from "sudden and alternate heats and colds," not to mention "disfiguring and maiming."

College law required that gowns be worn at all academic exercises such as chapel and recitations, thus reducing the undergraduate body, rich and poor alike, to a common external standard. For appearances on the rostrum of the prayer-hall, or of the societies, elaborate dressing seems to have been the rule, but the ordinary informal garment of the campus was a dressing-gown whose weight and texture varied with the seasons, thin flowered calico or cotton being worn in summer and heavily padded cloth in winter.

When a boy entered the grammar school in Nassau Hall, he came immediately under the strictest sort of system. At the back of the Latin grammar which he used he found a set of rules of

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conduct which, with the code of college laws, governed his daily life. If very young he roomed and boarded in approved lodgings in the village, where he received better personal care than in the less domestic precincts of Nassau Hall, and he was excused from the chief bane of undergraduate existence, morning chapel. But if he roomed in college, he was subject to all college regulations, eating his frugal meals in the refectory at a special table, attending chapel regularly, and seeking his recreation on the campus. The only known account of the grammar scholar's life is to be found in the autobiography of Dr. Joseph Caldwell. There are no records of the school in the University archives; its graduation exercises, however, were reported in the newspapers with the college commencements to which they formed the preliminaries, and at least two grammar school valedictories have been preserved. Graduation from the school constituted entrance into the freshman class of the College and Dr. Witherspoon asked entering students from other schools to come up for examination at the grammar school commencements. Entrance into higher classes lacked uniformity of method. John Leake of 1776 wrote to his guardian that he and they who were examined with him received admission into the junior class, but were afterwards told that they should have been examined in Roman Antiquities "if it had not been forgotten."

Aside from his studies, the Princeton undergraduate of that day found his life controlled by four leading factors, three of which were also unfailing points of controversy—compulsory chapel, which he had to attend twice a day, compulsory commons, where he ate if he ate at all—unless surreptitious meals at the taverns be counted—proctorial oversight by tutors who policed him all day and even dropped in on him after he was safely in his room at night, and finally the life of the two literary societies, of one of which he was inevitably a member. He found relief for his animal spirits in spasmodic exercise, in constant practical joking, and in breaking the rules as often as he dared and could escape detection.

Compulsory chapel was as old an institution as the College itself, appearing in the original set of laws. Its value from a religious point of view was negligible, but its value as a discipline

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was indubitable. The author of the anonymous *Journal of Nassau Hall*,<sup>20</sup> like the majority of his fellows, was a young gentleman to whom this ancient rule of worship was usually irksome and never a joy; but without it he would seldom have got out of bed before noon. His nearest approach to satisfaction with chapel was expressed one spring morning in a note to the effect that it was "a sweet day indeed—do not shiver in the Hall at Prayers as formerly." Invariably he lay abed until the last moment, reaching his bench in the dark unheated prayer-hall half dressed and more than half asleep. "Lie till the second bell," he writes one day, "return from Hall half asleep and am not able to keep awake to study." Another winter morning "do not wake till [roused] by the noise of students running thro' the entry—spring up; half give over dressing soon enough to get there, however persist, & have just time enough." And once more:

Hear the knocking in the morn̄s but get asleep again, waked by the 2d bell, scramble up in the dark, James [his roommate] dont attempt to get up & dress [though] time enough, but I resolve not to miss prayers & huddle on my cloathes any how & push into Hall all open & unbuttoned, tho by far the coldest morning of the season and escape being tardy.

Philip Fithian, more piously inclined, found no objection to the discipline he faced and after his first week in college assured his parents that the rules were "exceedingly well formed to check & restrain the vicious & to assist the studious, & to countenance & incourage the virtuous." He even admitted that, "through divine goodness," he was very well and "more reconciled to rising in the Morning so early, than at first."<sup>21</sup>

Although he did but little studying, the diariest of 1786 carefully obeyed the schedule of study hours during which a tutor made frequent rounds; but he was always one of the first to welcome the bell releasing him from his imprisonment in Nassau Hall. His time was frittered away with friends as little studious as he, and when examinations loomed perilously near he was wont to reproach himself bitterly for his lack of concentration.

<sup>20</sup>Library of Congress.

<sup>21</sup>*Journal and Letters*, p. 7.

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Dr. Witherspoon was a pitiless examiner: "Our Quarterly Examination," said a boy in 1774, "was about two weeks ago, when the Doctor not only used me ill, but near 15 more clever fellows, which we in no wise deserved." And in 1786 the ordeal was just as fearsome: "Find it necessary to employ every moment," wrote the diarist, "and lament that I did not begin to review sooner—think the time lost in going to meals & prayers—study very hard." The next morning he arises "after 4 hours sleep, feel examinations very near—fall to strenuously . . . near 10 o'clock take my clothes out to dress—but suddenly shocked with the bell—begin to tremble." The bell proving to be a false alarm, "return to room and have time to dress myself before 10 o'clock. At that time We march in like so many criminals, Faculty take their Seats formally & we extend in a great circle round the room, 26 of us."

Before the Revolution, final examinations—at least of the senior class—began at a much earlier hour, those of 1773 being set for seven o'clock in the morning, to which a formal invitation to the public was issued by the clerk of the board of trustees. Examinations took place in the college library room and the final examination of the junior class, with which the *Journal* closes, had a touch of ceremoniousness all its own. The class acquitted itself brilliantly:

After withdrawing we returned & rec<sup>d</sup> our Sentences from the old Dr. [Witherspoon]. No distinctions could well be made—but the whole class prettily complimented—& the Dr. reminding us of what was incumbent on us being promoted to the Senior Class, dismissed us with his good wishes & still better advice.

✓ The dormitory floors of Nassau Hall were admirably adapted to the frequent visiting from room to room and the consequent inevitable loafing without which no ordinary evening seemed to be complete, according to the record of the *Journal*:

Come to my Room positively to do something clever either to study some of props [propositions of Euclid] write part of my Religion [a Sunday required composition] or write &c—but spend the whole time till the Bell without doing a single thing but joining in a foolish lot-

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tery for Breast pins & broaches in which I lost 3/5. . . . I go into Abiel's room, find a number of Lads collected & a blessed scene. . . . after supper invited to drink coffee with Read—also to eat oysters with Graham &c by Abiel—decline—both Lads in room prevent me studying—lose 1/1 more by the bad lottery.

Likewise, on evenings when the resident tutor was known to be out, the long and unlighted corridors or "entries" that ran through the building gave every opportunity and incentive to disorder:

Meet a lad in the entry this evening—seizes me—I lay hold of him and he runs, afterwards have a chase after him upstairs in the dark, but do not find out who he is. . . . Go to Brown's Room to hear Bob Hughes play his violin, the Room full as usual, Whigs & Clios promiscuously—after that go to the upper entry with Ab. Woodruff, find Bob there who draws over a negro with a violin also—the fellow playing very well & Reed & myself have glorious exercise dancing up & down the entry & joining in the noise & confusion of 20 students hallowing & tearing about. GILBERT NOT IN COLLEGE. Come down at 8—reading part of my lesson, go to bed 10 Clock.

The gentleman in capitals was the resident tutor, Gilbert Ten-  
nent Snowden, who was fond of village society and was frequently absent from the building where his proctorial duties lay.

Students were always ready to supplement the fare offered in the college dining hall, although that fare was not without its surprises:

Chocolate Tea & bread & butter for supper tonight for a wonder but not to be continued for it was only because they could not give us Mush conveniently.

A year or two before, a student had complained

I believe in my soul they will turn me into a line of veal, or a chocolate cake, for we have had nothing else scarcely since I have been here.

Proper formalities laid down by college law were supposed to govern conduct in the dining hall, but if no tutor were present the customary conventions were lost in the riot that prevailed:

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Furman & I run as hard as we can drive to get to dinner & arrive just time enough—Gilbert said to be gone a-riding & the lads rush in & seize everything—while in confusion, Gilbert comes & going round to see who had taken butter &c on their plates, he orders those out. . . .

Just get down before dinner—no Tutor comes & we rush in as if storming the Room I am pitched over & 1 or 2 over me. . . . Pot Pie for dinner & by the time I get to it all is swept off, some of the lads seizing near  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the whole that they may not miss taking enough.

In those lean years the college appleman was a ministering angel, especially when he added a basket of eggs to the legitimate wares he brought to Nassau Hall, and initiated his purchasers into the mysteries of egg-nogg—“for tis a glorious Liquor, he says,” adds the diarist. Many a joyous evening, however, was staged far less insidiously; indeed the rarity of references to drinking is one of the characteristics of this remarkably frank diary; coffee was the favorite undergraduate beverage and tea a distinct luxury. The most hilarious party described was keyed up by nothing more dangerous than coffee and toast:

about 9 sit down to 2 good potts of it & a fine plate of toast & the worst was that there were too many to divide it among; however have pretty near 3 dishes a piece if we had had dishes to drink it from—all [in] good humour & all join in singing several good songs both before & after supper—knowing Gilbert was out of College—come down to our Room at  $\frac{1}{2}$  after 12.

With the Revolution a new holiday appeared on the calendar, and in the *Journal* the national festival receives the honor of a full page with a much decorated heading. It is a fair record of the manner in which the Fourth of July was celebrated in President Witherspoon's time:<sup>22</sup>

How are the mighty fallen! This day for 3 or 4 years past has been celebrated with the greatest elegance & festivity. Literary as well as many other entertainments—the day entirely devoted to relaxation & pleasure—Professors, tutors, students partaking in common of a most elegant dinner previously provided—But this year the latter

<sup>22</sup> The *Pennsylvania Packet* for July 11, 1787, contains the account of the celebration at Princeton in that year with an almost identical program, so far as the formal exercises were concerned. The college participation dated from the summer of 1783.

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part of the celebration was knocked in the head—the Faculty having determined it *big treason* for any students to breakfast, dine or sup out of the Stewards Hall who was anyhow within reach of it—This by the by the Steward would willingly have dispensed with. For it is very currently reported & as generally believed that his feelings were much hurt, his conscience much strained and his Purse much impaired by the Punch, ham & green peas which (*mirabile dictu*) were had on this membl<sup>e</sup> day—The orations deliv<sup>d</sup> in the morn<sup>g</sup> by S. Snowden & Ed Graham were very well spoken & in all other respects well conducted, —a good audience—polite & attentive—the speakers complimented by Dr. Smith—In the afternoon partake with 3 or 4 select students of a nicely elegant repast, fruit, preserves, punch, &c. At 5 o'clock 6 other orations were deliv<sup>d</sup> by Students 3 from each Society & concluded with 2 very humorous ones which terminated the Literary exercises of y<sup>e</sup> Day—The Day was ushered out by the discharge of 13 rounds from a cannon in the campus which seemed to defuse more gen<sup>l</sup> satisfaction than had been felt before.

No occasion was suffered to pass without appropriate oratory, and few without music—indeed, music instrumental and vocal seems to have been a feature of life in Nassau Hall. Moreover, however formal the exercises, the collegian's unfailing sense of humor was always keenly on the alert and never failed to make the most of its slender opportunities. A passage from the letter of a sixteen year old Sophomore of 1785 to his mother, describing the college Christmas celebration that winter, affords an illustration:

We had a very agreeable Christmas, the Senior Class spoke orations of their own Composing and we had a numerous Assembly, but I fancy their pieces rather solemn to gratify the ladies' expectations; we had musick also but it was only a hand organ, and whenever the Steward (who is a very corpulent man, and has a remarkable large head) reached over the Gallery to play, he created a laughter and especially as he went more like the bagpipes than anything else.<sup>23</sup>

Evidently the organ which had been eviscerated by the British during their occupancy of the building had been replaced by some sort of instrument, which, however inadequate musically,

<sup>23</sup> *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, December 22, 1915.

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at least gave the overworked steward an additional task in life and added materially to the joy of undergraduate existence.

The paternalism of Dr. Witherspoon's government of the College is apparent on perusal of the first minute book of the faculty. It dates from November, 1787, when the faculty consisted of the President, two professors and a couple of tutors. The faculty seldom met save to take disciplinary measures—there are but half a dozen exceptions in seven years—and the record is therefore a mirror of contemporary academic penology. The gradations in punishments were finely drawn and sometimes odd; insolence to tutors was punished by admonition before the entire College; disorder or absence from chapel or classroom, by suspension and sentence to coventry; swearing, and abusing a fellow student, by apology and asking pardon of the faculty; visiting a house of ill-fame was punished by "serious" admonition; but the heinous crimes of refusing to open a door when commanded, or to appear before the faculty when called, met with summary expulsion.

Procedure in cases of discipline was formal, the defendants being served with written charges and a list of witnesses. If at the trial the culprits confessed, the findings of the faculty were read at evening chapel, not infrequently concluding with some such phrase as "it is their confession which has prevented any very pointed or severe punishment." A group of students, after eating and drinking to excess in a tavern, tethered a calf in the prayer-hall pulpit and "also overset the college necessary;" they were cited to appear for trial, with the result that the leaders were ordered to leave college instantly; others pleading not guilty were likewise expelled without ado; but the rest, having confessed, were admonished, and soon after even those who had been expelled were allowed to return on confession and apology. An "improper" use of a sword cane—a weapon which seems to have succeeded the dress sword—having been made in a personal encounter between two undergraduates, there resulted private admonition for both, and the adoption of a new rule by the faculty:

Whereas disorders have arisen in college by some of the students making an improper use of swords and pistols, the Faculty unanimously ordain that in future no student shall be permitted to use any such in-

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struments, under pain of high censure or expulsion as to the Faculty shall seem proper.

On another occasion the faculty met to investigate a rumor that several students had played cards on the Sabbath. The investigation resulted in public confession at evening prayers, the "more guilty" from the rostrum, the others from their seats; and all were ordered to return their winnings. The minutes fail to explain whether or not the size of the winnings was the criterion of the degree of guilt.

The part that oratory played in the daily life of the College was preponderant; orations were delivered in the prayer-hall every afternoon after vespers, and when the better speakers in college were scheduled even the careless author of the *Journal* came in to listen. In due time his own turn arrived; he waited impatiently until nearly five o'clock for the college barber to come and dress his hair, with its ear-curls and its ribboned queue—

at last obliged to run out of College to his house, return just time enough before the bell, not so much perturbed as I expected, go into the Hall, Green prays, after I mount first & but once prompted, after [me] Pollock a good deal prompted, and after him Jas. Read who misses so much is obliged at last to make his bow & come off the Stage without going thro' with it.<sup>24</sup>

The constant stream of oratory was varied now and again by dramatics. For, however much Dr. Witherspoon in theory may have objected to the stage, there is ample evidence that he permitted the production of plays in the prayer-hall. At Commencement in 1772 the boys of the grammar school acted a Latin play which perhaps had academic excuse; but some years later the prayer-hall saw the Reverend John Home's tragedy *Ormisanda and Alonzo* handsomely produced—"our dress was silk and elegant and every circumstance to render it noble was strictly adhered to," says the undergraduate chronicler; "it was so affecting that it caused tears to flow from many." Dr. Witherspoon was away in Congress at this time, but he must have known of the

<sup>24</sup> James Read's misadventure was identical with the one that happened to a classmate of Philip Freneau and was gleefully celebrated by the latter in his *Distress Orator*.

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production of this play by the author of *Douglas*. In 1782 Nathaniel Lee's *Rival Queens* was given, followed by Fielding's version of Molière's *Médecin Malgré Lui*, young Ashbel Green, the future divine, scoring, as Alexander the Great in the *Rival Queens*, a hit that was the talk of the campus for months.<sup>25</sup>

Besides these reliefs to monotony and the customary Fourth of July celebration, unexpected incidents such as the visit of the Continental Congress to Princeton, or the news of the founding of the French Republic added their measure of welcome variety. The news from France was celebrated at Princeton in January, 1793, with a public dinner at the tavern, but the account of the proceedings contains only a list of the toasts which included, besides those to the new Republic, the United States, the State of New Jersey, and the College, one to Lafayette, one to Poland, one to the Colonies of South America, and one to "a millenium of universal liberty, peace, and virtue." No reference is made to any especial academic function. The celebration on July 14 of the same year had, however, a distinctly collegiate note, for the campus republicans marked the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille by a brilliant ball in one of the taverns, where French and American flags, liberty caps, and cockades of the national colors figured prominently among the decorations, and the "Marseillaise" was the only song sung during the supper—a supper at which one toast, "a very patriotic one but I do not remember the words," sent the company into ecstasy,—“Good Heavens how it was clapped, I thought the room would have come down with the stamping,” writes the young lady whose letter has recorded the affair. Nassau Hall was handsomely illuminated with clusters of lights in each window with "a fine transparency of the American and French colours in the form of arms" over the main entrance, and in front of the door a large tree of liberty around which the French gentlemen stood "singing the Marseilles Hymn with great enthusiasm" amid the crackle and glare of fireworks and rockets.<sup>26</sup> What the January civic dinner lacked in gaiety was more than supplied by the abandon of the July celebration. Citi-

<sup>25</sup> An account of Eighteenth Century Dramatics at Princeton may be found in the *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, December 6, 1916.

<sup>26</sup> *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, November 3, 1915.

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zen Genet had reached this country, and college republicanism was bent on making itself conspicuous, without pondering too deeply the awkward problem of neutrality confronting the national government.

It will be gathered that the social graces were not neglected by these undergraduates, although such waste of academic time was not universally approved. In spite of faculty protest, dancing and fencing masters maintained in the village well attended classes for students. "We have a dancing master in town and a fencing master," wrote Zadoc Squire in 1783 to his friend John Croes, the future bishop of New Jersey, "and I do not know what other animals, but I believe it would be better for us if these frenchmen were all where they came from; for a republic cannot subsist by such useless accomplishments; it must subsist only by simplicity and frugality." And Dr. Witherspoon's trustees seemed to agree with this solemn young philosopher, if not as to the proper disposal of French visitors, at least as to the value of their instruction, for an edict was issued in September in the following terms:

It being represented, that permitting the students to attend a dancing school in the town is useless to them in point of manners, they being generally past that period of youth in which the manners are formed & it being represented that their attendance in such school involves them immediately, or by consequence in considerable expences, to the injury & ill report of the college, & it being held in a tavern & often late at night, circumstances unfriendly to the order of good government of the institution—it was unanimously resolved, that from henceforth the students shall not be permitted to attend a dancing school, during the sessions of the college, under any pretense whatever.

However lightly the eighteenth-century Princetonian took his academic work he was almost sure to fulfil scrupulously his duty to his Society. As the Well Meaning and the Plain Dealing clubs, the two societies had been suppressed by the faculty just before Witherspoon's coming, because of the bitterness of their rivalry. It was not merely to satisfy undergraduate whim that the new President permitted their reorganization with more imposing names—the Cliosophic Society and the American Whig Society. Their value was too obvious not only as safety valves for under-

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graduate energy but also as adjuncts to the curriculum which he intended to emphasize. He must have sensed here the possibility of moulding and developing a latent power, and if the opinion of the Princeton makers of America like Madison, Ellsworth, Paterson, and their fellow Nassovians, could have been recorded, there is little doubt that among the strongest influences these men carried from Princeton, next to the personal influence of Witherspoon himself, they would have placed that of the two Societies. President Witherspoon dignified them, gave them headquarters in Nassau Hall, and official recognition on public occasions such as Commencement and the Fourth of July. Their importance in organizing campus life is a striking feature in every allusion to them in eighteenth-century Princeton documents. They formed the backbone of that life; they were the centre of college loyalties, the promoters of college friendships; even their "paper wars"<sup>27</sup> and wordy wrangles over foolish trivialities had their part in giving life at Princeton its distinctiveness. Under Witherspoon they became serious organizations, almost as serious as they were in the next century when they had made history, had built their own halls, and had gathered traditions unto themselves. They were the unique feature of life at Princeton, constituting an activity in which even academic loafers really worked, compelled by the force of campus opinion. Their influence was not merely formal, nor confined to style and manner of literary effort. Here, beside the production of poems, essays, and orations and the satisfaction of the personal partisanship of the campus, the deeper feeling of the 1760's that had seen the end of the French and Indian War and had led collegiate political temper to stage at commencement *The Military Glory of Great Britain*, now was turned to the local questions which had grown into national problems; here were discussed the proud ideas of young America which in 1772 found partial expression in Freneau's and Brackenridge's commencement poem on *The Ris-*

<sup>27</sup> This was the name given to the practice of posting on the walls of Nassau Hall anonymous attacks and equally scurrilous replies. "The two societies have been quarreling with each other so warmly," writes Ashbel Green in the summer of 1782, "that Mr. Smith (Professor S. S. Smith) interposed and put an end to the contention, not, however, till about twenty pieces were written." Specimens are still extant.

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*ing Glory of America*, and in the ultra-patriotic orations of successive commencement platforms. In the rooms of the Cliosophic and Whig societies on the top floor of Nassau Hall, eighteenth-century Princetonians practised not only the formal side of the art of written and spoken expression on which the President lectured in the classrooms downstairs, but thrashed out with probably more earnestness than formality the new politics of the day and spun their shining dreams of the future. Here Philip Freneau—and how many others we do not know—advocated independence of the Colonies long before it became a public matter; here was shaped the spirit that in 1770 burned the New York letter breaking the non-importation agreement, that later decided to wear no other than American cloth at commencement, and that burned the college tea in 1774. It cannot be questioned that the training afforded by the weekly sessions of the Societies contributed largely to the impression made by Princeton undergraduate oratory and conduct on the American public of the eighteenth century. In purely educational lines Dr. Witherspoon may have exerted a more evident influence; but in no way did he better foster the spirit of the new nationalism than in the open support he gave to Princeton's two historic literary societies.

While his undergraduates were thus continuing the cheerful tenor of their way, the last great achievement of Dr. Witherspoon's life was looming up over the struggle and routine of his presidential duties. One of his three great rôles, that of the constructive statesman, was virtually completed; the second, that of the educator, ended only with his death; the third, that of the ecclesiastic, was now to reach its crowning point. He had been far too busy to be able to devote much time to the Presbytery of New Brunswick to which he belonged; indeed the records of the Presbytery show that he seldom attended its deliberations save when he had some special business to put through, or when it met at Princeton. He was absent from fifty-two of the eighty-eight stated meetings held by the Presbytery during his membership. But his attendance at the Synod was somewhat more regular and his presence was usually marked by his appointment to important tasks. The most important was the one assigned to

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him shortly after the end of the war. Dr. John DeWitt, of Princeton Theological Seminary, has pointed out the elements making for the spirit of union in the Presbyterian Church in America at this time and aiding to eliminate the provincialism that marked it when Dr. Witherspoon first landed in America. To the President was to fall the task of guiding, in the work of reorganizing the Church on national lines, the ready hands he at last found about him. The actual work began at the meeting of the Synod in 1785 when he was appointed chairman of a special committee to consider the constitution of the Church of Scotland and other Protestant churches and, agreeably to the procedure for presbyterian government, to compile a system of general rules for the government of the Synod, the presbyteries under its inspection, and the people in its communion, and to report at the next meeting of the Synod. It being clear that the Church had outgrown its colonial organization, a further step in the direction of reorganization was taken when Dr. Witherspoon proposed at this meeting of 1785 an overture looking toward the breaking up of the Synod into three or more, and erecting a General Assembly of delegates from each. This overture was made the order of business for the 1786 meeting, when a committee was appointed which drew plans increasing the number of presbyteries from twelve to sixteen, grouping them into four Synods with provision as to the number of ministers and ruling elders each presbytery was to send to the proposed Assembly. Three hundred copies of the plan were ordered printed and distributed among the presbyteries for discussion. A committee of which Dr. Witherspoon was also chairman was appointed to prepare a book of discipline and government. At the 1787 meeting of the Synod Dr. Witherspoon resigned the treasurership as it was deemed more convenient to have the treasurer resident of the place where the Synod met. His plan of government was reported and discussed, the criticisms of the single presbytery that had any comments to offer were considered, and after debate and amendment the plan was ordered to be printed in an edition of 1000 copies for further distribution and discussion. In the following year, 1788, after several days of debate the whole plan, with the confession of faith, the two catechisms, the directory for worship, and the form

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of government and discipline, was adopted and it was resolved that the first meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America be held on the third Tuesday of May, 1789, in the Second Church at Philadelphia, Dr. Witherspoon to preach the opening sermon and to preside until a moderator should be elected. The selection of the radical New Side Second Church as the first meeting place of the Assembly instead of the conservative Old Side First Church, was indicative of the new spirit of harmony. Noting the debates that led to this historic conclusion one cannot help remembering that the Constitution of the United States was under discussion at the same time, and that the new organization of one branch of the Christian Church in America was (to borrow the phrase of one of its historians) but the "fruit of the same great national impulse of the time to give the social life its complete expression by a policy of national dimension and spirit."<sup>28</sup>

Manassah Cutler has left a portrait of the President at this time. He met him at Dr. Rodgers' house in New York City in the summer of 1787 and heard him preach in Dr. Rodgers' church:

He is an intolerably homely old Scotchman, and speaks the true dialect of his country except that his brogue borders on the Irish. He is a bad speaker, has no oratory, and had no notes before him. His subject was "Hypocrisy." But, notwithstanding the dryness of the subject, the badness of his delivery, which required the closest attention to understand him, yet the correctness of his style, the arrangement of his matter, and the many new ideas that he suggested rendered his sermon very entertaining. The attention of the congregation strongly marked their regard for good sense and clear reasoning, rather than the mere show at oratory and declamation.<sup>29</sup>

This description of Dr. Witherspoon's personal appearance tallies with the Trotter engraving of 1785, which without question is an intolerably homely picture, and which it is claimed was drawn from life. It flatly contradicts the Tassie cameo of 1784 which we know was modelled from life and resembles the Peale portrait.

<sup>28</sup>R. E. Thompson, *History of the Presbyterian Church in America*, p. 67.

<sup>29</sup>W. P. Cutler, *Life of Manassah Cutler*, vol. I, p. 236.

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Possibly the cameo and the painting flatter their subject; but the engraving is almost a caricature.

The meeting of the first General Assembly in May, 1789, was the climax of Dr. Witherspoon's ecclesiastical career. As moderator he presided and opened the session with a sermon on I Corinthians iii, 7, the same sermon that he had delivered twenty years before, when he occupied for the first time his Princeton pulpit. What changes he made in its contents we do not know as the printed version is the earlier one; but it was characteristic of the man that, on this crowning occasion of his life—for one must believe that he so considered it—he should have chosen a sermon whose keynote was humility. For himself, if he looked back over his varied labors of the past twenty years he might justly have claimed some satisfaction. Surely he must have known, if he ever allowed himself the thought, that although others might be more accomplished or more brilliant, he was by his very office that morning the most distinguished Presbyterian minister in America and his influence in the councils of the Church correspondingly greater than that of any other minister in it. Dr. Ashbel Green is authority for the statement that most of the published acts of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia had been from Witherspoon's pen, and that in framing the constitution of the Church his opinions were all but dominant. He had suggested the publication of the principles of the Synod in forming that constitution and the draft he brought in was adopted with scarcely an alteration, if we may believe Dr. Green, who was present. Benjamin Rush's unpresbyterian dream had come true. Dr. Witherspoon had become the veritable "bishop of the churches."

When the Assembly voted at the meeting of 1789 to present an address to President Washington, Dr. Witherspoon was the logical chairman of the committee in charge and author of the document it prepared;<sup>30</sup> when the Assembly resolved to publish selections from its minutes, he was appointed chairman of the committee to make the selection and print five hundred copies of it; and when it was agreed to commission Isaac Collins, the

<sup>30</sup> Text in *Minutes of the General Assembly*, Philadelphia (1842), pp. 11-12. Washington's reply is in the *Minutes*, p. 24, and also in his *Writings*, Sparks edition, XII, 152.

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Trenton printer, to issue an edition of the Holy Bible, not only was Dr. Witherspoon placed on the committee to act with similar committees from other denominations or synods to choose the text and to correct the proof, but the preface which takes the place of the "Dedication to King James" in the English bibles was prepared by him, being "a short account of the translations of the Old and New Testaments from the original Hebrew and Greek in which they were written." The edition appeared in 1791 and the preface is Dr. Witherspoon's last piece of published writing on non-secular subjects.

The efforts of the board of trustees of the College to put the institution back on its feet were still meeting but meagre results. In 1786 a sensible and long needed step toward method was taken when a standing committee was appointed to assume general charge of the corporation's finances. It was furthermore ordered for the first time that all monies whatsoever paid to the College should be turned in to the treasurer and that henceforth he should disburse only on order of the board. Treasurers had found their task anything but easy. When Professor Smith was appointed Vice-President in 1786 and therefore resigned the treasurership he had held only six months, he was out of pocket over three hundred pounds. This was nothing new, and the deficit was made good, but the trustees found great difficulty in finding his successor. Dr. John Beatty, the eminent surgeon, who was finally prevailed upon to accept the office conducted matters so well, and subscriptions came in so opportunely, that at the end of the following year he was able to report a deficit of only eleven pounds. This improvement and the steady growth of the enrolment emboldened the board to fill the chairs of mathematics and natural philosophy left vacant by the resignation of young Ashbel Green, and to call to the professorship the first incumbent of any chair at Princeton, save that of divinity, who was by his previous training especially prepared for his task. Even Dr. Smith who was elected in 1779 to the chair of moral philosophy cannot be said to have had any particular training in his subject save as a teacher since graduation, and as an ordained minister. The new member of the faculty was Walter Minto. The board's reso-

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lution of September 26, 1787, in connection with his election is interesting:

The board considering the importance to the interest & reputation of the institution of perfecting the course of mathematical & philosophical science—Resolved that this board will establish a professorship of Mathematical & Natural Philosophy in the faculty of the College, & that its appointment at present, till the funds of the College may enable the board to make a more liberal provision, shall be two hundred pounds current money of New Jersey per annum.

Dr. Minto was then elected by ballot, with the further proviso that, if he would reside in Nassau Hall and perform certain procedural duties, his room and board should be free.<sup>31</sup>

The Federal Convention had by this time completed its labors and the Constitution of the United States was awaiting ratification by the individual States. Somerset County, New Jersey,

<sup>31</sup> Born in Scotland in 1753, Dr. Minto had been educated at Edinburgh University and on graduation had devoted himself to literature. As tutor in the family of the Hon. George Johnstone, who during the American Revolution achieved notoriety by attempting to bribe General Joseph Reed, Minto had visited the Continent and during a residence at Pisa had become intimately associated with Professor Slop, the astronomer at the University, who seems to have turned the young man's serious attention to science. On his return to Edinburgh he taught mathematics, corresponded with scientific men, and published several minor writings on astronomical subjects, some of these appearing in the publications of the Royal Society. Aberdeen conferred on him the honorary degree of LL.D. His most important work was published jointly with the Earl of Buchan, being an *Account of the Life, Writings, and Inventions of John Napier of Merchiston*, which appeared the year of its author's appointment at Princeton. In 1786 he had come to America and had accepted the headship of Erasmus Hall, an Academy at Flatbush, Long Island. The Pennsylvania Historical Society owns a letter from President Witherspoon to the Earl of Buchan written soon after Professor Minto's transfer to Princeton, expressing the satisfaction he was giving in every respect, "so that we look upon him as a great Acquisition to our Seminary & to America." At the time of his death he had several mathematical treatises ready for the press with the plates engraved, but his death halted their publication. These manuscripts were still in existence in 1850, but are now lost. His Princeton inaugural address *On the Progress and Importance of the Mathematical Sciences*, was published at Trenton in 1788. One of the two Princeton copies of his *Researches into some Parts of the Theory of Planets*, published at London in 1783, was a presentation copy to Benjamin Franklin. Dr. Minto is said to have been one of the most distinguished younger mathematicians of his time. The *Princeton Magazine* (1850 pp. 38-47) contains an extended sketch of him. An unflattering portrait of him is in the University's collection.

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sent to Trenton, as its representatives at the state ratification convention held in December, 1787, three of the men who had helped to depose Governor Franklin in 1776, Colonel Frederick Frelinghuysen, Dr. Jacob Hardenburgh and Dr. Witherspoon; and the latter was also a member of the committee finally elected to draw up the form of ratification.

The financial condition of the College in September, 1788, had been still wretched; the roof of the President's house in which Vice-President Smith now lived was leaking badly; the foundation and other parts of Nassau Hall were found to be in a "decaying state;" but the committee on repairs reported that for lack of funds to pay workmen it had not been able to get the necessary work done, and funds were ordered to be advanced from interest accruing from public securities belonging to the College. The board, confessing its inability to discharge its debt to Colonel Bayard and Mr. Snowden, ordered that the education of their sons and others under their charge be credited to them. Matters improved in 1789, for at the annual meeting in September the treasurer's report showed a balance of one pound and a few shillings, the first time such a condition had appeared for many years. But the board was not permitted to enjoy this novel sensation for more than a few moments. Professor Minto informed the trustees that he was contemplating matrimony and therefore petitioned for an increase of salary, a bond for arrearages, and permission to live outside of the college building. All of his requests, save the supreme one of increase in salary, were gladly and promptly granted.

That spring General Washington passed through Princeton on his way to his first inauguration and visited his old friend at "Tusculum." Town and College united in framing an address<sup>22</sup> of congratulation of which Dr. Witherspoon was the author.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY GEORGE WASHINGTON, ESQUIRE—  
PRESIDENT GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
Sir,

The President and Faculty of the College of New Jersey, and the Inhabitants of Princeton beg leave to join in the general joy, and con-

<sup>22</sup> *Princeton Bulletin*, vol. XI, p. 54.

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gratulate Your Excellency on your appointment to the first office in confederated America.

The unanimity with which you have been destined to this Station does honor to the citizens of the United-States, as it Shows they retain a just and grateful Sense of your eminent Services during the late war in council and in the field; and we are of opinion that you have hardly an opportunity, even in your own life, of discovering greater self-denial and devotedness to the public good than by relinquishing your peaceful retirement with fulness of honor; and again submitting to the toils and cares of public life.

That Almighty God may direct your counsels, and prosper your undertakings; and that your life may be long continued as a blessing to your country, is our sincere and fervent Prayer.

Signed in name and by appointment of the Faculty of the College and Inhabitants of Princeton

J<sup>N</sup> WITHERSPOON  
JOHN BEATTY

On October 8, 1789, Dr. Witherspoon's wife died at "Tusculum" at the age of 68. Ann, the wife of Dr. Smith, was now the only member of his family left in Princeton. Little is recorded of Mrs. Witherspoon. Her attitude at the time of her husband's call to Princeton has been described earlier in these pages. Ashbel Green, who knew her well, says she was of distinguished piety, devoted to the promotion of her husband's comfort and usefulness, a peculiarly fond parent, amiable in temper, social in her habits and universally beloved. She was buried in the Princeton graveyard but her tomb is now unmarked save by a tablet bearing her name and set into the end of the President's stone.

Dr. Witherspoon found relief in active work. Somerset County sent him to the State Assembly and he was immediately given important committee duties. Entrusted with the correction of the journal and the examination of the documents accompanying the Governor's message, from which he was to select those that needed the urgent attention of the House, his choice was characteristic, a resolution to provide for the safe keeping of prisoners committed under the authority of the United States to the various jails of the State, a proposed amendment to the Constitution of the United States, an act to pay invalid pensioners of the United States, and a letter to the Secretary of the Treasury

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on the order of Congress regarding public debts. He served on the committees appointed to take up the first two of these matters, and he was also placed on the joint committee of the two Houses to draw up a congratulatory address to the President of the United States, the text of which he reported November 19. It was also natural that he should be a member of the joint committee to report what was proper and competent for the State Legislature to do to promote interest in religion and morality among the people of the State. The old question of divorce was also turned over to him but, as in the case of the bill reported in 1783, his report led to no action although it reached a second reading. His varied financial experience brought him also appointment on a committee to consider the state of paper money in New Jersey and to raise its value. This time he secured the passage of a bill. Another committee of which he was a member brought in a bill dividing the state into districts and requiring registers of marriage, birth, and deaths to be kept; the beginning of the recording of vital statistics in New Jersey. Another bill looking toward progress and for which he was jointly responsible, planned the relief of prisoners languishing indefinitely in jail for debt; and one of his favorite hobbies met with encouragement when a committee was appointed to report the most feasible mode of encouraging manufactures in the State.

The second session of the Legislature (1790) found him on two interesting committees, one to ascertain the cause of depreciation in New Jersey copper currency, and another, to which was referred the petition of Essex and Morris counties praying the Legislature to take steps to abolish slavery. As chairman of the latter committee Dr. Witherspoon reported that the law already in force forbade the importation of slaves except actual servants of immigrants from other States, or of transient residents; that the exportation of slaves was likewise forbidden; that the law as it stood encouraged voluntary manumission of slaves; and that by it, moreover, slaves were protected from violence. He then offered the suggestion that New Jersey might enact a law that all slaves born after its passage should become free at a certain age, as for example 28;<sup>33</sup> but in his opinion "from

<sup>33</sup>He was thus anticipating by several years the law adopted in Pennsylvania in 1804.

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the state of society in America, the privileges of the press, and the progress of the idea of universal liberty," there was little reason to believe that there would be any slaves at all in America twenty-eight years from that time, and experience seemed to show that precipitation in such a matter might do more harm than good not only to the citizens of the State in general but also to the slaves themselves. With these laudable but over-sanguine opinions the house entirely agreed, and did nothing further.

In May, 1791, the General Assembly placed the President on a committee to devise measures for collecting materials for a history of the Presbyterian Church in America, and he was also appointed a delegate to the General Association of Connecticut for the Promotion of Religious Harmony. Dr. Archibald Alexander has recorded the impression made on him by Dr. Witherspoon at this meeting of the Assembly. Speaking of his presence on the floor he says:

He immediately participated in the business, and evinced such an intuitive clearness of apprehension and correctness of judgment, that his pointed remarks commonly put an end to the discussion. . . . Dr. Witherspoon was as plain an old man as I ever saw and as free from any assumption of dignity. All he said, and every thing about him bore the marks of importance and authority.<sup>34</sup>

Dr. Witherspoon had cause to feel in good spirits at this meeting of the Assembly, plain and old though he may have appeared to be. For, a week after the Assembly adjourned, Dunlap's *American Daily Advertiser* for Thursday, June 2, 1791, contained the following brief but startling notice:

On Monday evening was married in this city, by the Reverend Dr. Nesbit, President of Dickinson College, the Reverend Dr. Witherspoon, President of New-Jersey College, to Mrs. Ann Dill, widow of the late Dr. Dill, of York County in this State.

Dr. Armstrong Dill had been a pupil of Dr. Witherspoon at Princeton. Up at New Haven, Dr. Stiles in his diary notes the incident with a touch of pointed finality:

<sup>34</sup>J. W. Alexander, *Life of Archibald Alexander*, 98, 99.

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On 30th May Reverend Dr. Witherspoon aet 69 was married to Mrs. Dill of Philada Widow aet 24.

The hint of something more than surprise contained in this entry is also found in Ashbel Green's cryptic reference to the event when he says that the Doctor's elevated station and ministerial character "rendered his second marriage the occasion of much observation and remark, but when his mind was made up and satisfied few men lived who were less moved by popular opinion or gossip."<sup>35</sup> Dr. Caldwell, who was an undergraduate at this time, in his *Autobiography* recalls the occasion and relates an incident which supports Dr. Green's comment. It was rumored in college one morning after prayers that Dr. Witherspoon had set out early for Philadelphia in the old family chaise harnessed to four horses, some of which "had been called to their higher service from the more humble function of the car or the plough." He breakfasted at Trenton with his friend the Reverend Dr. Armstrong who knew the nature of the President's errand to Philadelphia. As Dr. Witherspoon was leaving, his host, glancing at the incongruous team, said by way of pleasantry: "Doctor, you do not seem to be well matched." The President, construing the remark as a veiled allusion to the disparity of age between himself and his bride-elect, gruffly retorted: "I neither give advice, nor do I take any!" and clambered into his carriage.

When he returned to Princeton two or three days later with his young wife, the students sent a delegation out to "Tusculum" to beg a holiday to celebrate the event. With a greater show of feeling than he usually manifested, the President invited the committee in to drink the lady's health, to which toast the wily collegians coupled the name of the groom, and when they asked for one day's holiday, he gave them three. At the close of the

<sup>35</sup> Green records (*Autobiography* 241) that in July, 1791, he went to "Tusculum" one afternoon to take tea with Dr. Witherspoon and to pay his respects to Dr. Witherspoon's new wife: "I had heard her represented as very handsome. She is comely; but to my apprehension, nothing more. The doctor treated me with great politeness." By this marriage Dr. Witherspoon had two daughters, Frances, (born November 9, 1792, died November 18, 1793) and Mary Ann born in 1793, who became the wife of the Reverend J. S. Woods and the ancestress of one branch of the present Witherspoon family in America descending from the President.

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third day, the revolutionary cannon lying on the campus was dragged to the front of Nassau Hall and fired the signal for lighting up all the front windows of the building. Six hundred candles were used in the illumination which lasted an hour, while an orchestra of students in the belfry entertained the crowd with appropriate selections.<sup>36</sup>

At the spring meeting of the trustees in 1793 the committee appointed to apply to Congress for re-imburement of losses suffered through the war reported that any application for that object was without prospect of success, and the committee was discharged. The trustees subsequently turned their efforts to the State, with better success.

During the summer of the same year an interesting movement was set on foot to unite the College of New Jersey and Queen's College at New Brunswick, and a unanimous agreement was reached that such a union would tend to promote learning in the State, that, therefore, a new charter should be applied for naming twenty-eight trustees, thirteen from each college, the President of the College of New Jersey and the Governor of the State to serve ex-officio, all the trustees to be residents of New Jersey, the grammar school at Princeton to be given up and a preparatory department to be maintained at New Brunswick in its place, the present officers of the College of New Jersey to become the officers of the new institution, and finally that these recommendations be laid before the two boards for approval. A bare quorum was present at Princeton when Dr. Witherspoon laid the proposal before the meeting of his board in September, and it was decided to postpone consideration until a larger representation should be present. At the December meeting Dr. Witherspoon placed before the board a letter from the trustees of Queen's College wholly rejecting the project and no further action was therefore taken at Princeton, thus ending a plan which in the circumstances could scarcely have resulted successfully.

During this interlude the efforts of the finance committee to bring order out of college books were reaching a conclusion that seemed ungenerous. Colonel John Bayard, whose mercantile

<sup>36</sup> *Gazette of the United States*, June, 1791. Quoted in the *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, October 15, 1919.

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training had been called into requisition, had been appointed in 1790 to systematize the accounts, open a new set of books, and inaugurate a more business-like method of keeping them. Vigorous efforts were made to collect the overdue subscriptions of 1785, the price of the board in the college commons was raised, and students were ordered hereafter to supply their own furniture. Repairs were still imperatively demanding attention; the kitchen in the President's house was now in a "ruinous condition;" the new roof of Nassau Hall on which hundreds of pounds had already been spent needed further patching. But in April, 1793, the committee reported that it had digested the college books from 1766 to date, and had collected and arranged the documents. To its surprise it had discovered that a similar committee had been appointed in 1774 and had reported certain recommendations; this committee's accounts had been examined in 1775, approved, and ordered spread on the minutes of the board; but this had never been done, and the report and even the rough minutes of that session had been missing. At that date Dr. Witherspoon had claimed a balance due him, but the report had declared him in debt to the college to the amount of six hundred and twenty-five pounds and some shillings. In 1778 a special committee had re-examined his statement and with fuller evidence had allowed his claim. Now among loose papers turned over to it, the present committee had found a copy of the missing report. It, therefore, asked direction whether it should accept the findings of the earlier special committee or ignore them. The board ordered the previous report to be disregarded. Concerning some special funds in the President's hands the committee also sought instruction, the disposition of the monies involved being in dispute. In December Dr. Witherspoon asked for a certified copy of the report and it took him long to clear up the tangle, for in April, 1794, the committee, by way of reporting progress, informed the board that it had employed accountant after accountant: one had to relinquish his work for private reasons, another had fallen a victim of the yellow fever epidemic, a third had been seized with sudden illness; it hoped, however, that Dr. Witherspoon would turn in his statement and explanation, if he had any, before the final report was made. At last Dr. Witherspoon's

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statement was received, and in September, 1794, the committee announced finally that the balance due from him up to 1788 was only one hundred and eighty-six pounds, nine shillings and eight pence, which could be easily and satisfactorily explained. Beyond that date the report had not been carried as the President's ledger showed all accounts thereafter.

As Dr. Maclean has devoted a chapter to the committee's report and its unfortunate controversy with the President,<sup>37</sup> there is no necessity for repeating the details except as the documents throw light on the financial condition of the College during Dr. Witherspoon's presidency. The prevalent unbusiness-like practices and methods in the financial administration of the College have already been mentioned; in addition to these, however, the death, at the beginning of the war, of Mr. Sergeant who had been treasurer for over twenty-five years, the frequent changes in his successors, the consequent scattering or loss of papers, and above all the chaos into which the war threw not only the affairs of the College, but also the finances of the country, complicated the situation almost inextricably. The treasurer's books and in particular the one most frequently referred to in the documents as "the college ledger" have disappeared, and for data on the situation we are restricted to the reports of special committees made in 1775, 1794, and 1795, the last three being continuations, and to Dr. Witherspoon's own transcripts for the years 1778 and 1789 inclusive, compiled apparently for the information of the committees from his now lost private ledger.<sup>38</sup> According to these reports, the total capital of the corporation in 1769 was about three thousand pounds and in 1774, when the 1775 report closed, a little over six thousand pounds. During this period donations and subscriptions had been received amounting to roughly seven thousand seven hundred and eighty pounds. On October 1, 1777, when depreciation first became apparent, the resources of the College exclusive of property at Princeton amounted to eight thousand one hundred and fifty-two pounds eighteen shillings and eight pence. On October 1, 1781, when depreciation, except

<sup>37</sup> *History of the College of New Jersey*, vol. I, p. 368.

<sup>38</sup> The various papers are now in the University Library, and in the Office of the Secretary of the University.

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in state paper money, had virtually ceased, this amount had fallen in value to four thousand eight hundred and fifty-four pounds one shilling and eleven pence. And by October 1, 1791, in spite of donations the resources were estimated at only two thousand four hundred and eleven pounds six shillings and two pence. From 1768 to 1795 the College had received in subscriptions over twenty-two thousand pounds, part of which—the amount is not stated—was in depreciated money. The report of 1795 censures the corporation, and of course this in reality means the President, for allowing current expenses to be paid out of monies which it is claimed should have been applied to capital; but the fact is disregarded, as Dr. Maclean very pertinently remarks, that most of the subscriptions secured during the war were frankly sought not for endowment, but to meet current salaries and make necessary repairs. The committee's further criticism is fairer; that interest and arrears were often permitted to remain for years uncollected, that interest was allowed on debts of the institution, while a large proportion of debts due the corporation were received without interest, and that large sums were often held in bank without being applied to capital, so that current expenses had swallowed them up, and arrears due on outstanding debts had been totally lost for want of timely collection. The committee accordingly opened new books and laid down a number of regulations to govern the handling of college funds, the vital feature being a reiteration of the 1786 rule that hereafter all monies should be received exclusively by the treasurer, and that all payments should be made by him and that no other vouchers would be honored by the board. In its September 1794 report of progress the committee remarked that it had felt it a duty

not to close the report without declaring that whereas it appears to have been apprehended that some enquiries, heretofore made by this committee were intended to implicate the character of Dr. Wither-  
spoon, no such design was ever in the contemplation of the committee. And they do now most cheerfully report that these enquiries are answered to their entire satisfaction from papers furnished by the President himself and in such a manner as must convince every person who understands the subject, that there is no foundation whatever for any impeachment or suspicion of the president's integrity.

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In glad anticipation of this much desired conclusion of the whole disagreeable matter the entire faculty asked for an increase in salary, the funds for which were to be raised by increased tuition, so as not to encroach on monies assigned to other purposes. And the trustees, content to let well enough alone, just as cheerfully tabled the petition.

Despite his increasing infirmities, which had induced him to give up his ministerial duties as pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Princeton,<sup>39</sup> Dr. Witherspoon's interest in current events remained unflagging. He was a subscriber to three newspapers and read several others. His concern over a tendency in American life induced him to dictate to his amanuensis his last letter for publication and shows how keenly he watched the press. Soon after the New Theatre was built at Philadelphia and was beginning to draw a large patronage, Philip Freneau in the *National Gazette* quoted a paragraph from a French source to the effect that formerly a stigma was attached to the theatrical profession, especially when compared with the professions of the Law and the Church: He hoped that now the improvement in the status of actors due to their merit would contribute not a little to the improvement of public culture. In reply to this Dr. Witherspoon dictated his *Letter on Play Actors*<sup>40</sup> explaining why a stigma was attached to the stage, a document so severe in its tone that no newspaper editor, says Dr. Green, would accept it, and it remained unpublished until he placed it in his edition of Witherspoon's Works. The article shows that the President had not modified by one whit the attitude he had held at the time of *Douglas*, nor lost any of his mental vigor. It contains of course, the stock arguments—players have so often been persons of loose morals; their profession leads to corruption of heart; whoever acts human passions is prone to become their victim, and "will soon become" what he had "so often seemed to be;" players by always appearing in assumed characters must lose all sense of sincerity and truth; love is the most conspicuous passion on the stage—"a play without intrigue and gallantry would be no play

<sup>39</sup> See Petition of the congregation to declare the church vacant. Hageman, vol. II, p. 93.

<sup>40</sup> *Works*, vol. III, p. 94.

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at all"—and yet love is the passion that has produced the most misery in the history of mankind; hence the futility of sending young persons to the theatre "to form their manners." No cognisance is taken of the attractive, or even of the noble, characters in dramatic literature. And in conclusion he deprecates the acting of pieces by young persons in schools or private families, as a means of obtaining grace in deportment or propriety in pronunciation. And yet he permitted dramatics in his own prayer-hall.

The college enrolment was increasing, but the physical appearance of the institution reflected the gaunt poverty of its exchequer; the place looked seedy; Dr. Witherspoon's administration was running out—gallantly, but none the less forlornly. Pitiful and graphic, even though lacking in sympathy, is the last description we have of the College in his time. In May 1794, the French traveller Moreau de Saint Méry passed through the village and recorded his impressions.<sup>41</sup> After describing the exterior of Nassau Hall, which he confesses is in all respects a striking building "for America," he continues:

In front of it is a vast court enclosed on the street side by a brick wall bearing at even distances wooden urns painted gray.<sup>42</sup> This front court is dirty, covered with the dung of cattle that come there to graze, and in its centre lies an old four pounder minus its carriage. The cannon, the bad condition of the wall, many of whose urns have fallen to the ground, all reflect a lack of care, and one reaches the building sorry that the students should have so unfortunate an example before their eyes.

The building, which is called Nassau Hall, is entered by three doors of equal size, of which one is in the middle of the front projection and two others at the sides. One goes up by means of wooden steps with-

<sup>41</sup> *Voyage aux Etats-Unis de l'Amérique*, 1793-1798. Edited by S. L. Mims, New Haven, 1913, pp. 114-117.

<sup>42</sup> The wall enclosing the campus was built in September, 1770. It was of brick on stone foundations with a fence of wooden palings topping it. These palings were probably consumed as firewood during the military occupancy of Princeton in the Revolution. It is not known when the urns were put up.

While the wall was being erected the entire front campus from Nassau Hall to the street was graded down about two feet so as to make the basement rooms in the building more habitable. The latter then acquired and long retained the name of "the barracks" and continued to be the most undesirable rooms on the campus.

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out balustrades. . . . On the lower floor are a chapel, a refectory, a library of about 2000 books where one may see the justly famed orrery of Dr. David Rittenhouse. . . . On this floor opposite the main entrance door, but at the rear, is a vast hall furnished with benches, like a school room. On entering one perceives on the right hand a picture about 8 feet high. It is a full length portrait of General Washington. . . . Behind the College is a very large yard, dirty, and lying fallow, so that it all looks neglected. Although 120 students can be lodged in the building, it has ordinarily about 80, most of whom come from Virginia and the two Carolinas.

It would be pleasant to approve the government of the institution, but when one has not been raised in American fashion it is very difficult to do so. A system which makes children subject to no restraints, humors the carelessness of masters, and flatters so strongly the indolent American disposition, must produce a vicious system of government. Its effects are apparent at the college at Princeton where, it is said, gambling and licentiousness occupy the students more than study.

That the students did not overstudy was probably as true then as it is now; but the charge that they were addicted to gambling and licentiousness can, under the strict system of surveillance in operation, have had little or no basis of fact. It is not supported by the records of the faculty, or by any other source.

The President maintained until the end his prerogative of examining candidates for admission to college. When young Titus Hutchinson of the class of 1794 entered Princeton in 1793, he recorded in his diary an experience which was typical. Directed to "Tusculum," he reached the house at about sunrise; his letter of introduction was taken by Mrs. Witherspoon up to the President who presently came downstairs, "feeling his way along." After family prayers and breakfast, the President went up to his study with the lad and there questioned him as to his reading in Greek and Latin, testing him pretty severely in the latter tongue. He then said he would see him later at the village tavern. About eleven o'clock the Doctor came into the village, Mrs. Witherspoon driving the chaise, and the new student led him over to Vice-President Smith's house, where the President and Dr. Smith held a private consultation in such loud tones that young Hutchinson in an adjoining room plainly heard his fate being settled.

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But pathetic evidence of the President's growing infirmity is found in his trembling signature of January, 1794,<sup>43</sup> compared with that of February 26, 1790, which was still firm and flowing. In May 1794 he appeared once more in the General Assembly, but his useful days were over; blind and feeble, he was given no work to do. His last appearance at a meeting of his faculty was on September 25, 1794, and two days earlier he had presided over a meeting of the board of trustees for the last time. Death came suddenly, although in his poor state of health it could not have been unexpected. Besides being blind, he was suffering from dropsy, but his mental faculties remained unimpaired; his last request was for the newspapers. He died on the evening of Saturday, November 15, 1794, at "Tusculum," in the seventy-second year of his age.

Dr. Ashbel Green, who was not in Princeton at the time, and secured his information many years later,<sup>44</sup> says in his biography of the President that he died in his bed suffering but little. An undergraduate's Sunday letter home, written the day after the President's death, seems more trustworthy and is so circumstantial that it may be quoted in full. The letter is from William Eltinge, a Junior in College, to his father under date of November 16, 1794:

We have lost our president Doctor Witherspoon, he was found dead in his chair, he was very desirous to hear the last news read, they had sent for Doctor Smith that Night and when he came they read the news of the last paper they had, but Doctor Witherspoon was still desirous to send for the last paper. They sent for it but before the boy had arrived with the paper, they found him dead sitting on his chair, and but a little before his wife was with him in the room, but going out into another room upon some business and when she returned he was dead.<sup>45</sup>

Eltinge's account is corroborated by Joseph Warren Scott of the class of 1796, writing to John Henry Hobart of 1793, on the following Monday, in a letter of very different style.

<sup>43</sup>Library of Princeton University.

<sup>44</sup>*Autobiography*, 460.

<sup>45</sup>Library of Princeton University.

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Nassau Hall Princeton Nov. 17, 1794

My Dear Friend

What melancholy tidings does this bear? It is the death of our Good & worthy president.

On Saturday evening in his chair, this good old [man] met the common enemy of man, with joy and cheerfulness. And why should he not? It would set a final period to trouble and suffering, and land him in that haven of eternal peace, which is the reward of his labours, and his fidelity to his Master's trust. Full of days and full of honors, this venerable sage left us to deplore his loss as a father and a protector, but he has also left us an example, truly worthy to be imitated.

Tomorrow his body is to be committed to the silent grave. Doctor Smith I believe is to pronounce his funeral sermon, no doubt it will be a moving and a feeling discourse.<sup>46</sup>

On the eighteenth of November, early in the morning, the President's body was brought from "Tusculum" to Nassau Hall where it lay in state and was viewed by the undergraduates. Years after, Richard Rush, of the Class of 1797, told of seeing the President thus, and Judge Herring, of the Class of 1795, at a Princeton alumni meeting in New York in April 1868, described how the President looked in his coffin, especially recalling "his massive head, high cheek bones, and almost interminable nose."<sup>47</sup>

From Nassau Hall, the body was carried to the Presbyterian Church where the Reverend Mr. David Austin of Elizabeth, New Jersey, preached a discourse which has remained unpublished. Then, accompanied by eight clergymen as pall-bearers and followed by the faculty, the trustees, the treasurer, the steward, and the undergraduates as mourners, and a large throng from town and neighborhood, President Witherspoon was borne to the Princeton graveyard, a stone's throw down the street now named after him, and was laid beside his predecessors in the Presidents' Lot.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> *Archives of the General Convention, Hobart Correspondence*, vol. I, p. 102. Seventy-four years later, the writer of this letter and a classmate, Judge Elbert Herring, sat on the platform as the two oldest and most conspicuous alumni guests at the inauguration of Princeton's other great Scotsman, Dr. McCosh.

<sup>47</sup> J. W. Alexander, *Familiar Letters*, vol. II, p. 119, and *Nassau Literary Magazine*, June 1868, p. 33.

<sup>48</sup> *American Daily Advertiser*, November 24, 1794. His death was noticed in the *Scots Magazine*, the *European Magazine*, and the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

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The faculty's Minutes do not mention his death. The trustees also took no formal action at the time, but at a special meeting on May 5, 1795, resolved, according to a previous understanding, to ask the President's old friend, Dr. Rodgers, to preach a commemorative sermon in the church the next day. This is the discourse published under the title of *The Faithful Servant Rewarded*. The biographical sketch in this sermon was supplied by Dr. Smith, who also wrote the epitaph carved on the tombstone ordered by the board.<sup>49</sup>

Dr. Witherspoon's will is filed in the Secretary of State's office at Trenton. It was drawn on September 15, 1793, with a codicil dated November 11, 1794, and was proved November 28. It appoints his wife Ann his executrix, and to each of his surviving children by his first wife, John, David, and Ann, who had already received sums from him, besides their education "in the best manner," he gives £50. To his grandsons, John Witherspoon Smith, John Witherspoon Ramsay and John Nash McPherson, he leaves £200 each; of the balance of his estate, one-half is left to his daughter Frances "and any other child or children which may be born to me," and the other half to his wife. A codicil was signed November 11, 1794, substituting the name of his infant daughter Mary for that of his daughter Frances, since deceased, in the provision disposing of the first half of his residuary estate.

The inventory of Dr. Witherspoon's "Goods, chattles & Credits wares & merchandise" was drawn up at "Tusculum" by Daniel Agnew, the college steward, Professor Walter Minto, and Derrick Longstreth, on November 28, 1794, and filed with the will. It reveals nothing—and the tastes and manner of life of Dr. Witherspoon reveal nothing—to substantiate the implication of luxury in Sir George Trevelyan's statement<sup>50</sup> that Dr. Witherspoon had endeavored as far as might be done at that distance from Italian antiquarian shops and Birmingham and Leipzig printing houses, to render "Tusculum" worthy of the name by the character and value of its decorations and contents. On the contrary, the furniture and decorations listed in the inventory consist of little but the most necessary articles. The four

<sup>49</sup> See opposite page.

<sup>50</sup> *American Revolution*, Part Two, vol. II, p. 31.

RELIQUAE MORTALES  
JOHANNIS WITHERSPOON, D.D., LL.D.  
COLLEGIUM NEO-CAESARIENSIS PRAESIDIS, PLURIMUM VENERANDI,  
SUB HOC MARMORE  
INHUMANTUR.

NATUS PAROCHIO YESTERNENSI SCOTORUM,  
NONIS FEBRUARII, MDCCXXII. V. S.  
LITERIS HUMANIORIBUS IN UNIVERSITATE EDINBURGENSI  
IMBUTUS.

SACRIS ORDINIBUS INITIATUS, ANNO MDCCXLIII.  
MUNUS PASTORALE  
PER VIGINTI QUINQUE ANNOS PERFUNCTUS EST,  
PRIMO APUD BEITH, DEINDE APUD PAISLEY.  
PRAESES DESIGNATUS AULAE NASSOVICAE, ANNO MDCCCLXVII.  
IN AMERICAM MIGRAVIT, ANNO MDCCCLXVIII.  
IDIBUS SEXTILIS.

MAXIMA EXPECTATIONE OMNIUM,  
MUNUS PRAESIDIALE SUSCEPIT.

VIR EXIMIA PIETATE AC VIRTUTE  
OMNIBUS DOTIBUS ANIMI PRAEELLENIS  
DOCTRINA, ATQUE OPTIMARUM ARTIUM STUDIIS,  
PENITUS ERUDITUS,  
CONCIONATOR GRAVIS, SOLEMNIS.

ORATIONES EJUS SACRAE  
PRAECEPTIS ET INSTITUTIS VITAE  
PRAESTANTISSIMIS,  
NECNON EXPOSITIONIBUS SACROSANCTAE SCRIPTURAE  
DILUCIDIS  
SUNT REPLETAE.

IN SERMONE FAMILIARI COMIS, LEPIDUS, BLANDUS,  
RERUM ECCLESIAE FORENSIUM  
PERITISSIMUS.

SUMMA PRUDENTIA,  
ET IN REGENDA, ET INSTITUENDA JUVENTUTE,  
PRAEDITUS.

EXISTIMATIONEM COLLEGIUM APUD PEREGRINOS  
AUXIT:  
BONASQUE LITERAS IN EO MULTUM PROVEKIT.  
INTER LUMINA CLARISSIMA, ET DOCTRINAE ET ECCLESIAE,  
DIU LUXIT.

TANDEM, VENERATUS, DILECTUS, LUGENDUS OMNIBUS,  
ANIMAM EFFLAVIT, XVI. KAL. DECEM.  
ANNO SALUTIS MUNDI, MDCCXCIV.  
AETATIS SUAE LXXIII.

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prints owned by the President were valued at only a dollar each, a Wilton carpet at thirteen dollars, seventeen mahogany chairs at two dollars apiece, one clock and case at thirty-six dollars. His plate weighed but one hundred and fifty-two ounces and was valued at one hundred and sixty-two dollars. The number of volumes in his library is not stated but the collection was appraised at six hundred and forty dollars. Two slaves were valued at a hundred dollars each; and the whole inventory amounted to only \$2495. This, of course, does not include the house itself nor its buildings and farmland, although the standing grain on its seventy-three and a half acres is included. The President's live stock consisted of seven oxen, six cows, one bull, five heifers, ten horses, twelve pigs, thirteen hogs, and twenty-four sheep. He also owned a sleigh, a riding chair, two waggons and one cart. Judged by the standard of even that day, he was far from wealthy.

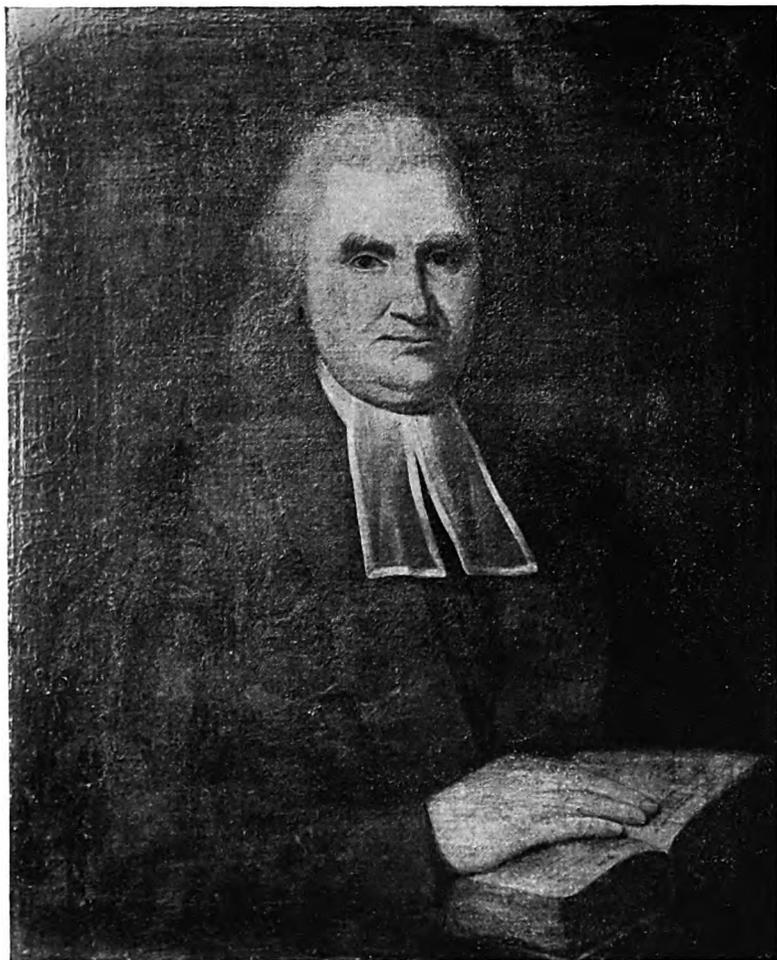
## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE MAN AND HIS IDEAS

FOR once in the world "a man of extraordinary force, versatility, and charm had found the place exactly suited to give full swing and scope to every element of power within him. He seems to have come at the right moment, to the right spot, in the right way."<sup>1</sup> This conclusion, by a scholar whose special study of the period will hardly be superseded, must remain unchallenged. If few men have been fortunate enough to justify such an estimate of their careers, it is because as the Philadelphia *American Daily Advertiser* phrased it, few have filled with greater dignity, or with more eminent and extensive usefulness the several places Dr. Witherspoon occupied in life. Still rarer was the man who could have touched the imaginations of as many different groups of contemporaries as he did—the general public who read his printed writings and found them easy to understand and profitable to remember; the scores who listened to him on the floor of Congress or in ecclesiastical assemblies and never forgot the dry humor and zest of his debating; the crowds who heard him in the pulpit and bore away the memory of his clean-cut, telling phrases; and finally the hundreds of undergraduates who carried from his presence into their lives as public servants, ministers of the gospel, lawyers, doctors, teachers, or heads of families already historic, the unfailingly pungent stimulus of their association with his dominant personality.

That President Witherspoon was lucky in the opportuneness of his coming to America for the work he was to do is an assertion that scarcely needs defence. For if, to borrow Professor Becker's words, by the time of his arrival the mantle of Samuel Davies the preacher had fallen upon Patrick Henry the political orator, and something of the moral conviction of the Great Awakening had passed into secular activities, it was given to President Witherspoon to weld the two strains together not only by send-

<sup>1</sup>Tyler, *Literary History*, vol. II, p. 321



JOHN WITHERSPOON

*By Charles Willson Peale*

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## THE MAN AND HIS IDEAS

ing out from Princeton what Mr. Becker recognizes as a new leaven to work itself through the processes of the American Revolution, but also by typifying in himself the amalgamation of the older power of Calvinistic religion and the newer political spirit. Other clergymen may have been as active as he in fostering the spiritual temper of Revolutionary days; but he was the only clergyman in America to cap that activity by serving the country in the Continental Congress, and by aiding it to shape its new national individuality.

A more fortunate spot, moreover, could scarcely have been chosen for the headquarters of his great emprise. Set as Princeton was, midway between New England and the South, and in a buffer province between the dominating cities of New York and Philadelphia, a province that was almost a no-man's land in its political balance and denominational variety, a province that at the same time was perhaps somewhat less worldly than most of its neighbors, President Witherspoon came thither politically unaffiliated and unprejudiced, save as a Presbyterian fresh from Scotland (if that qualification does not deny all others), and wisely non-committal until he perceived that this particular spot had long been preparing to play a national part and was but waiting for the call. One has only to read the history of the College of New Jersey up to Witherspoon's time to see the signs clearly written. Given its antecedents, the College in his day could hardly have done other than it did.

If one adds to these fortuities of time and place the nature of the man himself, the more firmly convinced does one become that, as the *Daily Advertiser* said, usefulness to his day and generation was the impelling characteristic of the President's philosophy of life, and he could not have taken a different course on coming to America. Fame, wealth, position, none of these influenced him in accepting the opportunities thrust upon him, opportunities that were never of his own seeking. His leadership of the Popular Party in Scotland, his election to the presidency of the College of New Jersey, his advancement in American political circles, his elevation in the American Church, were accepted by him only because they seemed inevitable calls to the practical service of his fellowmen. It is safe to assume that at

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heart he would have preferred the quiet of his hillside farm at "Tusculum" to congressional wrangles at Philadelphia, the guiding of young enthusiasms in Nassau Hall to dull sessions of a peripatetic State Legislature; but he never shirked what he conceived to be a present duty. Usefulness to the society in which one lived was his own motto and the great outstanding lesson he taught his students. Among his parting advices to his graduating classes occur these words:

Avoid sloth as a dangerous enemy. Fear it, hate it, and despise it. It is a common saying that men do not know their own weaknesses; but it is as true, and a truth more important, that they do not know their own strength. . . . Multitudes of moderate capacity have been useful in their generation, respected by the public, and successful in life; while those of superior talents from nature, by mere slothfulness and idle habits, or self-indulgence, have lived useless and died contemptible.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, his definition of usefulness to society was bounded by the sternness of his religious views. His conceptions on the subject found their grimmest expression in his essays dealing with the influence of the stage. Here he went so far as to assert that any talent, however excellent in itself, was beneath notice when devoted only to entertainment or pleasure; even music, if used only for amusement, was "wholly contemptible." He was willing to admit that natural talents were gifts of God, but "the instances of their being eminently useful are exceeding rare."<sup>3</sup> He would not actually condemn all human accomplishments that had no "immediate reference to our religious improvement;"<sup>4</sup> but he affirmed that they ought to be kept in "subordination and subservience to the great and chief end of man."<sup>5</sup> For similar reasons he cared but little for pure scholarship as such and for its own sake, or for intellectual ability that produced no really useful results. Great genius, he was wont to say, is often like a fine flower—to be wondered at, but of slight use for food or medicine.<sup>6</sup> The

<sup>2</sup> *Works*, vol. II, p. 617.

<sup>3</sup> "Serious Enquiry," *Works*, vol. III, p. 61.

<sup>4</sup> *loc. cit.* p. 88.

<sup>5</sup> "Letter on Play Actors," *Works*, vol. III, p. 97.

<sup>6</sup> "Lectures on Eloquence," *Works*, vol. III, p. 384.

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mere beauty of a flower appealed but little to him; his comment on his garden has been already quoted. Similarly, he dismissed novels with a sentence—they were “a class of writings to which the world is very little indebted.”<sup>7</sup> And elsewhere he declared that “romance and fabulous narrations are a species of composition, from which the world hath received as little benefit, and as much hurt, as any that can be named, excepting plays themselves.”<sup>8</sup> Therefore, we are not to be surprised that the eighteenth-century British novelists find no place in his lectures. Here too may be found the key to his lack of appreciation of poetry—it was an unnecessarily ornamental mode of expression. It is significant that the paragraph mentioning a beautiful poem, in the third lecture of the printed edition of his *Moral Philosophy*, does not appear in the manuscript student copies of his lectures made under his own dictation; it was doubtless inserted by a later lecturer, using his outlines.<sup>9</sup> No undergraduate copyist of Witherspoon’s time would have omitted the allusion had the President made it.

Hence, too, he saw nature only with utilitarian eyes and although he was perhaps in a general way conscious of beautiful scenery it scarcely appealed to him from an aesthetic point of view. There is not a free appreciation of nature in all his writings. But, “the beauties of nature,” he wrote, “are greatly heightened by adding to their delightful appearances a reflection on their utility and the benevolent intention of their author.”<sup>10</sup> A Beith tradition of his curling days illustrates this attitude of mind. One of his ministerial friends taking him to task, solemnly asked if he thought curling was becoming in a clergyman. The unequivocal reply shot back: “When God Almighty makes Kilbirnie loch to bear, He intends us to use His blessings with thankfulness in this most rational recreation.”<sup>11</sup>

And naturally he held similar views with regard to feminine beauty. He complained in his *Letters on Marriage* that almost every writer on the female sex overrates the charm of outward

<sup>7</sup> “Letters on Marriage,” *Works*, vol. III, p. 577.

<sup>8</sup> “Serious Enquiry,” *Works*, vol. III, p. 71.

<sup>9</sup> See his *Moral Philosophy*, edited by V. L. Collins, Princeton, 1912, p. 22.

<sup>10</sup> “Eloquence,” *Works*, vol. III, p. 494.

<sup>11</sup> Dickie, *John Witherspoon, Patriot*, p. 3.

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form; in plays and novels "the heroine for certain, and often all the ladies . . . are inimitably beautiful;" whereas, he remarked in the *Druid*, "I have not seen any killing eyes these several years," adding, with a quiet chuckle, that he would rather have "the exalted and rapturous phrases of Arcadia" brought down to the level of "the composed discourse of a quiet man and wife in Philadelphia."<sup>12</sup> Even though he maintained a correspondence with the lady whom he had not been able to persuade to marry him, the utilitarianism of his maturity had carried him bravely over his youthful infatuation for the other sex. "Men may talk in raptures," he wrote in his *Letters on Marriage*,<sup>13</sup> "about youth and beauty, wit, and sprightliness, and a hundred other shining qualities, but after seven years of co-habitation not one of them is to be compared to good family management which is seen at every meal and felt every hour in the husband's purse." It must not be hastily inferred, however, that Dr. Witherspoon was unobservant of feminine charms. Far from it. He admired extremely, so we are told, the brilliant complexion of that radiant American beauty, Mrs. John Jay, although he doubted its genuineness; and it was just as well that his cloth forbade him to back his doubts with his dollars, or, like the French Minister, who shared his suspicions and placed a wager on the question, he would have lost his money. It is clear, however, that there was little of the sentimentalist about him. In most matters the practical bent of his mind prevailed; he did not preach the philosophy of common sense without practising it. Dr. Smith aptly summed up the case when he spoke of the President's "cool and simple" character.

The development of President Witherspoon's "Americanism" may be traced in the series of essays, letters, and sermons, that came from his pen during the years 1774-1778, and in his progressive participation in public service. Sent by Somerset to the New Jersey convention to elect delegates to the Continental Congress in 1774 he gave, in his *Thoughts on American Liberty*, his opinion of what that Congress should be and what it had to do; unbidden he went to Philadelphia when the Congress met,

<sup>12</sup> *Works*, vol. III, p. 577 and vol. IV, p. 153.

<sup>13</sup> *Works*, vol. III, p. 581.

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and mingled with its members endeavoring to force home certain notions of his own; a few months later he voiced the attitude of American presbyterianism in the *Pastoral Letter* of May, 1775; in July, war having begun, he accepted minor public service on the Somerset County committee of correspondence, and in September, 1775, preached his baccalaureate sermon on *Christian Magnanimity*; in April 1776, seeing independence looming up inevitably he futilely urged New Jersey to accept the logical and unavoidable conclusion; at about this time he wrote his essays on *Conducting the American Controversy* and on the *Controversy about American Independence*; in May 1776 he preached his fast day sermon on the *Dominion of Providence*, and began his first group of *Druid* papers; probably in June he wrote his *Reflections on Public Affairs*, and it was in this month that he was elected to the New Jersey provincial congress, helped to depose Governor Franklin, and was sent by his colleagues to the Continental Congress to vote for independence; his *Letter to the Natives of Scotland in America* appears with his fast day sermon shortly after; in 1777 he was too busy to put pen to paper, but in 1778 was written his letter on the *Contest between Great Britain and America*; and by 1781, when he drew up the *Memorial and Manifesto of the United States* and the Instructions of June for the American peace commissioners, he had become spokesman for the nation.

His writings on the controversy rest on four main contentions which he continually repeated; separation was not sought by the Colonies but was forced by the ignorance and blundering of the British government; under the circumstances separation was inevitable; it was the visible intention of Providence; and finally, the great need and duty of the Colonies was union. He differed from many of his contemporaries in his invariable protest against vituperating the King and his Ministers. We have seen that he held the more discriminating view that at worst they, as well as the British nation at large, were misguided. "The wise and valuable part of the British nation," he wrote in 1776 in the *Address to Natives of Scotland in America*, "were and as yet are, in great measure ignorant of the state of affairs in this country." British ignorance of American geography he had flayed in a letter

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to the *Scots Magazine* as early as May, 1771.<sup>14</sup> But when he realized that an understanding was impossible—and he realized it early—he did not hesitate to accept the consequence of that impossibility. While he probably did not endorse every phrase in the final form of the Declaration of Independence, he advocated independence itself because it was the only solution unattended with sacrifice of self-respect or annihilation of the whole colonial political fabric—the converse of John Adams' remark made twenty years before, that “the only way to keep us from setting up for ourselves is to disunite us.” Independence the President, therefore, advocated not only because it was inevitable, but because it would give unity and strength to colonial self-defence and because of the world-destiny it involved. No other point of view would he tolerate. Ezra Stiles, voicing current opinion of Scottish responsibility for the war, of course read Dr. Witherspoon's attitude differently. Writing in his diary in July 1777, he said:<sup>15</sup>

There are only two Scotchmen in Congress viz., Dr. Witherspoon Presid<sup>t</sup> of Jersey College, & Mr. Wilson, Pennsylv<sup>a</sup>, a Lawyer. Both strongly national & can't bear any Thing in Congress which reflects on Scotland. The Dr. says that Scotland has manifested the greatest Spirit for Liberty as a nation, in that their History is full of their calling Kings to account & dethroning them when arbitrary and tyrannical. But Dethronization & Revolution are constantly taking place at Constantinople, Isphahann, & Delhi; no one however thinks that this will prove the Policies of Persia & the Mogul & Turkish Empires friendly to Liberty. The Policy of Scotland & all the governmental Ideas of the Body of that People, are abhorrent to all Ideas of civil Liberty & are full of rigorous tyrannical Superiorities & subordinations. But Dr. Witherspoon goes all lengths with the Congress both in the War, independency & foreign Alliances. Because he had Discernment to see from the beginning that America would be inevitably dismembered, & then acted as all Scotchmen would do under such a conviction, determined to rise & figure in the Dismemberment & p<sup>h</sup>ps lay a foundation of reconciling the Americans to the Scots so far as at least to forgive them. The Dr. is a politician. We may use him as far as he is for America—but scorn to be awed by him into an

<sup>14</sup> *Works*, vol. IV, p. 295.

<sup>15</sup> *Literary Diary*, vol. II, p. 184.

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ignominious Silence in the subject of Scots Perfidy & Tyranny & Enmity to America. Let us boldly say, for History will say it, that the whole of this War is so far chargeable to the Scotch Councils, & to the Scotch as a Nation (for they have nationally come into it) as that had it not been for them, this Quarrel had never happened. Or at least they have gloried in the Honor of exciting & conducting these Measures avowedly by their Earl of Bute behind the Curtain.

This was Dr. Stiles' reply to the *Address to the Natives of Scotland*, and in all probability even as late as 1791, when President Witherspoon visited his New Haven friend for the last time, the matter had not been settled to Dr. Stiles' satisfaction. He shared the ineradicable and erroneous opinion of the majority of colonials who ignored the fact that the Earl of Bute had been out of office since 1763, and still considered him the responsible agent behind the scenes pulling the wires of his marionettes on the stage.<sup>16</sup>

Dr. Witherspoon's conception of the political struggle into which he found himself plunged was mainly practical; the separation of the Colonies from the mother country was not only providential and inevitable—according to his view that would have to be conceded—but it would work to the mutual advantage of both sides. If there was little of the sentimentalist about him there was less of the reckless enthusiast, and least of the ranting demagogue. He had matured too soon to see visions, and if he dreamed dreams he was too matter-of-fact to relate them. Therefore his writings contain scarcely any hint of his expectations for the future of the United States, unless they are revealed in his belief that the War of the Revolution was no petty insurrection but an epoch-making struggle in the history of mankind and one upon which hung the fate of unborn millions. In his *Reflections on the Present State of Affairs*, which it will be remembered was in part the basis of his *Address to the Natives of Scotland resident in America*, he speaks of this belief as an "august idea" and becomes almost enthusiastic over the vastness of the American continent and its wonderful development in a century—"a country, growing every year in beauty and fertility, the

<sup>16</sup> See Trevelyan, *American Revolution*, Part II, vol. II, pp. 183ff.

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people growing in numbers and wealth, arts, and sciences carefully cultivated and constantly advancing, and possessing security of property and equal laws, which are the true and proper source of all the rest." But even in this incompleted essay, with all its warmth, it is clear that Dr. Witherspoon based the Revolution in the last analysis on economic causes, the need of unhindered material and social expansion; it was not merely a revolt against an alleged deliberate political tyranny. And economic causes in his vocabulary were synonymous with providential design. He readily perceived, however, that the period immediately after his entrance into Congress was one in which men of vision around him were not only struggling to maintain the national independence but were also striving in a subtler fight to crystallize the idea of nationality into the concrete shape of a strong central government, and it was for the conservation of this sentiment that he was most concerned. Yet it is odd that he left behind him no clear expression of his thought on the ultimate greatness of the new nation. In 1790 he was still able to believe that a country, as territorially vast as this was even then, really needed no capital or abiding seat of government. In a letter opposing the discussion of the location of a federal city, he admits that if one were decided upon he would wish its buildings to be as magnificent as "the dignity of the empire" demanded; but he hoped,—indeed, he seems to have expected—that the annual sessions of Congress would become shorter as the years went by; he appears to have thought that the republic in the main would somehow run itself. Of course he had no notion of the future enormous and complicated machinery of the national government. His jealousy for the rights of the individual States colors his statement:

If the American empire comes to be consolidated government I grant it would be of some consequence that the seat of government and source of authority should be not too distant from the extremities. . . . But if the particular States are to be preserved and supported in their constitutional government, it seems of very little consequence where the Congress, consisting of representatives from these States, shall hold their sessions. There is not only little profit in their being

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fixed and central, but perhaps some advantage might arise from their being unfixed and ambulatory. This last seems to be more suitable to the equality of rights of the several States.

The discussion of a federal city he considered inopportune, because all intelligent people, he believed, were of the opinion that "bringing order into our finances, restoring and establishing public credit, is the most important business which the Congress had to do." Just how Congress was to accomplish this without permanent headquarters is not explained.<sup>17</sup>

While his writings show scarcely any forecastings of the future, he occasionally made them in conversation, as when he was told one day by Ashbel Green of the completion of the turnpike between Philadelphia and Lancaster, and replied: "You are not to be surprised if you live to see a turnpike road that shall extend from Philadelphia to the Pacific Ocean." Patriarch though he became, Ashbel Green did not live to see that day; but it is a curious fulfilment of his master's prophecy that the old postroad past Nassau Hall should now be a part of the Lincoln Highway stretching from coast to coast.

Dr. Witherspoon was deeply impressed by the development of the country immediately after the Revolution. Writing to the Earl of Buchan in the spring of 1788, after remarking that there was no news of moment except the approaching adoption of the federal constitution, he continued:

to a scholar & Philosopher it may be more worth while to observe this—the Rapidity with which the immense extent of Territory to the westward fills is most astonishing. To know or be informed of the Numbers that migrate would make a man suppose that the former settlements must be laid waste; yet it is not so.

There is no place with which I am acquainted in which they are not building new Houses. Princeton is very nearly double to what it was in 1776 & it is much more than double what it was when I came here in 1768. This is far from being all owing to an influx from Europe though to be sure this has some Effect, but the Increase of Mankind

<sup>17</sup> His arguments against a federal city are contained in "A few reflections humbly submitted to the consideration of the public in general, and in particular to the Congress of the United States," an article evidently prepared for the newspapers. (*Works*, vol. IV, p. 231.)

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when the far greatest part of them live a simple country Life is vastly greater than has been generally supposed. The Principles of Dr. Wallace's book on the Numbers of Mankind are clearly illustrated & fully confirmed by the present & past state of America.

Ashbel Green asserts that the President lamented the ambition and jealousy of the States in the formation of the Confederation, and passed judgment on the inefficiency of that compact at the time of its adoption. He complained, says Dr. Rodgers, of the petty spirit of the individual States which opposed the strong central government he advocated. His attitude toward the disposal of the western lands is only one illustration of this feeling. Especially did he remonstrate against the total inadequacy of the method of providing for public exigencies and debts by requisition on the States. He insisted that the government should hold in its hands the entire regulation of commerce and the revenues derived therefrom. This he had believed would have been sufficient for the needs of the United States in time of war; he was certain it would suffice in time of peace, and he had the satisfaction later of seeing the country swing to his view. He heartily rejoiced to see the adoption of the Constitution, as it embraced principles he had long advocated.

The respect President Witherspoon commanded in deliberative bodies, as we have already seen, was not due to his possession of any tricks of the oratorical trade. The untranslatable French of one of La Rochefoucauld's maxims—*La vraie éloquence se moque de l'éloquence*—expresses Dr. Witherspoon's case exactly; he was never eloquent in the ordinary sense of that word—he showed no warmth, or color of language, when he spoke. We know that he did not even have the orator's voice. Alexander Carlyle's description of his voice in early days is repeated by every later recollection of him, save Benjamin Rush's first rapture. But in spite of its weakness, that voice could be easily heard in the largest auditorium if there was silence. The secret of his success on the platform is revealed by Ashbel Green. Although a fair extempore speaker Dr. Witherspoon preferred to listen to debates in legislative and ecclesiastical courts and then, in the quiet of his room, to prepare a speech which he memorized

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and, when opportunity arose, delivered in apparent reply to a previous speaker. By this simple device he used to surprise his hearers with the orderliness of his ideas, when he was merely carrying out the advice he urged on his divinity students—the wisdom of careful preparation. His close dependence on memorized material perhaps deprived his utterances of spontaneity; but in part this lack of style was inborn. “After you have learned the theory of oratory in the most perfect manner,” he said to his students, “there is still the nameless something which nothing but experience can bestow;”<sup>18</sup> but he did not add that experience at best bestows only a small portion of this “nameless something” if the would-be orator is not to some degree its born possessor. And it was just this that he lacked and which all his experience never gave him.

In part also, his total lack of oratorical fervor was due to the restraint he carefully adopted after his nerves were shattered at Castle Doune. That experience left his whole nervous system extremely tense, and it was for this reason that in his delivery he substituted gravity for fervor. This studied self-repression left indelible traces in his style. Here evidently was a man who never let himself go; one is conscious that he must have felt deeply, keenly, perhaps passionately; but he kept himself closely in hand. The emotionalism of Ezra Stiles was not to be found in him; and Stiles’ thumb-nail sketch of Dr. Finley, President Witherspoon’s predecessor at Princeton, that he was a “boisterous” preacher who filled his sermons “with too much Gall and Invective,”<sup>19</sup> could never have been made of Witherspoon. Reading through his sermons and speeches one finds oneself on a level of high thinking and clear expression, a plateau as it were, elevated, but still a level. In vain one looks for the peaks thrusting up into the sky; the ringing phrase shot with immortality, the one inspired line that outlives a dozen pages of solid reasoning. This is wanting. He held his hearers by the sheer clarity of his thought and by his constant reversion to simple fundamental principles, the inferences from which were inescapable. That keen psychologist, Dr. Rush, his youthful impulsiveness

<sup>18</sup> *Works*, vol. III, p. 388.

<sup>19</sup> *Literary Diary*, vol. II, p. 337.

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outgrown, wrote of him as "a man of great and luminous mind. He seemed to arrive at truth intuitively. He made use of his reasoning power only to communicate it to others."<sup>20</sup> The peculiarly mature judgment which we are told marked him as a boy became the chief quality of his mental processes as man. Dr. Rodgers, for example, gave it as his opinion that Witherspoon's ability to seize upon the heart of every question, his skill to disentangle the most complicated subjects, his clearness and conclusiveness in reasoning were due to this innate soundness of judgment, and enabled him to conduct a discussion to the most speedy and decisive termination.<sup>21</sup>

Already conspicuous on his first appearance in the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, his position of intellectual leadership as President of the College of New Jersey added to this conspicuousness; the phenomenon that he speedily illustrated, a Briton turned completely American, capped the growth of his prominence and gave double weight to his views when he entered politics. If the attention he commanded owed nothing to any oratorical ability, still less was it due to any deference to his age, for although there were but seven or eight members of Congress older than himself—and the average age of the men who debated the Declaration of Independence was about forty-five—yet, he was only fifty-three. It was due to his known experience, his British birth and education, his breadth of learning, and his reputation for a certain mellow weightiness of mind. Ashbel Green, who knew by sight if not personally most of the great Americans of the Revolution, asserts moreover that President Witherspoon had more "presence" than any public character he knew, save Washington—and he did not have Washington's advantage of physique. Dr. Witherspoon's "presence" was not a physical quality; on the contrary it was what the brilliant Frenchman already quoted defined in one of his gentler moods as "a loftiness that does not depend on fortune, a certain air that distinguishes its possessor, compels the deference of others, and places him

<sup>20</sup> Biddle, *Memorial of Rusb*, p. 29.

<sup>21</sup> It is pertinent to note in this connection that he discarded logic as a formal study in college, insisting that thorough drill in the elements of Euclid was the finest possible training in logic.

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higher above his fellows than birth, honors, or even merit." The judicial sanity and the practical common sense of the President's views, and the directness and cogency of argument with which he urged them, kept him in the forefront of attention during his congressional service. Men felt that here was a person whose judgment could be trusted, who could think straight, and who voted as he thought. He himself appreciated the respect with which he was treated, although he explained it with his accustomed modesty:<sup>22</sup>

A person educated in the old countries, he wrote in 1778, had a degree of rank and credit from the circumstance independent of any other. I think the Americans were even partial in this respect. I believe had I myself been born and educated in America, I should have met with a degree of acceptance and success in my station far inferior to what actually happened.

Dr. Rush, however, considered that President Witherspoon's usefulness in Congress was hampered by his cloth and that he did not cut the figure there to which his ability entitled him. The President always sat in gown and bands,<sup>23</sup> and this practice is said to have spared him liberties of speech on the part of his colleagues which might have wounded his sensibilities; but it is difficult to see how he was hampered, or how he could have been more active. His presence in Congress added a novel and a distinctly picturesque personality to that assembly. If his isolation as a clergyman placed him at any disadvantage with his colleagues, the latter in return conceded him a compensating advantage in his fresh reading of the authorities for his college courses in international law, politics, government, reviews which he did not hesitate to use before his maturer audience. Whether his cloth hampered him or not, had his fellow-members slighted the value of his judgments he would not have been appointed to the committee work that fell to him; and had he been a negligible figure he would not have drawn upon himself the constant attention of foreign observers. We have seen what his own hostile compatriots in Scotland thought of him; what the British officer

<sup>22</sup> "Letter on the Contest between Great Britain and America," *Works*, vol. IV, p. 300.

<sup>23</sup> He never used the clerical wig, but wore his hair buckled at the back.

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at the 1783 commencement reported; and what Professor Adam Ferguson's opinion was. Horace Walpole is said to have remarked that the Colonies had run away after a Presbyterian parson, and even if the remark has repelled all attempts at verification, it represents pretty accurately the thought of no small portion of the British public. The British spy, Paul Wentworth, in his "Minutes concerning some characters in America" describes the President as "an able—Indefatigable—cunning—well informed Person—great talents and address—a Zealot, a Republican, but prone to the love of Power & Riches."<sup>24</sup> In 1777 Wentworth had already named him to William Eden as a leader on the anti-British side,<sup>25</sup> and Lord Carlisle's list of American leaders in June, 1778, similarly includes him.<sup>26</sup> We know that when with General Reed he was sent to Europe in 1783 the British authorities in New York City thought it worth while to warn the home government. And in a *Liste des Membres et Officiers du Congres*, dated 1783 and preserved in the archives of the French Foreign Office, his name occurs, with a curious confusion as to his Scottish career, to the effect that he was a "*vieillard intéressant par son zèle qui l'obligea de quitter l'Ecosse où il avoit embrassé le parti du Prétendant. Il a dit au commencement de la révolution que ce seroit la dernière fois qu'il se mêleroit de rebellion.*"<sup>27</sup>

But after all, Dr. Witherspoon's political service was incidental to the main current of his life, a day's task fulfilled to the best of his ability, and laid aside when that day was done. His chosen work, that of the clergyman and educator, was a task he never put down, and it is there that his true power must be sought. Had he lived in the present time he would have been a natural supporter of church institutionalism. There was in his make-up a gift of leadership and a vigorous interest in life at large that had to find expression no matter where he was or what his official duties were. He had preached that ministers should keep out of politics, chiefly perhaps because of his objection to a state-con-

<sup>24</sup> Stevens, *Facsimiles*, 487 f° 30.

<sup>25</sup> Stevens, 3.

<sup>26</sup> Stevens, 71.

<sup>27</sup> *Min. Aff. Etr.*, Archives. Etats Unis, Corresp. Supplément, 2e serie, XV, f° 328. This reference was given to the writer by Professor Max Farrand.

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trolled Church, but the first thing he himself had done on entering the ministry had been to lead his militaristic parishioners in a purely political enterprise; later this strain found vent in ecclesiastical politics and his militant interest in the relation of the Scottish church to Scottish life. In Scotland, however, he was primarily a pastor; when he came to America he found his opportunities enlarged to an extraordinary degree. His clerical office was eclipsed by the very nature and prestige of his new position. Pre-eminent though his influence was in American ecclesiastical councils, like later American clerical heads of colleges he found it impossible to divest himself of his academic rôle when he appeared in the pulpits of the day; he was first and always President of one of the leading colleges of the land at a time when colleges were not yet as thick as leaves. After his coming to America he was never again in the full sense pastor of a church. He sorely missed this relation, however much his new approaches to society may have satisfied certain other needs of his nature, and he never outgrew the feeling of utter loss that swept over him when he first faced his Princeton congregation and bethought him of the parish he had left behind "at home."

It is true that in his opening lecture on divinity he admitted that the chief comfort of his coming to America and sacrificing the work he had been doing in Scotland was the hope that he "might be instrumental in furnishing the minds, and improving the talents, of those who might hereafter be the ministers of the everlasting gospel."<sup>28</sup> But he did not allow this hope to outweigh all others. In his *Address to the West Indies* he said that boys had been graduated from Princeton whose church affiliations he did not know. The non-sectarian atmosphere of the College is further indicated by the fact that in his administration specially printed versions of the Episcopal Catechism and of the Shorter Catechism were used as college texts for Sunday study. He harbored no fancy that piety, whether Presbyterian or Anglican, was a universal panacea. "Some pious persons believe that religion is better than all the learning in the world, and have come to despise learning itself," and of them he did not approve any more highly than of those who, "promising well in early life" become

<sup>28</sup> *Works*, vol. IV, p. 10.

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“enamored with human wisdom,” and think “themselves such great scholars that they are too proud to be Christians.” He warns his divinity students that “intellectual pride is perhaps as dangerous a distemper as any we are liable to.”<sup>29</sup>

He held one “great and leading view” ever before his eyes when teaching:

to unite together piety and literature, to show their relation to, and their influence one upon another, and to guard against any thing that may tend to separate them, and set them in opposition one to another.<sup>30</sup>

Accordingly, the religious life of the campus during his administration in general reflected the sanity of his attitude. It was marked by restraint rather than by any sensationalism. He was open-minded enough to allow Dr. Jedidiah Chapman to remain a week on the campus, nor did he resent the invitation to Dr. Spencer, who was a better exhorter; but, while he permitted the youthful enthusiast Bradford to spread a new doctrine among the students, he did not muzzle himself.

The Revolutionary War was destructive to strict piety in Nassau Hall and Dr. Green tells us that in his senior year he was the only “professing Christian” among the students, “and a number were grossly profane.”<sup>31</sup> The first part of this statement is hard to believe, but if it be true, the solitariness of Green’s religious experience gives relative significance to the acquaintance with Rousseau’s writings revealed by the grammar school valedictorian of 1783. Ten years later, so it is said, the works of Voltaire, Volney, and Thomas Paine were in everyone’s hands, and, according to some observers, infidelity was spreading

<sup>29</sup> *Works*, IV, 11. The same thought occurs in his *Address to the Senior Class*: “We see sometimes the pride of unsanctified knowledge do great injury to religion; and on the other hand, we find some persons of real piety, despising human learning, and disgracing the most glorious truths, by a meanness and indecency hardly sufferable in their manner of handling them.” *Works*, II, 617.

<sup>30</sup> *Works*, vol. IV, p. 10.

<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, they checked their tongues under circumstances that would have tested the patience of more experienced natures; for Green goes on to admit that the College behaved perfectly well at five o’clock morning prayers, when in the absence of the President, the Vice-president and the faculty he, as a pious Senior, used to conduct that compulsory so-called devotional exercise. (*Autobiography*, p. 133).

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throughout the College.<sup>32</sup> Apparently toward the end of President Witherspoon's administration, in spite of the advantage the philosophy of realism enjoyed it had proved unable to keep Princeton undergraduates locked in "intellectual dormitories," as Professor Riley puts it, "safe from the dark speculations of materialism or the beguiling allurements of idealism."<sup>33</sup>

There is no doubt that President Witherspoon established at Princeton its traditional and almost official philosophical doctrine. His life in America was too varied and active to allow him the leisure to be a creative philosopher, even if he had possessed that type of mind. He was a man of action rather than meditation, practising his philosophy rather than writing about it; he left behind him no philosophical work; even his lectures on philosophy consist of the merest outlines, were never intended for publication, did not receive his correction, and acquired an authority of which he had not dreamed. But through these lectures, repeated to several college generations, he gave firm rootage in America to the doctrine he had brought with him from Scotland. He came over with his philosophical mind somewhat rigidly made up, as Professor Riley has remarked, and at his age possessed ideas more conservative than those of his predecessors. These ideas were the tenets of Scottish realism and the common-sense school of Reid and others. He used to claim that before Reid or any other writer had criticized idealism he had written against it in the essay in the *Scots Magazine* mentioned in an earlier chapter, a production which modern critics consider at best but a dubious refutation of Berkleyanism.<sup>34</sup> Certain it is that Dr. Witherspoon had no patience with early American idealism, as the group of advanced thinkers at Princeton discovered when he set about checking their influence.

His substitution of the firmer though less alluring Scottish philosophy in place of Berkleyanism was not without its disad-

<sup>32</sup> Joseph W. Scott (of 1795) writes in November, 1794, to the future bishop John Henry Hobart (of 1793) forwarding a message from Joseph Caldwell (of 1791), to the effect that "if you are coming, be expeditious, or otherwise we will not have a sufficient barrier against infidelity, which is spreading its dominion far and wide." *Archives of the General Convention, Hobart Correspondence*, vol. I, p. 107.

<sup>33</sup> J. W. Riley, *American Philosophy*, p. 477.

<sup>34</sup> Riley, *American Thought*, p. 128.

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vantages. While the College became a point of strategic importance between the idealists of the North and the materialists of the South, continues the historian of American philosophy, "the victory over the opposing forces was gained only at considerable expense, the loss of a certain spirit of liberality due to the replacement of speculation by dogma, of philosophy by theology."<sup>35</sup> It may be true that contemporary philosophical tendencies elsewhere in America had more of the breath of intellectual liberty in them, although they were not more safe or sound, but if these tendencies were chilled to their death by the Princeton doctrine—and this seems to have been particularly true with regard to the French philosophical influence in Virginia and the Carolinas—the fact constitutes striking evidence of the remarkable power exercised by a man who after all was only incidentally a philosopher.<sup>36</sup>

If Dr. Witherspoon was hardly a creative thinker, he was still less a formal theologian. His unrivalled position in American ecclesiastical circles, which may have proved to be one compensation for his loss of the purely pastoral relations he had so dearly prized in Scotland, was based not so much on his doctrine as on his perfect familiarity with the historic principles, discipline, and forms of Presbyterianism. His theology was plainly one which would find favor with his American ecclesiastical colleagues, being essentially that of the Old School Presbyterians on the fundamental Calvinistic dogmas. His general sermons, framed on the conventional lines taught at Edinburgh, are purely evangelical. He once said that if they had any particularly valuable feature it was that they emphasized the essential principles of the subjects they treated. Dr. Benjamin Rush on the other hand set it down as his deliberate and mature opinion that "there was nothing in Dr. Witherspoon's sermons to recom-

<sup>35</sup> There is a suggestion of this in the continuation of Scott's letter to Hobart mentioned in an earlier note. He is still referring to Caldwell's message about the spread of infidelity: "This stroke I apprehended is meant for me: he knows I have been reading Hume and is frequently giving me sharp strokes about my beliefs. I have said that reading the above named I thought rendered any person less bigoted; Caldwell supposes that I believe all that is said by Hume."

<sup>36</sup> See review of his *Moral Philosophy* in *New York Evening Post*, November 23, 1912; also H. B. Adams, *Jefferson and the University of Virginia*, p. 28 (United States Bureau of Education, Circular of Information No. 1).

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mend them but their uncommon good sense and simplicity,"<sup>37</sup>— which was pretty close to the truth and does not necessarily contradict the President's words. The principles referred to by Dr. Witherspoon are discussed in his group of doctrinal sermons and essays published before he came to America and constitute his sole and slight contribution to a system of theology.<sup>38</sup> To them he added nothing during his American career, save as his divinity lectures, incomplete though they are, developed some of his points. In this connection it should be said that he seems to have prepared for publication a volume of essays intended to promote church unity, but this project came to naught, and his manuscripts on the subject have been lost.

The President's influence as an educator is to be sought in his upbuilding of the Grammar School, his broadening of the college curriculum and his provision of graduate courses, in the wide variety of pupils he attracted to Princeton, and in their subsequent careers. The school was the first department of the College to feel the new vigor he brought to Princeton, and the stress he laid on it in his announcements and in his administration was not a selfish one, even though the school was a presidential perquisite. He was constantly emphasizing the importance of early education. His British belief in disciplinary fundamentals and in the necessity of beginning them while a boy was still young, was the point, as we have seen, on which he broke with the Reverend Mr. Boucher. Especially interesting is his full appreciation of the fact that the education some of his scholars received in the basement of Nassau Hall would be the only formal instruction they would ever get, and his consequent planning of special courses for boys intending to go no further in their studies. As early as 1771 he announced, for example, that they could have French and the practical parts of mathematics if they desired. Clearly he was here anticipating one of the problems of the modern American public school and meeting it in not a very different

<sup>37</sup> *Rush Memorial*, p. 86.

<sup>38</sup> Professor Lyman H. Atwater of Princeton estimated Dr. Witherspoon as a theologian in the *Biblical Repertory* for October, 1863, vol. XXXV, p. 596. His material is drawn entirely from these sources:

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way, except that he did not discard the immemorial foundations and the tested training to be gained in classical studies.

✓ The President's theories on education are scattered through his essays and lectures and are most definitely expressed in his newspaper announcements. His *Letters on Education* deal only with moral upbringing of children and are negligible in the present connection. First of all, he did not believe in forcing higher education upon the unwilling or the ineducable; "it is not only difficult to instruct those who have a radical incapacity for any study, but sometimes they are much worse for application just as fine clothes and a courtly dress upon a clown renders him unspeakably ridiculous."<sup>39</sup> Book learning amounts to nothing of itself: "we find many who learn the dead languages to great perfection, who learn arithmetic, geometry, natural philosophy, rhetoric, politics, who even become eminent in some of these and tolerably skilled in all, whom yet we reckon greatly inferior to more ignorant persons, in clear, sound common sense."<sup>40</sup> It has already been shown that Dr. Witherspoon placed but little value on merely acquisitive scholarship. In his lectures to his divinity students he pointed out that:

To excel in any particular branch of science, and to know everything upon that branch that may be known, is the work of a life-time. Grammar, mathematics, astronomy, oratory, history, law, physic, poetry, painting, statuary, architecture, music; nay, the subordinate divisions of some of these sciences, such as anatomy, botany, chymistry, are all of them sufficient to employ a life, to carry them to perfection. It is therefore plainly in itself improbably, that almost any man can attain a high degree of perfection in all, or indeed in many of these branches of study. There is something more to be observed: the person who addicts himself to any one of those studies so as to be an adept, or really a complete master in it, cannot be a man of extensive knowledge; and it is but seldom that he can be a man of a liberal or noble turn of mind, because his time is consumed by the particularities, and his mind narrowed by attending to one particular art. He is likewise apt to esteem his favourite study so much, as to confine all excellence and even all capacity to it. . . . Hence you may observe

<sup>39</sup> "Eloquence," *Works*, vol. III, p. 383.

<sup>40</sup> "Druid," *Works*, vol. IV, p. 171.

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that all who are devoted to the particular study of one small branch, are generally considered as pedants. . . . But I observe that the most reasonable pedants and the least to be blamed are those whose hearts are set upon what is their business in life. Therefore though a schoolmaster can scarcely speak without citing Virgil or Horace, he is to be indulged; and though he may not make the most distinguished figure in public or polite life, yet he is useful in his generation, and fit for the discharge of his trust.<sup>41</sup>

But Dr. Witherspoon appreciated true learning applied to the service of mankind and realized clearly the need his adopted country was under of stimulating intellectual life. Nothing, he declared, was holding America back in point of general knowledge so much as the lack of large libraries, where "thorough researches" might be made, and the small number of learned men "to assist in making research practicable, easy, and complete." The enlargement of the Princeton library had been his first care even before he set foot on American soil. After its depletion in the Revolutionary War he at once set about replenishing it by inducing English and Scottish authors to present their works, enlisting in particular the aid of the Earl of Buchan in Scotland. His own library must have been large for his day; its remnant still contains about nine hundred titles. The constant bibliographical references in his lectures show the importance he attached to the use of books. "Reading a few books well chosen," said he to his divinity students, "and digesting them thoroughly, together with the frequent exercise of reflection, will make a knowing and intelligent man: but to make what the world calls a learned man, or a great scholar, requires a very general knowledge of authors, books, and opinions of all kinds."<sup>42</sup>

Not only did he constantly urge his students to continue their reading after college days were over, but those who cared to have his counsel as to further study he was only too glad to advise. John Read, after commencement in 1787, returned home bearing to his father, the Hon. George Read, the Delaware statesman, a typical letter from the President, in which the latter testified to the great satisfaction the young man had given to the college

<sup>41</sup> *Works*, vol. IV, pp. 18, 19.

<sup>42</sup> *Works*, vol. IV, p. 17.

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authorities—he had talked with him about his future—“if he cannot return here I shall willingly write him my opinion upon the subject of future studies.”<sup>43</sup>

His letters to his son David show how solicitously he watched over the lad's further development after graduation:

I received your favour of the 20th past, with pleasure, he wrote in January, 1777. When I cast my eye on the back of it, I thought it was somebody that wrote very distinctly and neatly and did not think of you, till I saw with satisfaction your name at the bottom. There are however still some small inaccuracies—be ambitious of improving every day.

A little later he wrote:

I need hardly tell you that our greatest comfort now is to hear of the welfare of our children. It gives me unspeakable pleasure to hear that you apply to your studies, both in teaching and reading. . . . Be as accurate as possible in writing your letters, and take pains to improve your hand.

It having been reported that David was “lusty and grown much,” the President wrote to him:

That is a pleasing but very inconsiderable circumstance, compared with the accounts I had before and confirmed by him of your applying diligently to your business. I wish you to be sensible how much joy I have had from this information, and therefore often repeat it. My first concern is that you should fear God . . . now that you are at a distance, I pray you to remember that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Next to the *one thing needful*, you know I am chiefly concerned for your improvement in useful knowledge, and fitness for the duties of active life; and I am persuaded by the taste you have taken, you will find the highest pleasure and the greatest honour by attending to your duty.

And once more:

I hope, my dear boy, if you continue to keep the path which I have chalked out for you, you will be useful, happy, and successful in life. Give great application to your studies, but above all be attentive to

<sup>43</sup>W. R. Read, *Life of George Read*, p. 459.

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your moral conduct. . . . Remember, my beloved child, that those who have been trained up in the fear of God, cannot sin at so cheap a rate as others, and that the great advantages which you have had, and do still enjoy, must be accounted for. I wish your accomplishment in every respect, and therefore bear with me while I put you in mind to prevent at any rate a habit of holding down your head, or keeping it on one side, or any other ungraceful habit. Let there be decency in your outward carriage, reserve and modesty in your conversation, and humility in your heart.<sup>44</sup>

He must have been gratified by the increasing number of young men who did not think their studying days were done when they received their diplomas, but who came back to Princeton, like James Madison, to read for a year or so longer under his guidance. No one regretted more than he the failure of the effort made in 1781 to systematize the graduate department of the College.

Most of all did he seek to make his divinity students well-read men, and here in all probability is the explanation of the influence his clerical graduates exerted. "Piety without literature, is but little profitable," he said in his introductory lecture, "and learning without piety, is pernicious to others, and ruinous to the possessor." And in his second lecture he says: "There is no branch of literature without its use. If it were possible for a minister to be acquainted with every branch of science, he would be more fit for public usefulness . . . I may also say, therefore, it were good if a minister were a person of extensive knowledge."<sup>45</sup> He strongly recommended as helpful in the ministerial calling not only eloquence, belles lettres, and moral philosophy, but also history sacred and profane, the classics, Hebrew, and French. The remains of the ancients were still the standard of taste, and all literary persons should be familiar with them. He, therefore, advised the reading of the classics with the best critics.

It is to be lamented that many spend a great part of the time of their education in learning Latin and Greek, and yet few ever attain them to that perfection, which alone can make the learning of a language of great moment, so that they can read the authors with pleasure, and

<sup>44</sup> The letters quoted above are from the *Christian Advocate*, vol. II, pp. 443-5.

<sup>45</sup> *Works*, vol. IV, pp. 11, 17.

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profit for the matter which they contain. This might easily be attained by almost any student after his grammar school and other education.<sup>46</sup>

French was both useful and ornamental:

There is hardly any such thing as a learned education in Britain, where the French language is omitted. . . . And though there are some branches of writing in which there are English authors not inferior to any of the French that I am acquainted with; yet, in general, there is to be found a greater purity, simplicity and precision in the French authors than in the English.<sup>47</sup>

But what had chiefly disposed him to recommend the French language was the "sound calvinistic, reformation divinity" to be read in that language: "There are many more able and elegant writers in that language than in English;" and he was broad-minded enough to admit that there were admirable treatises by popish divines in French, not to mention the writings of the Jansenists.

It will be recalled that he had offered French as a graduate study on his arrival in 1768, and had introduced it into the undergraduate curriculum as an elective subject as early as 1770, and into the grammar school in 1771, teaching the language himself. That he spoke and read French easily we know, although the Marquis de Chastellux's comment on his pronunciation is sufficient authority for the conclusion that the President's accent was far from Parisian. Parisian or not, his knowledge of the language proved of great service in his congressional days. On the arrival of Baron Steuben at Yorktown in 1777, Dr. Witherspoon found that he alone of the committee of which he was chairman could converse with the Baron, who knew no English, but could speak French. He acted as interpreter in the interview which sought to learn the terms of Steuben's service, and was called as a witness for the Baron when the latter's claim came up. It was because of the increasing usefulness of the language in the new country that he made such a point of its study.

<sup>46</sup> *Works*, vol. IV, p. 20.

<sup>47</sup> *Works*, vol. IV, p. 21.

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You will find a vast advantage in the French (language) now, he wrote in February, 1777, to his son David, for there are multitudes of Frenchmen come over and almost everybody is ambitious of learning the French. I am often employed as interpreter to those who come to Congress, and have many visits from them.<sup>48</sup>

A letter from him to M. Marbois, secretary of the French mission in America, throws light on his effort to popularize the language in college; it is dated from "Tusculum" July 18, 1783:

I am just favoured with your Letter of the 14th by Mr. Delandes to the Education of whose son I shall pay the strictest Attention. We have now several young french Gentlemen which gives me much Pleasure & I hope will be attended with happy Effects.

As to Mr. Lavalette he came to Princeton of his own Accord to teach the French Language. I was well pleased with it & gave him all the Encouragement in my Power as I had done much before the War to introduce the Knowledge of the French Language and Writings among our Students & indeed taught the Language myself as well as I could for some years. . . . I believe the Reason why he removed was that all he could gain was not a sufficient support.<sup>49</sup>

Dr. Witherspoon's own reading in French seems to have been limited chiefly to the Port Royalists and the French Calvinistic writers. Fénelon appears to have been studied carefully by him and is easily his favorite French author after Montesquieu. To the latter he refers again and again with admiration, and for a few years the *Spirit of Laws* was used as a textbook in his courses. Other classical Frenchmen, Molière and Pascal, Fontenelle and Boileau are barely named, while La Rochefoucauld is scored in the *Address to the Senior Class*. Although Voltaire was being read surreptitiously in college toward the end of his administration, the President himself had in his library only a copy of the London (1784) edition of Voltaire's memoirs;<sup>50</sup> and the deist receives but a sentence in his printed lectures—like David Hume, Voltaire's enmity, he says, appears to be directed against religion in general and not against the gospel, save that Voltaire "deals very

<sup>48</sup> *Christian Advocate*, vol. II, p. 444.

<sup>49</sup> Pennsylvania Historical Society.

<sup>50</sup> Bearing the autograph "D. Witherspoon"; possibly David.

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much in particular cavils, and of the most silly kind."<sup>51</sup> He owned a copy of Hume's account of his controversy with Rousseau published at London in 1766, and Rousseau's theory of the degeneration of society was quoted by the grammar school valedictorian in 1783, but the President's lectures contain no allusion to the author of the *Social Contract*.

Dr. Witherspoon's college courses were the first to establish a tradition at Princeton. Other lecturers had preceded him; and several had been more eloquent; but they were scarcely more than temporary, while he had the advantage of lecturing for a quarter of a century on the same group of subjects. With a personality like his the establishment of a tradition was inevitable. His pupils carried away their carefully copied notes and many used them as the basis of their own lectures when in turn they found themselves teaching in after years. Until his time the curriculum had been chiefly confined to three fields—the classics, mental philosophy, and natural philosophy, with daily practice in oratory. While he strengthened the whole course in these fields, and was a pioneer American college lecturer on history and on philosophy, he was more conspicuously the first to give particular attention to the cultivation of the English language, which as a study had been neglected. "The education must be very imperfect in any seminary," he declared in the *Druid*, "where no care is taken to form the scholars to taste, propriety and accuracy, in that language which they must speak and write all their life afterward."<sup>52</sup> Accordingly, "great pains have been taken," he said in October, 1773, in announcing the opening of the next college term,

to introduce a taste for the study of the English Language, not without considerable success, and it is earnestly recommended to all masters of schools, that they be at pains, not only to make their pupils well acquainted with the Grammar and construction of the Greek and Latin Languages, but with the Orthography, Punctuation and Grammar of their own Language, in which, if they be defective, when they come to enter College it is extremely difficult afterwards to remedy.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> *Works*, vol. IV, p. 24.

<sup>52</sup> *Works*, vol. IV, p. 180.

<sup>53</sup> *New Jersey Archives*, 1 ser., vol. XXIX, p. 60.

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His influence in this direction is said to have done much to correct contemporary speech and purify contemporary taste in literature. The literary criticisms which he put forth for more than a quarter of a century not only in his college lectures but in the public press did not fail of effect. In the opinion of many, his most important influence was to be found here, Dr. Rush going so far as to allege that in this respect Dr. Witherspoon "gave a new turn to education and spread taste and correctness throughout the United States" so that it was possible to pick out his pupils whenever they wrote or spoke. While this statement may be an exaggeration, nevertheless it appears to be generally conceded that he gave fresh impetus to literary style and appreciation in those centers where such an influence would have most weight. As Dr. Rodgers puts it, the mode of learning was changed by Dr. Witherspoon and literary inquiry and improvement became more liberal, more extensive, more profound, because of the influence that emanated from Nassau Hall. This was particularly true of the Middle Colonies and Dr. Rodgers' implication that the College in Witherspoon's day was a fountain of new literary vigor in those Colonies is corroborated by Professor Tyler.<sup>64</sup> The movement centered about a little group of undergraduates of whom Philip Freneau and Hugh Brackenridge were the leaders, the former the first true lyric poet the country saw, the other America's earliest dramatist and novelist. Their undergraduate adventures into literature have been noted by Professor Pattee in his edition of Freneau's *Poems*, and included not only poetry but fiction.

Oratory and the classics had been the backbone of the Princeton curriculum when President Witherspoon arrived and he left oratory even more firmly entrenched. The attention that Princeton undergraduate platform utterances attracted in his day has been sufficiently referred to. He found when he came to Princeton that the prevailing style of public speaking was the persuasive and he urged his pupils to cultivate the narrative style as lying better within their powers, but it does not appear that they made much use of his advice. Senator William B. Giles of the Class of 1781, replying in 1827 in the Virginia Legislature to

<sup>64</sup> *Literary History*, vol. I, pp. 11, 187.

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what he called a "jingling sonorous" speech of Henry Clay, recorded two fundamental rules he had learned at Princeton:

It happened to be my fortune in early life, he said, to be placed for my education under the care of the late celebrated Dr. Witherspoon of Princeton College. The Doctor although highly learned, was as much celebrated for the simplicity and elegance of his style and for the brevity of his orations, as for the extent and solidity of his erudition. He lectured the class of which I was a member upon eloquence and criticism and was delighted with the exercises in that branch of science. . . . He commenced his lectures in the simplest style of conversation. "Lads, if it should fall to the lot of any of ye, as it may do, to appear upon the theatre of public life, let me impress upon your minds two rules in oratory that are never to be departed from upon any occasion whatever—Ne'er do ye speak unless ye ha' some thing to say, and when ye are done, be sure and leave off." Frightful restraints upon modern oratory! The Doctor would proceed most methodically to impress upon the class the sacred inviolability of each of these rules and the indispensable necessity of their strict observance by every pretender to oratory.

Dr. Witherspoon gave his personal attention to his students' productions, in some cases writing their orations himself. There is, for example, extant in his handwriting, a Latin oration delivered by one of his boys on the very subject he had used for his inaugural; a commencement dialogue on "Civil Liberty" by two other undergraduates and published in the *Pennsylvania Magazine* for April, 1776, was written for them, says Dr. Green, and was taken from the President's lectures; the British officer who attended commencement in 1783 incognito expresses more than current opinion when he speaks of the President's hand visibly coloring the orations of the day, for a college law required all commencement performances to undergo his correction. The emphasis at Princeton on oratorical and English training led to the selection of that college for the education of John Randolph of Roanoke. His mother wished him to become an orator and he was, therefore, sent to what he later called "the noisy wretched grammar school kept for Dr. Witherspoon's emolument," where the prizes for elocution were borne away by "mouthers and ranters," to the utter disgust of this superior Virginian of four-

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teen, who, in his own estimation at least, was a better scholar than any of his fellows and just as good as his master.<sup>55</sup> Public speaking being the chief object of the American Whig and Cliosophic Societies, it is no wonder that facility in that art was a characteristic of the men who graduated under Witherspoon.

A distinct novelty introduced into the curriculum by the President was the study of history, which his announcement asserted was "easy, pleasant, and profitable, and by a peculiar happiness of this age, fashionable"—a craftily worded advertisement whose allurements must have appealed to every type of undergraduate mind. Instruction in history was given by means of lectures, but Dr. Witherspoon's notes have not been preserved. Dr. Green reports that they were fragmentary and that he, therefore, "suppressed" them, when he prepared the President's writings for publication.

The single manuscript student version (and no other is known save an outline by Fithian) in the Library of Princeton University, a quarto of twenty-four leaves stitched together, is likewise fragmentary, containing only six lectures. It was made by Abel Johnson of the Class of 1784 and was copied from either the President's notes or from another undergraduate version. Gaps occurring where words in the original were illegible, and in particular one amusing error, prove that young Johnson was merely a copyist. He makes the President assert that Noah's Ark is supposed to have rested on the mountains of "America"—not the first time, nor the last, that Armenia has been mishandled.

The study of history, says the President in his opening sentence, "is, first, honorable being at present in high repute especially in our country, 2<sup>d</sup> useful, 3<sup>d</sup> delightful, 4<sup>th</sup> very much connected with and subservient to the interest of religion."<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup> H. A. Garland, *Life of John Randolph of Roanoke*. It was this lad's valuable conviction that "nowhere is there such foul play as among professors and schoolmasters, more especially if they are priests." Which disposes completely, and once for all, of Dr. Witherspoon, his grammar school, and the local brand of oratory!

<sup>56</sup> In his *Serious Enquiry into the Nature of Effects of the Stage* he had already remarked that the knowledge of history was "necessary for proving the truths of natural, and confirming those of revealed religion; for repelling the attacks of adversaries, and giving us such a view of the plan of Providence, as may excite us to the exercise of the duties of adoration, thankfulness, trust, and submission to the Supreme Disposer of all events. Real facts only are proper for this purpose."

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Two lectures deal with chronology and the remaining four cover the period from the providential creation of the world (4003 B.C.) out of previously non-existent matter to the death of the patriarch Jacob (1690 B.C.). How far the entire course extended cannot be said, and it is perhaps unfair to try to form an estimate of the whole from the opening group of lectures. Their outstanding feature is the attempt made in the last three lectures to describe, "the state of religion in that period . . . the state of civil society, and the improvements of the human mind." Under these heads the President discussed the origin of laws and government, the progress of manufactures, commerce, and the arts, the beginnings of science, the development of the art of warfare, and finally, general manners and customs. The peoples described are the Egyptians, Assyrians, and Phoenicians, with constant reference to the Old Testament. Dr. Stiles considered the President a good historical scholar and the reader is at once struck by the numerous historical allusions in his essays and speeches; but the fragmentary notes on his lectures would indicate that his outlines were more curious than well formulated.

From Dr. Witherspoon's lectures on "Eloquence," imperfect though they also are in their printed form, we can reach some judgment as to the scope of his own reading and taste in general literature. His inevitably high opinion of the value of the classics is apparent in all his academic pronouncements, but he was no mere classicist. In an allusion to the famous French Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns, like his much admired Fénelon he takes the middle ground. A better Latinist than Grecian, whenever he quotes from the classics it is from a Latin author. In the same mention of the French Quarrel he passes judgment on "great and excellent patterns to form upon, both ancient and modern;" and thus among the Greeks he names Demosthenes, "simple, close, nervous, rapid and irresistible," and Xenophon "superior to almost every author in dignity, elegance and sweetness in the narrative." Of the Latins he names Cicero— "flowing, fervent, ornate, somewhat vain and ostentatious, but masterly in his way;" Livy, who has "a bewitching knack of telling a story," Sallust, who "excels in giving characters, which he strikes off in single epithets, or very concise remarks;" and Tacit-

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tus, "remarkable for judicious and sagacious observations on human life." Among the moderns he names Addison, whose *Spectator* he knew intimately, as a "noble pattern of elegance, dignity, and simplicity;" Swift in his political pieces is "a pattern of style which has scarcely been exceeded since his time;" and his old rival Dr. Robertson, turned historian, he generously declares "has as just a mixture of strength and elegance, as any other author I know in the English language." Just here Dr. Witherspoon cannot help cautioning his hearers against

one modern author of some eminence, Johnson, the author of *Rambler*. He is so stiff and abstracted in his manner and such a lover of hard words, that he is the worst pattern for young persons that can be named.<sup>57</sup>

In his closing lecture on "Eloquence" he considers the alliance between the various kinds of written and spoken composition and the fine arts, poetry, oratory, music, painting, sculpture, and architecture. He believed in a standard of taste—that set by leading authors on aesthetics; but evading himself a definition of this alleged standard, he declares that the way to state it is to quote the opinion of these authors, as for example, Addison *On the pleasures of the imagination*, Longinus *On the Sublime*, Crousaz *Traité du beau*, Hogarth *Analysis of Beauty*, Burke *On the Sublime*, Gerard's *Essay on Taste* and the French author of the *Theory of agreeable Sensations*.

As we have seen, Dr. Witherspoon's interest in poetry was of the slightest, and the few poetical quotations he made in his lectures are used only to point some moral. Here Horace is his commonest source, with Vergil a distant follower. Butler, Young, Swift, and Pope are infrequent English sources, although he is said to have been thoroughly familiar with the seventeenth-century British poets. His life-long antipathy to the stage explains

<sup>57</sup>"Lectures on Eloquence," *Works*, III, 386, 387. Dr. Witherspoon's opinion of Robertson was not shared by Dr. Johnson, who disliked him for what he called his "verbiage," although as Mr. Boswell hints, the dislike was more probably based on Johnson's general antipathy to the Scotch. Incidentally, it is interesting to find that Dr. Witherspoon had in his library a copy of Boswell's Edinburgh graduation dissertation, or *Disputatio Juridica* (Edinburgh, 1766), which fact suggests the possibility of an acquaintance.

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his neglect of the drama. To Shakespeare he refers but three times—twice to *Julius Caesar* and once to *Hamlet*. Molière is the only French dramatist he names and in his one allusion to him, he merely calls attention to the ecclesiastical opposition aroused by *Le Tartuffe*. For poets as a class he had but slight regard, if a passage in one of his *Druid* essays may be trusted; he has known “youths of bright genius, in their own esteem,” he says, “who have looked down with contempt on the plodding boys, and yet the latter have become men of spirit, and capacity, while the others have turned out to be rakes and bullies and even block-heads,” or “taking the road to Mt. Helicon have become poets, fools, and beggars.”<sup>68</sup> And yet the prizes offered in his grammar school commencement competitions were the works of English authors, in prose “and poetry.” But if his interest in poetry was negligible, he was imaginative enough to have interesting ideas on simplified spelling, on the influence of climate on style, on the value of a central authority in language such as the French Academy, on the probability of an American school of English speech distinct from, and as authoritative as, the British; and on punctuation—“a thing the scholar should strive to understand a little, tho’ few gentlemen and scholars use it much in their letters or in their composition.” And in this respect Dr. Witherspoon was both a gentleman and a scholar; for his amanuensis asserts—and is fully corroborated by the President’s remaining manuscripts—that the only punctuation mark he used was the period.

When Dr. Ezra Stiles, estimating the sixteen college presidents he had known, laid down the opinion that Dr. Witherspoon’s mathematical and scientific training was inferior, he was not far from the truth. The President’s acquaintance with the higher mathematics, with astronomy, and with physical science in general, was little more than elementary. He once undertook to criticize an essay on the Cartesian and Newtonian theories published in the *Pennsylvania Magazine* by Dr. Matthew Wilson who enjoyed reputation as a physicist. In the next issue of the magazine the President found himself somewhat tartly answered by David Rittenhouse himself; and wisely refrained from ven-

<sup>68</sup> *Works*, vol. IV, p. 178.

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turing again into that field of polemics.<sup>59</sup> But he appreciated the value of the physical sciences and extended and emphasized their place in his curriculum. The experimental apparatus he purchased in London for the College was considered, before the Revolution, one of the best in the country; his acquisition of the Rittenhouse orrery was a step in the same direction; lack of funds alone kept him from strengthening his faculty on the scientific side earlier than he did, and after the war, with his apparatus wrecked, he called to the faculty Walter Minto, a genuine mathematician and physicist. Dr. Green declares that there was a distinct change in the upperclass curriculum after the war, by which juniors and seniors spent their whole time "in mathematics, philosophy, natural and moral, belles lettres, criticism, composition and eloquence," resulting in the virtual elimination of the classics. This post-war materializing or commercializing of the curriculum, as Dr. Green would have called it, came to such an unheard-of pass that in his own class (1783) there was one individual who did not even know the Greek alphabet and yet received his degree, while the Latin salutatorian, whose oration was written by Dr. Witherspoon, was such a poor Latinist that he came to Green for a translation of the President's composition. On the other hand there was criticism of the equipment in science toward the end of Dr. Witherspoon's administration,<sup>60</sup> but he had no funds to secure both a professor and a new equipment and he wisely chose the former, when he appointed Minto.

Dr. Witherspoon was a great teacher not because of any remarkable quality in his scholarship; he had not been trained as a scholar. His greatness as a teacher lay in his thoroughness, his personality, his sympathetic understanding of young men, and in his ability to make them share with him his enthusiasm for the subjects he taught. While therefore it is true that he vitalized instruction in college it is nevertheless inaccurate to say, as the chief speaker did at the dedication of the Witherspoon statue in

<sup>59</sup> Dr. Green does not include Witherspoon's effort in his edition of the *Works*. It may be found in the *Pennsylvania Magazine* for May, 1776, and Rittenhouse's reply in the issue for June, 1776. See also Riley, *American Philosophy*, p. 492.

<sup>60</sup> "Our education at Princeton," wrote Charles W. Harris, of the Class of 1792, "was shamefully & inexcusably deficient in experimental Philosophy." (*Harris Letters in University of North Carolina Sprunt Historical Publications*, vol. 14, p. 32.)

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Washington, that on coming to Princeton the President found the college "sleeping over its books;" on the contrary, he found it only too wide awake to the new philosophies of the day. But he did give a touch of what was modern and liberalizing to the studies of the curriculum. He constantly sought to awaken the intelligence of his listeners and to induce them to read beyond the mere boundary of daily recitations. And he did not confine his attention to his upper-classmen; for several years after the Revolution he heard the freshman and sophomore recitations in the classics, and it was the sophomore class in Xenophon that he had to tramp out to "Tusculum," where the informal surroundings and the intimacy of the hour must have made those recitations far off prototypes of the twentieth-century Princeton preceptorial method of instruction. He was at his best, however, in his upperclass and graduate courses. Here he combined the lecture and recitation methods. He used no textbook save his own lectures, and each student was required to make a copy from the President's original outlines, of which the text was then all but learned by heart. At recitations on this text he would expand at great length, illustrating the point at issue by his wealth of anecdote and experience. This procedure will explain the meagreness of his printed lectures; they are summaries or syllabi rather than complete lectures; in them none of his subjects is treated minutely; and in his course on divinity he was accustomed to lecture on topics rather than follow any definite system.<sup>61</sup> Whatever we may think of these outlines, when we are reminded by Ashbel Green that they were originally prepared during the first four years of Dr. Witherspoon's presidency, while he was crowded with other new duties, we must be struck by the activity of his mind, the comparative breadth of his knowledge, and the facility and speed of his composition.

It should not be supposed that because he drew so many of his students from leading families of the country, such as the Lees, Madisons, Randolphs, and Washingtons, of Virginia, the Clymers and Hodges of Pennsylvania, the Morrisises, Bruyns and Van Renssalers of New York, the Macons and Hawkins of

<sup>61</sup> Fithian, p. 29.

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North Carolina, the Reads of Delaware, and the Stocktons, Patersons and Livingstons of New Jersey, that Princeton was chiefly a rich man's college. The democracy of its enrolment is proved by the scores of pupils he attracted from humbler families neither boasting of pedigrees nor blessed with accumulations of wealth. The autobiography of Dr. Joseph Caldwell furnishes an example; and the reference, in an earlier chapter, to his generousities toward impecunious collegians affords abundant evidence. He took likely students wherever he found them, and they came from various kinds of families; but they left him all singularly alike in spirit and outlook, and purpose in life. Fithian in 1772 said that almost every province in the country was represented in college, a statement which Dr. Witherspoon himself corroborates.<sup>62</sup> He had students from the West Indies, and French boys after the Revolution; in 1774 two free negroes, Bristol Yamma and John Quamine, sent by the Missionary Society of Newport, Rhode Island, were enrolled at Princeton for a couple of years of preparation for work in Africa; and in 1783 he accepted three Delaware Indians, whose tuition bills, it will be remembered, were the subject of Congressional action. A little later the rolls contained the names of two direct descendants of Pocohontas, and also that of another young Indian; and Dr. Witherspoon states in his description of New Jersey written for M. Marbois, that Indian boys from New Jersey had been educated at Princeton. None, however, was graduated.

The most remarkable of his pupils in this group was John Chavis, a negro sent to Princeton as an experiment, who became famous as a schoolmaster and preacher in North Carolina.

His students seem to have had a genuine affection for him, John Randolph's jibe being conspicuous by its isolation as well as its ill-nature. Ashbel Green's love of him is patent in every line he wrote about him. But it was an affection marked by no familiarity. Dr. Witherspoon was not a man with whom to take any liberties. Although he was known on the campus as "the old Doctor," there was a certain aloofness about him which compelled respect. One of his maxims was "never to praise a man to his face, and never to speak evil of him behind his back, unless

<sup>62</sup> *Letter to a Noble Lord*, Woods, p. 144.

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called to do so as a matter of obvious duty and for a useful purpose." Green recalls his own experience of this maxim. His maiden sermon was delivered in the Princeton church with Dr. Witherspoon in the pulpit behind him; "After the worship was over, he tapped me on the shoulder and said 'Well, well, continue to do as well as that and we'll be satisfied'—the only praise he ever gave me to my face."<sup>63</sup>

Episodes in Dr. Witherspoon's pastorate at Paisley suggest that he was by nature a strict disciplinarian, and several later incidents in his life give evidence of his love of orderliness and rule, and his reputation for authority. An odd bit of testimony to this reputation is reported by Dr. Green who tells us that, during the President's voyage to Great Britain in 1783, he was asked by his fellow-passengers to draw up a set of rules to govern their conduct on shipboard.<sup>64</sup>

The Minutes of the faculty have been quoted to show that his government of the College was paternal and strict,<sup>65</sup> but marked by a sane tolerance. Ashbel Green was of the opinion that after the war and especially after the French Revolution a very noticeable spirit of independence permeated American colleges and made government more difficult and delicate than teaching; but Dr. Witherspoon seems to have had little real trouble with discipline. Knowing personally as he did the family of nearly every boy under his charge he was able to find in the intimacy of his

<sup>63</sup> *Christian Advocate*, vol. XII, p. 613.

<sup>64</sup> The sequel as related by Dr. Green is characteristic. All agreed to the code save one man who declared "in a profane manner" that he would do as he pleased. A storm arising and there being danger of the ship foundering, the lawless passenger staggered across the cabin and sat down beside Dr. Witherspoon, seeking consolation. "This," continues Green, "Dr. Witherspoon was by no means disposed to administer, but wished rather to increase his fear. The following dialogue then took place:

Mr. Lawless: 'Doctor, a most tremendous storm!'

Dr. W.: 'It is indeed dreadful.'

L.: 'I am afraid we shall be lost.'

Dr. W.: 'There seems much reason to apprehend that we shall.'

L.: 'The captain says he thinks the ship cannot live!'

Dr. W.: 'Well he certainly knows best.'

L.: 'Oh, we must go down! I hope we shall all go one way!'

Dr. W.: 'There, Sir, you must excuse me.——I hope *we shall not!*'

<sup>65</sup> Mr. Adams in 1774 learned on his visit to Princeton that "the government of this college is very strict, and the scholars study very hard." *Life and Works*, II, 356. That his informants were undergraduates, it is almost superfluous to add.

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relation with his undergraduates a satisfaction that meant more to him than even his ecclesiastical conspicuousness. The many glimpses we get of this intimacy—students reaping his fields, classes going out to “Tusculum,” the celebration in honor of his second marriage, his letters to parents, his sponsorship for penniless boys—all point to the conclusion that he was more the friend and counsellor than pedagogue. Senator Giles of Virginia, in the reference to Dr. Witherspoon already used in part, tells us that “the Doctor generally approached his class in great familiarity, with a ‘How do ye do, lads?’ to which the reply was always in kind: ‘Brawly, sir, brawly!’” In an earlier chapter, a letter of his to Colonel Lee was quoted as evidence of the parental oversight he exercised in college. The following letter to Mr. Thomas Fitzsimmons, the Philadelphia merchant, is an additional illustration of his personal interest in his pupils:

Princeton May 12, 1788

Sir

I have now to inform You respecting Mr. John Ferguson that after I had conversed fully with him about 10 days ago he agreed that if he did not hear from Mr. Gadsden by the End of last Week he would then proceed to Charlestown by the first Opportunity. He dined with me to Day & having heard Nothing he seems quite desirous to go & I think as discreet & sensible in his Behavior and Designs as ever I saw him. Therefore you will please to take a Passage for him in the first Vessel for Charlestown. I may also inform You that I had told him before that it was the Opinion of many People that he was hurting his younger Brother Billy by his Example. This seems to have deeply impressed him & I find he has been at much pains to advise his Brother to be regular & stick to his Studies. Accordingly as the Session of the College began on Saturday Billy has gone into College & seems to be ambitious to apply to his Books.

I shall probably see you in Philadelphia next Week & then fully inform you of their Affairs & in the mean Time shall not be wanting in giving John my best Advice as to his future Conduct. I shall be glad to hear when any vessel is to sail.

I have the Honour to be Sir your most obedt humble  
Servant<sup>66</sup>

<sup>66</sup>Princeton University Library.

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From the paternalism of his college discipline it may have resulted that, no matter what a student's offence was, if he confessed, apologized, and promised to do better, he was certain of ultimate pardon; but the scarcity of severe punishments recorded in the faculty's Minutes was not due to any laxity of discipline. Dr. Witherspoon had very definite theories as to the government of his undergraduates. When Ashbel Green and Samuel Beach were appointed tutors on their graduation in 1783, the President invited them out to "Tusculum" to dine, and gave them some pertinent advice on their new duties. Govern always, he said, but beware of governing too much—a piece of advice that the early nineteenth-century authorities at Princeton, and especially Dr. Green, would have done well to follow. Convince your pupils, he continued, for you may convince them, that you would rather gratify than thwart them, that you wish to see them happy, and that you desire to impose no restraints but such as their real advantage and the order of the College render indispensable. Put a wide difference between youthful follies and foibles and those acts which show a malignant spirit of intentional insubordination; do not even notice the former except it be by private advice; overlook them entirely unless they occur in such a public manner that it is known that you must have observed them. And he told them that one day he was walking down the long corridor of Nassau Hall when he heard soft footsteps behind; suddenly turning his head he found one of his students tip-toeing after him, shaking his fists at him. He said nothing: the fellow slunk away; and expecting to be called to account, was politeness itself from that time on. On the other hand, continued the President, be exceedingly careful not to commit your authority or that of the College in any case that cannot be carried through with equity; but having pursued this system in every instance where there is manifest intention to offend or to resist authority, make no compromise whatsoever; put it down absolutely and entirely; maintain the authority of the laws in their full extent and fear no consequences.

Even when he was the sufferer by some thoughtless prank, if a frank acknowledgment was forthcoming the President was quick to forgive. The story of the bowlful of soapy water tossed from



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an upper window of Nassau Hall which accidentally drenched him as he stepped out of an entry is an example. To the stammering apology of the dismayed perpetrator of this breach of the college law that forbade the casting forth of anything from the windows, he merely replied—"Yes, but why did ye do it at all? Ye knew it was unlawful," and passed on.

The autobiography of Dr. Joseph Caldwell tells of a hunger strike in College toward the end of Dr. Witherspoon's administration because bread and milk became the regular fare at supper. The College refused to eat and even went so far as to "clear the tables with a volley of stones," despite the presence of the Vice-president and tutors. Recitations were suspended until discipline was restored, when Dr. Smith met a deputation of the strikers and effected a compromise, saving them from a sterner fate. Fithian tells of a tamer revolt in his days against the brand of butter that the steward served, but mentions no punishment, threatened or inflicted. Perhaps the President had tasted the butter. But when necessary, he was firm and merciless. There was but one serious combination against his authority during his entire administration. Learning of it, he summoned the students together in the prayer-hall before anything actually had happened, and lectured them sternly on the situation. Then calling up the ringleader he demanded: "Now what have you to say?" Undaunted, the lad replied: "I have only this to say, that I am no more guilty than twenty others, and we are resolved to share the same fate." "Then," said the President, "you shall know it and share it without delay, even if your number should include the whole college. You, sir, are expelled; and go you immediately out of the hall." Then turning to the rest, "And now follow him, just as many as please, and take part in his disgrace!" Not another individual moved, and the rebellion was broken. Dr. Green cites, as another instance of the President's personal authority, the case when several of his best students began to board out of College, and the President, reminding them of the rule requiring all students to board at the refectory, ordered them to give up their new eating place. The following day, as he was leaving Princeton he learned that his injunctions had not been obeyed,

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and proposed to dismiss the group instantly. Green persuaded him to delay action until his return, and in the President's absence warned the seceders of their impending doom. When the President got back, each was in his proper place at the refectory, meekly making the best of his plainer fare.

One of the purposes of the founding of the College of New Jersey had been to provide an educated ministry for the middle and southern provinces and until the end of President Finley's administration in 1766 this had remained a leading function of the College. The Presbytery of New Brunswick, in a memorial drawn up in April, 1769, for the use of its members in collecting funds for the College, had stated that the object was "important & interesting to Church and State;" and while the Presbytery had observed with pleasure "some very eminent Departments of a civil Nature already filled with sons of this college," yet in 1767 not less than eighty Princetonians were Presbyterian ministers of the Gospel throughout the Colonies. The majority of vacant churches especially in New Jersey and the South, the memorial said, looked to Princeton to supply them with incumbents who would also make a stand "against any such as might be glad to abridge our Liberties and bring us under the Yoke of Ecclesiastical Power—instruments to plead the Cause of Religion & Liberty & to make our Body Respectable."

Of the 313 graduates in classes from 1748 to 1768 inclusive, 148 or 47% had entered the ministry. The next twenty-six classes, from 1769 to 1794 inclusive, covering Dr. Witherspoon's administration, graduated 478 men of whom only 114, or 23%, entered the ministry. Until the war the previous average was fairly well maintained; in the classes from 1769 to 1776 inclusive 117 were graduated, of whom 75, or slightly over 42%, became ministers. But in the classes from 1777 to 1794, of 301 men graduated only 39, or 13%, entered the ministry. Part of the responsibility for this marked contrast may be laid to the war and the new national conditions it brought about, but part must also be laid to the President's conviction, hinted at in his first announcement and driven home upon his students, that the College should

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prepare its members for constructive citizenship—leadership not only in Church but also in State, in education, at the Bar, and in less conspicuous walks of private life.

Although the number of candidates for the ministry under Witherspoon fell below previous averages, their quality remained high (if membership in the General Assembly was a criterion), and the President still had cause to congratulate himself. Leaving an Assembly in company with Ashbel Green one day, so the latter reports, he said:

You can scarcely imagine the pleasure it has given me in taking a survey of this Assembly to believe that a decided majority of all the ministerial members have not only been sons of our college, but my own pupils.

The occasion must have been the third General Assembly as the following table shows:

| ASSEMBLY | NO. OF MINISTERS | PRINCETON GRADUATES | WITHERSPOON PUPILS |
|----------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1789     | 22               | 10                  | 3                  |
| 1790     | 22               | 10                  | 6                  |
| 1791     | 36               | 28                  | 16                 |
| 1792     | 50               | 15                  | 11                 |

The President need not have confined his boast to the General Assembly's rolls. The Assembly's minutes for 1789, in a report on the "State of the Presbyterian Church at the time of the organization of the General Assembly," contain a roster of one hundred and eighty-eight Presbyterian ministers from ten States. Of these, ninety-seven are Princetonians, fifty-two being men of Witherspoon's training.

Aside from the fact that he was constantly being called upon to name tutors for wealthy families, or teachers for struggling academies, or instructors for new colleges, it was chiefly through his clerical graduates, because so many of them were teachers as well as ministers, that the President's influence made itself felt in the spread of education. Over eleven per cent of them became Presidents of colleges in eight different States of the Union. Princetonians of his breeding were first Presidents of Union Col-

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lege, New York; Washington College and Hampden-Sidney College in Virginia; Mount Zion College in South Carolina; Queen's College and the University of North Carolina in that State, and of Washington, Greenville, Tusculum and Cumberland Colleges and the University of Nashville in Tennessee. Two of his own graduates succeeded him at Princeton. With first Presidents should be classed founders like Thaddeus Dod (1773) of Washington College, Pennsylvania, John Macmillan (1772) of Jefferson College, Pennsylvania, and Caleb Wallace (1770) of Transylvania College in Kentucky. The second presidents of Hampden-Sidney in Virginia, Jefferson College in Pennsylvania, the University of North Carolina, and Franklin College and Oglethorpe University in Georgia were also his graduates.

It is true that the educational success of Dr. Witherspoon's clerical graduates was due in part to causes with which he had little to do. The Scotch-Irish dwellers in the Shenandoah Valley, as Mr. Becker has remarked, were through racial and religious prejudice more disposed "to give credit to ministers trained at Princeton than to clergymen ordained by the Bishop of London,"<sup>67</sup> and especially if they had been trained by Dr. Witherspoon. Organizing schools in connection with their churches these men had prepared the way for the stream of men he sent forth in Revolutionary days to preach the doctrine that education and religious freedom went hand in hand with civil liberty. The log college erected by the Reverend John Brown of 1749 at New Providence in Virginia was matched by the simple cabin at Chartiers in Western Pennsylvania in which John McMillan of 1772 held the first Latin school established west of the Alleghanies. If McMillan, big of frame, heavy voiced, and rough as the stone benches in his school, was typical of one sort of Princeton frontier preacher and schoolmaster, his collegemate, Thaddeus Dod of 1773, represented the other type. Slender and graceful in figure, with a winning personality, a mathematician and classical scholar who had a passion for music and poetry, Dod gave up the certainty of a comfortable career for the hardships of a missionary's life in the west and founded his school at Amity in Washington County, Pennsylvania. Subsequently, these two

<sup>67</sup> *Beginnings*, p. 184.

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contrasting products of Dr. Witherspoon's teaching were associated as trustees of the academy which became Washington College. In schools like theirs, rude in equipment, but hearths of unquenchable fires, many of the elder institutions of learning in the South and on this side of the Ohio found their beginnings. For the stream did not exhaust itself in the fertile and congenial Valley of Virginia, but passed on down into the Carolinas and Georgia, whence here and there a pioneer, bolder than his fellows, turned westward into Kentucky and Tennessee.

The Witherspoon influence in Virginia centered in Hampden-Sidney College which, under the name of Prince Edward Academy, was opened in 1776 with Samuel Stanhope Smith, Dr. Witherspoon's pupil and son-in-law, as rector. Here it was that young David Witherspoon was an instructor. When Dr. Smith went back to Princeton in 1779, he was succeeded at Hampden-Sidney by his brother, John Blair Smith of 1773, also a pupil of Witherspoon. Through these brothers the early curriculum and administration of Hampden-Sidney took on a cast distinctly Princetonian. Those were days when religious liberty was the absorbing issue and it is said that the younger Smith's defence of this claim before the Virginia Assembly was an appeal which for astuteness and eloquence Patrick Henry could scarce have equalled. Both the Smiths were orators of the first order, speakers with physical gifts that President Witherspoon had trained. John B. Smith, moreover, was not only a defender of religious freedom; to aid the fight for civil liberty, he formed at the outbreak of the Revolution a company of students of Hampden-Sidney and marched away to Williamsburg to place them at the service of the revolutionary government.

The private school of the Reverend John Brown, 1749, was the germ of the more ambitious Augusta Academy, founded in 1776 by the Presbytery of Hanover at Timber Ridge with William Graham of 1773 as rector and John Montgomery of 1775 his assistant, both pupils of President Witherspoon. Removed to Lexington in 1779, the Academy was renamed Liberty Hall and nearly a century later became Washington and Lee University. Like his classmate, John B. Smith, Graham was a militant Christian, and when the necessity arose assembled pupils and parish-

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ioners and marched out to dispute the passage of the Blue Ridge with Tarleton's British dragoons. Some years later he appeared in a different rôle as author, on behalf of the Presbytery of Hanover, of the very remarkable memorial to the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia, protesting against a proposal to support religion by an assessment on all the people. His argument was based on a fundamental proposition which reminds one of Dr. Witherspoon's manner of thought in its assertion that

religion is altogether personal, and the right of exercising it inalienable; it is not, cannot, and ought not to be, resigned to the will of the society at large; and much less to the legislature which derives its authority wholly from the consent of the people and is limited by the original intention of civil association.<sup>68</sup>

Madison and John B. Smith supported the protest and carried the day against Patrick Henry.

Whether President Witherspoon ever travelled further south than Virginia will probably never be known; there is no evidence now that he did. But on his several trips to Virginia he must at one time or another have visited the school at Bladensburg in Maryland, founded shortly before the Revolution by the Reverend James Hunt of the Class of 1759; and there is fairly clear indication that he was personally instrumental in sending two of his more brilliant, though perhaps less pious, non-clerical graduates, the restless classmate poets, Hugh Brackenridge and Philip Freneau of 1771, to the famous Washington Academy in Somerset County, Maryland, a school, says Freneau, that was attended by boys who belonged to the best families in the State, but who preyed on him like leeches. Dr. Witherspoon failed dismally in his attempt to make a schoolmaster out of Freneau; the dreamer later fled in desperation from Erasmus Hall, Flatbush, whether he had gone on leaving Maryland, and so found his way back to his beloved Princeton to make a fresh start in life. He was succeeded at Washington Academy by William Linn of 1772, his college-mate but a better pedagogue, and destined to become President of Washington College, Maryland.

<sup>68</sup> Foote, *Sketches of Virginia*, vol. I, p. 342.

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Had Dr. Witherspoon visited South Carolina after the Revolution he would have found at Charleston, besides the schools presided over by Princetonians of the older generation, the Reverend Thomas H. McCaule of 1774, a Princetonian of his own making, re-organizing the famous Mount Zion College in that city, along the plans of his alma mater.

The College of New Jersey was well-known in Georgia in Witherspoon's day. But his influence in that State seems to have been felt more through social affiliations with families like the Macons and Hawkins, than through pioneer educators, although a graduate of his training, the Reverend Robert Finley of 1787, became President of the University of Georgia early in the nineteenth century.

The Reverend John Todd of 1749 had secured in 1780 the Act of the Legislature incorporating Transylvania Academy in Kentucky, but Dr. Witherspoon's graduate, Caleb Wallace of 1770, was responsible in 1783 for a further Act naming the trustees and actually founding the institution, which became Transylvania University, and it was in the house of a third Princetonian, David Rice of 1761, that classes were begun. Kentucky Academy near Lexington was organized by Rice and Wallace in 1794 and a few years later amalgamated with the older institution. This was the Caleb Wallace who wrote the memorials of the Presbytery of Hanover in 1774 and 1776 to the Virginia Assembly claiming equal rights of freedom of conscience for dissenters, and it is suggested that Thomas Jefferson, as a member of the Assembly, was strongly influenced by these documents in his advocacy of religious liberty.

Thomas B. Craighead of 1775 came to Nashville, Tennessee, in 1785 and soon was elected principal of the Davidson Academy, whose classroom was the rough stone meeting house erected for him, where for more than twenty years he taught on week-days and preached on Sundays. Later on, this academy was chartered as Cumberland College of which Dr. Craighead was elected first President. To this college Philip Lindsley of Princeton eventually was called as President when it became the University of Nashville.

The first school in Tennessee and the first literary institution

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in the Mississippi Valley was founded by one of the most remarkable of Dr. Witherspoon's students, Craighead's classmate Samuel Doak, who, after serving as instructor at Hampden-Sidney for two years, on receiving his licentiate had pushed into the Southwest, settling first in what later became eastern Tennessee. The pioneer spirit in him could not be satisfied and he soon moved westward settling at Salem, in Washington County, Tennessee. He was the first preacher and teacher in that beautiful wild region. His log cabin school was incorporated by the legislature as Martin Academy and later chartered as Washington College, and it was for the library of this institution that he obtained gifts of books while in Philadelphia in 1798 attending the General Assembly, carrying them back with him on a pack-horse, five hundred miles across the mountains. He gave up the Presidency of Washington College in 1818, and in Greene County, mindful of his old Princeton associations, he opened another school which he called "Tusculum" and which under the name of Tusculum College was consolidated with Greeneville College, founded by Hezekiah Balch an older Princetonian. The spirit of President Witherspoon, passed on by President Doak, is marked to this day in the history and achievement of the College in Tennessee named after the President's home at Princeton.

When the story of Princeton's influence in the South is written, no chapter will be more remarkable than the one narrating the service to higher education performed in North Carolina by Dr. Witherspoon's graduates.<sup>69</sup> In Mr. C. L. Smith's history of education in that State, published by the United States Bureau of Education, is given a list of thirty-six Princetonians who furthered the cause of higher education in North Carolina, and of these no less than twenty-three had been pupils of Witherspoon. When Queens College, the successor of Joseph Alexander's school at Sugar Creek, changed its name to Liberty Hall and was chartered in 1777, ten of the fourteen trustees besides the President were Princetonians, and six of the ten, with the President, were

<sup>69</sup> It was in some lonely region in North Carolina, according to the tale, that the suspicious owner of a wayside house declared to a stranger seeking shelter: "I allow no man to sleep under my roof but a Whig." "Then let me rest in peace," replied the other, "for I graduated under Witherspoon."

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Witherspoon's students. Clio's Nursery or Academy of Sciences, at Snow Creek, the first scientific school in North Carolina, was opened by James Hall of 1774, who supplied his own apparatus, wrote his own text-books, and taught. Zion's Parnassus, the classical school of Samuel E. McCorkle of 1772, at Thyatira, was the first institution in North Carolina, and perhaps in the United States, to have a separate normal department. Warrenton Academy, incorporated in 1786, had as its three most prominent trustees, Princeton non-graduates, Henry Patillo of President Davies' time and Benjamin Hawkins and Nathaniel Macon, who were Seniors when Dr. Witherspoon closed the doors of Nassau Hall on that eventful day in November 1776. There were five Princetonians among the trustees of the University of North Carolina when it was chartered in 1789, three of whom were at Princeton under Witherspoon, and the two first Presidents of the University were also his pupils.

One of his layman graduates, James Madison became President of the United States, and Aaron Burr, a Vice-president; and ten became cabinet officers. Young though they were at the time, six were elected members of the Continental Congress. Thirty-nine became United States Representatives and twenty-one were United States Senators; twelve were Governors of States and fifty-six were chosen to State Legislatures. Thirty became judges, three others being appointed Justices of the United States Supreme Court. Of the twenty-five college graduates in the Federal Convention, nine were Princetonians and six of these had President Witherspoon's signature on their diplomas. It will never be known how many Princetonians, nor even how many of Witherspoon's own students, served in the War of the Revolution; the lack of any class rolls previous to 1787 renders an exact count impossible. But when allowance is made for the fact that he came to Princeton only eight years before the outbreak of the War it is startling to note that, even if commissions were cheap, among these young graduates of his were eleven captains, six majors, four colonels, and ten lieutenant-colonels. Four of these officers died in service. Of the eleven army chaplains found among his students of theology seven gave up their lives on the same altar.

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These are records of President Witherspoon's graduates only. The records of his non-graduates are almost non-existent; there is not even a list of these men, and with few exceptions their histories are still unwritten. But the summary contained in the preceding pages of the part played in after years by some of the lads who came under his influence in the closing quarter of the eighteenth century shows how well his lesson of service bore fruit.

Until the latter part of his life Dr. Witherspoon preached in the college chapel regularly twice on Sunday in summer and once on Sunday in winter. Later, he preached only every third Sunday or on special occasions such as the baccalaureate. He never carried notes into his pulpit; all his sermons being delivered memoriter, and when blindness overtook him so that he could no longer see to write new sermons and even had to be led up into his pulpit, his remarkable memory stood him in good stead; he never failed to deliver verbatim the old discourse his amanuensis had read to him the day before. He once told Ashbel Green that when he had recently written a sermon he would engage, after reading it over three times, to repeat what he had written, "to an 'of' and a 'the.'" <sup>70</sup>

Ashbel Green, temporarily victim of a nervous complaint somewhat similar to that from which Dr. Witherspoon suffered, wished to resign his Philadelphia charge. But the President would not listen to such a step: "Take care how you do that," he said, "if you do that, it is my opinion you are likely to do little good while you live. There is no other alternative but to do as I did, or to consent to be useless the remainder of your days. Go you down to Philadelphia and do as well as you can, and God will help you. Take everything with moderation: but with this abatement do everything just as if you were well and after a while you will be so." It would seem, however, that the President never really got over his own nervousness. According to Dr. Green, his "olfactory and auditory nerves were morbidly excitable." He could not stand the odor of a small stove in the pulpit where he was preaching. Any sudden noise or accident would upset him. One Fourth of July, when he was presiding at the

<sup>70</sup> *Christian Advocate*, vol. II, p. 350.

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exercises in the prayer-hall, at the close of a speech the college cannon was fired close outside the building. He sprang forward as if in a convulsion and only with difficulty regained his composure. On another occasion while Congress was at Princeton, the preacher of the day was a young clergyman who clung closely to his manuscript. A belated Congressman entering the hall, the preacher raised his eyes, lost his place, and in his confusion re-read a whole sentence. Dr. Witherspoon, sitting in one of the front pews, started up from his seat muttering, and then recovered himself. His nervousness showed itself in company by his restless changing of position, his constant shifting of hands and feet. He suffered from insomnia and was drowsy by day—especially after dinner, innocently adds Dr. Green; and he was even known to nod in the pulpit behind a dull preacher. In view of this failing he endeavored, when a member of the New Jersey Legislature, to get the daily sessions held in one sitting before dinner, but was outvoted. He accepted his defeat good-naturedly, and adroitly prepared for future quiet naps, with this apology: "Mr. Speaker, as you will have this matter in your own way, permit me to remark that there are two kinds of speaking that are very interesting—the one is perfect sense, and the other is perfect nonsense. When there is speaking in either of these ways I shall engage to be all attention. But when there is speaking, as there often is, half-way between sense and nonsense, you must bear with me if I fall asleep."

For several years he suffered from fits of sudden dizziness. The first seizure of this sort occurred one day while he was preaching in the college pulpit, and he fell headlong into the pew where his family was seated. These turns left him with a swimming in the head, he says, and a sense of dread and uncertainty when about to deliver a discourse. They began, however, to leave him, so he continues in the letter here quoted, after an eruption appeared on his temples and forehead in 1780; and after 1782 he was never troubled again.

His blindness in one eye, as we know, was the result of a fall on board the ship that took him to England in 1783. He told Dr. Green that he had no idea the eye was seriously injured, until

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after his arrival in London, when, putting his hand to the other eye to dislodge a grain of dust, to his dismay he found himself in total darkness. The second eye was injured by a fall from horseback in Vermont. Cataracts forming, in the spring of 1793 the celebrated surgeon Dr. Tilton of Delaware operated on him; but confinement in a cold room bringing on a chill and other complications, the operation was unsuccessful. Ashbel Green was with him in Philadelphia before he underwent the operation. The President had but little hope of its success and agreed to it only at the insistence of his friends. He said he had had the use of his eyesight a long time, and if it pleased God to take it away it gave him but little concern; he then compared the privations suffered by the blind with those experienced by the deaf and decided that those of the blind were less trying; the blind could still enjoy the cheering influence of the human voice, the pleasure of free conversation, and of books read aloud, all of which was denied to those who had lost their hearing.<sup>71</sup>

Methodical and systematic in the management of his library and papers, he knew, even after he became blind, if a single volume or document were misplaced, and it would cause him to fret and pluck at his eyebrows with both hands, exclaiming "They use me verra ill, verra ill!" In connection with his Scotch accent Green notes Dr. Witherspoon's odd pronunciation of his own name—"Wotherspoon"—although he spelled it in the usual way. Routine even in minor details marked the conduct of his household; morning and evening prayers were part of that routine; the last day of the year was always a day of fasting and self-examination; on Tuesdays Scotch barley broth was always served at his table; and Saturdays invariably saw a fish dinner. In the summer he retired at nine, in winter at ten; and he rose as soon as it was light enough to see to read or write. When he had

<sup>71</sup>The Reverend Professor W. Brenton Green of Princeton Theological Seminary records in the *Princeton Book* on the authority of Dr. Witherspoon's granddaughter, the late Mrs. Joseph A. Williamson of Georgetown, D. C., that the President experienced a few days before his death a remarkable restoration of sight. His wife brought his little daughter into his room. He looked at her for some time and turning to his wife, said: "Why, Nannie, the bairn has eyes like yours!" "Why, Dr. Witherspoon," she exclaimed, "can you see?" "As well as ever I could in my life," was the reply.

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guests at his table he served wine—he was particular about his wines<sup>72</sup>—and his first toast was invariably “our absent friends,” itself indicative of a dominant trait in his character, and his second was always “the land we live in;” and if he proposed a third it would be either the health of the President of the United States, or the prosperity of the United States itself. There was a charming note of old world dignity in all his hospitality.

During the last two years of his life he employed as an amanuensis his third cousin, John Ramsay Witherspoon, who entered college in November 1792 as a Sophomore. It is to him, next to Ashbel Green, that we owe most of our knowledge of Dr. Witherspoon’s personality. The boy used to go out to “Tusculum” at least once a week, and sometimes oftener, to devote the whole day to the President’s correspondence. The hardest work he did, however, was to read to the President on Saturday afternoon the sermon selected for Sunday, for apart from the fact that it deprived him of his half-holiday, the manuscripts were often so old that the ink had faded, and as the Doctor in his prime wrote a rapid hand, with a gentleman and scholar’s shortcomings and seldom dotted an “i” or crossed a “t,” the sermons were sometimes scarcely decipherable.<sup>73</sup> President Witherspoon’s fund of anecdotes, and the interesting play of his mind, at one moment full of humor and at another serious and contemplative, made him one of the most companionable of men. Of warm though unobtrusive affections, he was a sincere and loyal friend. His affec-

<sup>72</sup> There is a letter in the Emmet Collection (No. 4192) from him to Mr. William Semple, a Philadelphia merchant; he finds that the “spirits” Mr. Semple has sent him have been tampered with; as this is the third occurrence of the sort he will cease to buy in Philadelphia unless Mr. Semple can devise some safe method of transportation. Another letter to Mr. Semple (in the Pennsylvania Historical Society) expresses the hope that the spirits ordered will be sent up to Princeton soon—“the sooner they come the better as we are almost quite out.”

<sup>73</sup> In earlier days this hasty penmanship often got the President into difficulty when his pupils were copying his lectures. They would have to wait for him to decipher passages and he was often puzzled himself. Indeed, once after careful examination of a particularly illegible passage he had to confess that he “supposed he knew what it was when he wrote it, but he could not tell now what it was.” He prudently never used his own manuscript when hearing recitation, but borrowed the best written copy in the class. This story will remind a later generation of Princetonians of the occasion when President Patton, lecturing on ethics, looked up from his notes and remarked that when he wrote the sentence he had just read he probably knew what it meant, but that he could not understand it now.

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tion for his own people never cooled. A letter of his written in 1786 to an old friend at Paisley states that his remembrance of his former flock is unabated, he has often said he would willingly add to all his other labors to ride ten miles any Lord's Day morning to have such a congregation as he used to preach to; he will not cease to pray for them. "I have accustomed myself to such forms of expression as to include them morning and evening in my family prayers."<sup>74</sup> We know that more than once during the Revolution he took British prisoners to Princeton and those he took usually had Scottish names. Robert Aitken, the Philadelphia bookseller and publisher, James Tod, the first printer in the village of Princeton, James Finley, the Paisley weaver who settled at Princeton on his urging, and Mrs. Isabella Graham, whose name is associated with the beginnings of child welfare work and other organized charity in the United States, are illustrations of the permanent interest Dr. Witherspoon felt in old friendships. He was a man of many friends. It is significant and characteristic that his commencement address to the senior class, delivered first in 1775 and repeated several times thereafter, should have contained an earnest plea for friendship, urging the young men before him to keep up the associations they had formed while pursuing together the common social aim of education.

His amanuensis has recorded the unforgettable impression of Dr. Witherspoon that he carried away with him when the time came to leave Princeton after commencement in September 1794. He went to "Tusculum" to pay his graduation fee and bid farewell to the blind President. The Doctor gently refused the money, but, placing his trembling hands on the lad's head, with tears in his eyes gave him his blessing. It always seemed to him, so he wrote many years later, that Dr. Witherspoon's manner at that moment had combined the simplicity of a child, the humility of a patriarch, and the dignity of a prince.

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<sup>74</sup>Crichton, *Memoir of John Findlay*, 52.

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### PRESIDENT WITHERSPOON'S WRITINGS

THE only manuscripts of President Witherspoon's published writings that have been preserved are his *Caspipina's Catechism* (Library of Congress) and a portion of one of his *Druid* essays (Library of Princeton University). It is recorded that shortly before his death the younger Mrs. Witherspoon at his direction destroyed a quantity of his papers. The remainder were for some time in the possession of his son-in-law, Dr. Smith, who sent part of the collection to the Woodwards of Philadelphia for Dr. Green's edition of the President's *Works*. It is said that all of the collection eventually passed into the hands of Dr. Smith's grandson, John Witherspoon Smith, of New Orleans. Its fate has not been traced.

The President's commonplace books, two little volumes of extraordinary interest containing memoranda, notes, outlines of sermons, etc., were seen by James W. Alexander (*Familiar Letters*, I, p. 83) in the Princeton Library in 1825; they are there no longer. The series of sermons and essays containing a "comprehensive view of divine truth," of which Dr. Witherspoon wrote to the Reverend Brian Collins in 1783 as if it were ready for the printer, seems to have disappeared before the President's death. Dr. Green heard him preach regularly during four years; but not one of these discourses (which included the series on submission preached after the death of Mrs. Ramsay) was found with his papers. They were probably among those destroyed by Mrs. Witherspoon.

Soon after the President's death Dr. Green wrote to Dr. Smith with regard to the possibility of publishing by subscription an edition of Dr. Witherspoon's writings. Dr. Smith's reply of March 20, 1796, now in the Library of Princeton University, reveals his utter discouragement; the printers informed him that subscribers were a "very uncertain reliance," the labor of transcribing the President's posthumous papers "without which they would be almost useless to a printer" would be immense; and

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without subscribers the book would not sell at all, "religion and morals have been so effectually supplanted in this country by politics, infidelity, and frivolous entertainment." Ashbel Green, however, did not abandon his effort to perpetuate the memory of his beloved teacher and within a year or two had arranged with the Woodwards to undertake the publication. To that firm accordingly Dr. Smith gave full use of the papers in his possession. In November 1799 he wrote to Green (Library of Princeton University):

I have furnished Mr. Woodward with all of Dr. Witherspoon's manuscripts that I have been able to find. There is a bundle of essays chiefly political, a great part of which very probably deserve to be published; but I confess I never read them and therefore judge only from the character of the writer. There are twelve sermons written in a tolerably fair hand. Three or four appear to have been cut out after Mr. Austin had possession of the volume. Dr. Witherspoon was very much displeased at him for publishing one or two & attempting to publish others that he had desired him not to do. The bundle of manuscripts that my brother took with him shortly before he died will require great selection as a large part of them I imagine were not intended, and are probably not fit, for publication.

This statement indicates a curious lack of interest on the part of Dr. Smith in his father-in-law's writings and also suggests that the President's manuscript sermons were kept together in volumes which Mr. Austin, editor of the *American Preacher*, a collection of discourses by American divines, mutilated, even failing to exercise critical care with the portions he published. It also appears that Dr. Smith's brother, John Blair Smith, had already taken a portion of the manuscripts south with him. These possibly were the papers Dr. Green speaks of in the preface to the fourth volume of the first edition as having been sought for "at many miles distance."

The first edition of the *Works* finally appeared at Philadelphia in 1800 with a list of 900 subscribers. It had been planned in three volumes, but a fourth volume, the most interesting of the set as it contains the President's political papers, was issued in 1801. A second edition, revised and corrected, came out the next year.

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Dr. Green had not published all the material sent to him. For example, there were several pieces of satire, two in verse, which he considered might well be suppressed—possibly one of them was the fragment published by Mr. Woods in his biography of the President. Thirty years later he still had in his hands “nearly the whole” of the President’s unpublished manuscripts, as well as a “large number of letters addressed to him by correspondents in Europe and America,” and he proposed (*The Presbyterian*, April 3, 1835) a third edition of the *Works* which should be more nearly complete than its predecessors. He was in possession of a “considerable number of articles in the Doctor’s own handwriting numbered and endorsed by himself, perhaps with a view to publication. From these a selection will be made for the new edition; and there will be a republication from the *Christian Advocate* of a few short pieces which have appeared in that work.” Moreover it had long been his wish, he says, to write and publish the life of “his early and best friend, his venerated teacher, counsellor and patron,” which had never yet been done in a manner at all worthy of the subject. The biographical sketch now among the manuscripts of the New Jersey Historical Society at Newark was the result, and was intended to be the introduction to the new edition; but, although a publisher had been selected, Dr. Green’s proposal came to naught and the third edition never appeared. What became of the Witherspoon manuscripts then in his hands is not known.

*In the following chronological list of the President’s writings all the known editions of any work are recorded under the date of the original publication, with cross references under the dates of later issues.*

1739

DISPUTATIO PHILOSOPHICA, quam favente numine Ut in artibus liberalibus & disciplinis Philosophicis magister rite renunciatur, ex Auctoritate Reverendi admodum Viri, D. Gulielmi Wishart, S.T.D. Academiae Edinburgenae Praefecti, nec non Amplissimi Senatus academici, & nobilissimae Facultatis artium decreto, Publico erudi-

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torum examini subjiciet, ad Diem 23 Februarii, hora decima antemeridiana, Joannes Wederspan, A & R.

Edinburgi: In Aedibus Jo. Paxton, M.DCC.XXXIX.  
pp. (4) 10, (1) 4to.

1753

REMARKS ON AN ESSAY ON HUMAN LIBERTY

In *Scots Magazine*, vol. XV, April 1753, pp. 165-70

Signed by J. W.

ECCLESIASTICAL CHARACTERISTICS: or, the Arcana of Church Policy.

Glasgow, 1753. Not found.

(Published in October, 1753. See Note to 3d edition).

*The same*. Second Edition. Not found.

(Published in December, 1753. See Note to 3d edition).

*The same*, Ecclesiastical Characteristics: or, the Arcana of Church Policy, being an Humble Attempt to open up the Mystery of Moderation. Wherein is shewn a plain and easy Way of attaining to the Character of a Moderate Man, as at present in Repute in the Church of Scotland. The Second Edition, Corrected and Enlarged.

Glasgow: Printed in the Year, MDCCLIV. Price Six-pence

pp. xii, 7-49. 12mo.

Either the second edition dated 1754 but published in December 1753, or really a third edition published in 1754. See Note to 3d edition.

*The same*. The Third Edition, Corrected and Enlarged.

Glasgow: Printed in the Year, M.DCCLIV.

pp. xii, 13-62. 8vo.

Contains an "Additional Maxim." Verso of title bears this "Advertisement. The First Edition of the Characteristics was published in the beginning of October 1753; the Second, the middle of December following; and this Third, the end of May 1754."

*The same*. Another edition. London 1754. Not found.

Announced in the *Gentleman's Magazine* as having been issued in September, 1754.

*The same*. The Fourth Edition, Corrected and Enlarged.

Glasgow: Printed in the Year, MDCCLV.

pp. xiv, 15-71. 12mo.

The Advertisement of 1754 is repeated with the additional fact that the present 4th edition was published in February, 1755.

*The same*. The Fifth Edition.

Edinburgh: MDCCLXIII.

pp. xii, 17-68. 8vo.

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*The same.* Kenschets van het bestaan en gedrug der Kerklyken.  
Utrecht. Wed. J. J. van Poolsum. Rotterdam, P. Holsteyn. n.d  
(1763?).

8vo. Not found.

*The same.* The Sixth Edition.  
In "Essays on Important Subjects." London, 1765.

*The same.* The Seventh Edition. London: Printed, Philadelphia; Reprinted, by William and Thomas Bradford at the London Coffee-House.

M,DCCLXVII.

pp. 60. 8vo.

*The same.* Reprints of Scarce Tracts connected with the Church of Scotland. No. 1 Ecclesiastical Characteristics. By J. Witherspoon, D.D. Originally published 1753. New edition with an introductory preface (by Alexander M. Dunlop.)

Edinburgh, 1842.

8vo.

1754

ECCLESIASTICAL CHARACTERISTICS. Second edition.

See 1753.

*The same.* Third edition.

See 1753.

*The same.* Another edition.

See 1753.

1755

ECCLESIASTICAL CHARACTERISTICS. Fourth edition.

See 1753.

1756

ESSAY on the Connection between the Doctrine of Justification by the imputed Righteousness of Christ, and Holiness of Life: With some Reflections upon the Reception which that Doctrine hath generally met with in the World. To which is prefix'd, a Letter to the Rev. Mr. James Hervey, Rector of Weston Favell, Northampton-

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shire, Author of *Theron and Aspasia*. By John Witherspoon M.A., Minister of the Gospel in Beith.

Glasgow: Printed by John Bryce and David Paterson.  
M,DCC,LVI.

pp. vi, 3-72. 12mo.

*The same*. The Second Edition.

Edinburgh: Printed by T. Lumisden and Company; sold by Gray and Peter, at their shop in the Exchange. M,DCC,LVI.

pp. 74. 12mo.

*Christ* mis-printed *Cbrirt*, and *Reflections* spelled *Reflexions*.

*The same*. Third Edition.

In *Essays on Important Subjects*. London, 1765.

*The same*. *Proeve over het verband tusschen het Leerstuk van Christus toegerekende gerechtigheit en de heiligkeit des levens*.

Utrecht, 1764, Wed. J. J. van Poolsum.

8vo. Not found.

*The same*. See *Treatises on Justification and Regeneration*. 1815.

1757

A SERIOUS ENQUIRY INTO THE NATURE AND EFFECTS OF THE STAGE. Being an Attempt to show, that contributing to the Support of a Public Theatre, is inconsistent with the Character of a Christian. By John Witherspoon, M.A., Minister of the Gospel in Beith.

Glasgow: Printed by J. Bryce and D. Paterson. MDCCLVII.

pp. (iv), 72. 12mo.

*The same*. *Ernstig onderzoek aangaande de Toneelen zynde ingereg't om aan te toonen dat het begunstigen en bevorderen van een openbaar Toneel onbestaanbaar is met het Karakter van een Christen*.

Utrecht. Wed. J. J. van Poolsum. 1772.

8vo. Not found.

*The same*. *A Serious Inquiry into the Nature and Effects of the Stage: and A Letter respecting Play Actors*. By the Rev. John Witherspoon, D.D.L.L.D. Late President of the College at Princeton, New Jersey. Also a Sermon, on the Burning of the Theatre at Richmond, &c. By Samuel Miller, D.D. Pastor of the first Presbyterian Church in New York. Together with an Introductory Address by several Ministers in New-York, &c.

New-York: Published by Whiting and Watson, 96 Broadway. 1812.

pp. 199(1). 12mo.

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*The same.* A Serious Inquiry into the Nature & Effects of the Stage (Originally Published in 1757); with a Letter respecting Play-Actors, (First published in 1793), by the Rev. John Witherspoon, D.D., sometime minister of the gospel at Paisley, and late President of Princeton College, New Jersey. With a preface by the Rev. D. T. K. Drummond, B.A. Oxford, and memoir of the author, by the Rev. William Moffat, M.A., Cairnie.

Edinburgh: Lyon & Gemmell, George IV Bridge, 1876.

pp. xxxvi, 100. 12mo.

The preface (pp. ix-xxvi) is an essay against the stage, followed by a Note (pp. xxvii-xxix) on certain novelists. pp. xxxi-xxxvi is the memoir. The title page is in error in stating that the Letter on Play Actors was published in 1793.

1758

CASE OF THE MAGISTRATES AND TOWN-COUNCIL OF PAISLEY, the Minister and Session of the Laigh Church, and the Minister of the High Church of that Town, Appellants; the Reverend the Presbytery of Paisley, Respondents. The Appellants Case. To be heard at the Bar of the Venerable Assembly met at Edinburgh in May 1758.

n. t. p. [Paisley, 1758?]. pp. 8. 4to.

Signed at end, by "Ja. Baine & Jo. Witherspoon."

THE CHARGE OF SEDITION AND FACTION AGAINST GOOD MEN, especially faithful Ministers, considered and accounted for. A Sermon preached in the Abbey-church of Paisley, on Thursday, September 7, 1758. At the Ordination of Mr. Archibald Davidson, as one of the Ministers of that Church. To which is subjoined, the Charge to the Minister, and the Exhortation to the People. By John Witherspoon, A.M. One of the Ministers of Paisley. Published at the desire of those that heard it.

Glasgow: Printed by J. Bryce and D. Paterson. MDCCLVIII.

pp. 52. 12mo.

*The same.* Belfast: Printed for Robert Johnston, Bookseller in Bridge-street. MDCCLVIX (*sic*).

pp. 40. 12mo.

*The same.* In *Christian's Scholar's and Farmer's Magazine*.

Elizabethtown. 1789.

vol. I, pp. 38-40, 179-181, 428-430.

*The same.* Boston: Reprinted and sold by Lincoln and Edmands.

No. 53 Cornhill. 1811.

pp. 36. 12mo.

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1758

THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST. A Sermon, preached before the Society in Scotland for propagating Christian Knowledge, in the High Church of Edinburgh, on Monday, January 2, 1758. By John Witherspoon A.M., Minister of the Gospel at Paisley. To which is subjoined, a short Account of the present State of the Society.

Edinburgh: Printed for W. Miller. 1758.  
pp. 90. 12mo.

*The same.* [Second Edition?].

In the expansion of a note on the Scripture meaning of Charity, appended to this sermon, Mr. Witherspoon states that criticism of the note induced him "on notice of a second edition being intended, to offer a few reflections on this subject." No copy of the second edition has been found. The expansion of the note constitutes his Inquiry into the Scripture meaning of Charity. See under 1768.

PRAYER FOR NATIONAL PROSPERITY and for the Revival of Religion inseparably (*sic*) connected. A Sermon Preached on Thursday, Feb. 16, 1758. Being the Day appointed in Scotland for the late Publick Fast. By J. Witherspoon, A.M. Minister of the Gospel in Paisley.

London: Printed for Tho. Field, at the Wheatsheaf. The Corner of Pater-noster-Row Cheapside. MDCCLVIII.  
pp. 38. 12mo.

1759

THE TRIAL OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH BY ITS MORAL INFLUENCE. A Sermon, preached at the opening of the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, October 9th, 1759. By J. Witherspoon, A.M. Minister of the Gospel in Paisley.

Glasgow: Printed for James Wilken, Bookseller in Paisley.  
MDCCLIX.  
pp. 45. 12mo.

THE CHARGE OF SEDITION AND FACTION.  
See 1758.

1760

CASE OF THE TOWN-SESSION OF PAISLEY, Appellants from a Sentence of the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, at Glasgow, October 15, 1760, disapproving a Plan for uniting the Offices of English Schoolmaster and

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Session-Clerk in the Town of Paisley. To be heard at the Bar of the Venerable Assembly met at Edinburgh in May 1761.

n. t. p. [Paisley, 1760?]. pp. 8. 4to.  
Signed "John Witherspoon."

1762

SEASONABLE ADVICE TO YOUNG PERSONS: A Sermon on Psalm i:1. Preached in the Laigh Church of Paisley, on Sabbath, Feb. 21st, 1762. To which is prefixed, An Authentic Narrative of the disorderly and riotous Meeting, on the Night before the Celebration of the Lord's Supper in that Place, which gave occasion to the Discourse. By John Witherspoon, A.M. One of the Ministers of Paisley.

Glasgow: Printed by Robert Urie. Sold by [names of thirteen book-sellers in nine cities.] MDCCLXII. Price Six-pence.

pp. vi, 41. 8vo.

*The same.* On the sin of scoffing at things sacred.

In Sermons, Edinburgh 1798. A reprint of the Seasonable Advice with the notes and local references omitted.

1763

A SERIOUS APOLOGY FOR THE ECCLESIASTICAL CHARACTERISTICS. By the real Author of that Performance.

Edinburgh: Printed by Sands, Murray, and Cochran. For William Gray, in front of the Exchange. MDCCLXVII.

pp. vi, 5-45. 8vo.

ECCLESIASTICAL CHARACTERISTICS. Fifth edition.

See 1753.

*The same.* Dutch translation.

See 1753.

1764

ESSAYS on Important Subjects.

London: Dilly. Three volumes.

Advertised in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for September 1764, and in the *Scot's Magazine* for November 1764; noticed in the *Monthly Review* for December 1764; but no copy has been found bearing date of that year.

*The same.* Essays on Important Subjects. Intended to establish the Doctrine of Salvation by Grace, and to point out its Influence on

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## APPENDIX A

Holiness of Life. By John Witherspoon, D.D. To which are added by the Publishers, Ecclesiastical Characteristics, or the Arcana of Church Policy, with a Serious Apology; which have been generally ascribed to the same Author.

London: Printed for Edward and Charles Dilly, in the Poultry, near the Mansion-House. M.DCC.LXV.

2 vols. pp. 279, (5); 290. 12mo.

The preface signed "J.W." is dated London, June 1764, and speaks of the Treatise on Regeneration as "now first published." Contents of the series: Vol. I Essay on the Connexion between the doctrine of Justification . . . and Holiness of Life, 3d edition; Absolute necessity of salvation through Christ; Trial of religious truth; Charge of sedition . . . against good men; Prayer for national prosperity. vol. II. Serious enquiry into the . . . stage; Ecclesiastical characteristics 6th edition; Serious apology. vol. III. A Practical Treatise on Regeneration.

*The same.* Essays on Important Subjects. By John Witherspoon. D.D. Sometime minister of the Gospel at Paisley, and late President of Princeton College, New Jersey. In four volumes.

Edinburgh: Printed for Ogle & Aikman, J. Pillans & Sons; J. Ritchie; and J. Turnbull. 1805.

12mo.

*The same.* A New Edition.

Bungay: Printed for the editor, by C. Brightly. 1800.

2 vols. pp. viii, 249; vii, 407. 8vo.

Editor's name not given. Introduction dated "Northwood Place, near Beccles, 1800."

A PRACTICAL TREATISE ON REGENERATION. By John Witherspoon, D.D.

London: Printed for Edward and Charles Dilly. M.DCC.LXIV.

pp. (4), 281, (3). 12mo.

Apparently the first edition referred to in preface to the 1765 edition of the Essays on Important Subjects.

*The same.* [Second Edition. Not found.]

*The same.* [Third edition. Not found.]

*The same.* [Fourth edition. Not found.]

*The same.* The fifth edition.

London: 1815.

pp. 211. 8vo.

*The same.* Regeneration, or the New Birth: extracted from Dr. Witherspoon by the Rev. George Burder. [Quotation: John iii:3.]

London: Printed by J. Dennett, Leather Lane, Holborn. Sold by

## APPENDIX A

Williams & Son, Stationer's Court, Ludgate Street. Price Two-pence.

n.d. pp. 16. 16mo.

This abridgement appeared first in the Protestant Dissenter's Magazine, vol. II.

*The same* (Extracts only.) In the Christian Advocate.

vol. VIII (1830) pp. 118, 177, 228, 287, 341, 397, 453, 505, 560, 616; vol. IX (1831) pp. 6, 63, 115, 172, 229, 285, 349, 404, 460.

*The same.* Verhandeling over de Wedergeboorte met eene Voorede van Prof. Chevalier.

Gröningen. A. Groenwolt. 1776.

8vo. Not found.

*The same.* An Address to six classes of persons: the rich and the poor: the young and the old; the self-righteous and the chief of sinners. By Dr. Witherspoon.

London n.d. [1830].

pp. 8. 12mo.

No. 358 of Vol. 10 Religious Tract Society, The First Series of Tracts. A reprint of the conclusion of Dr. Witherspoon's Treatise on Regeneration, with a few omissions. The date is that assigned by the British Museum Catalogue.

*The same.* Traité Pratique sur la Régénération, par John Witherspoon, D.D. [Text from John iii:3].

Toulouse, Delhorve, Libraire, rue du Lycée, 14. Paris, Librairie Protestante, rue Tronchet 2. 1850.

pp. 432. 12mo.

*The same.* See Treatises on Justification and Regeneration. 1815.

TREATISE ON JUSTIFICATION.

See 1756.

A PRACTICAL TREATISE ON REGENERATION. By John Witherspoon, D.D. Principal of Princeton College, New Jersey.

n.p.n.d. (London 1844?).

pp. 68. 8vo.

In the Christian Treasury. London, 1844.

*The same.* Reprint of the above. In the Christian Treasury. London, 1855.

1765

THE HISTORY of a Corporation of Servants Discovered a few Years

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## APPENDIX A

ago in the Interior Parts of South America. Containing some very Surprising Events and Extraordinary Characters.

Glasgow: Printed for John Gilmour, and sold by him and the other Booksellers in Town and Country. MDCCLXV.

pp. 76. 8vo.

*The same.* In sermons, Edinburgh, 1798.

ESSAYS on Important Subjects.

See 1764.

ECCLESIASTICAL CHARACTERISTICS. Sixth edition.

See 1753.

1767

ECCLESIASTICAL CHARACTERISTICS. Seventh edition.

See 1753.

1768

PRACTICAL DISCOURSES ON THE LEADING TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL.

Edinburgh: Kincaid and Bell and Gray. 1768.

Advertised in the *Scots Magazine* for June 1768; reviewed in the *Monthly Review* for April 1769. Contains 13 sermons and forms with Sermons on Practical Subjects (Glasgow 1768) two of the five volumes of Essays and Sermons on Important Subjects (Edinburgh and Glasgow 1768).

*The same.* Another edition.

Philadelphia: W. and T. Bradford. 1770.

Hildeburn 2618 and Evans 11944, but seen by neither. Not found.

*The same.* Practical Discourses on the leading Truths of the Gospel. By John Witherspoon, D.D. President of the College of New Jersey. Second Edition.

London: Printed for C. Dilly in the Poultry. MDCCXCII.

pp. viii, 355. 12mo.

The "Advertisement" dated Paisley May 16, 1768, is signed "J.W." and states that the sermons are selected to form "a little system of the truths of the gospel, to point out their relation to one another, and their influence on practice . . . an attempt to illustrate the scripture-doctrine by experience and observation on human life."

SERMONS ON PRACTICAL SUBJECTS: to which is added, a Farewel (*sic*) Discourse Delivered at Paisley in April and May 1768. By John Witherspoon, D.D.

Glasgow: Printed by A. Duncan and Company, for James Duncan

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## APPENDIX A

Bookseller, opposite the Main Guard, Trongate; and William Walker, Bookseller, Head of the Salt-Mercat. MDCCLXVIII.

pp. vii, 323, (1). 12mo.

Contains nine sermons and forms the last volume of the set of five volumes of Dr. Witherspoon's writings advertised in the *Scots Magazine* for June 1768. When found with the Practical Discourses and the three volumes of essays already published it carries an additional title-page: Essays and Sermons on Important Subjects. See below.

*The same.*

Edinburgh. J. Turnbull for Ogle & Aikman. 1804.

pp. 318. 12mo.

ESSAYS AND SERMONS on Important Subjects: intended to establish the doctrine of Salvation by Grace, and to point out its influence on Holiness of Life. By John Witherspoon, D.D. President of the College of New Jersey. In Five Volumes.

Edinburgh: Printed for A. Kincaid & J. Bell, and W. Gray, Edinburgh; and J. Duncan, & W. Walker, Glasgow. MDCCLXVIII.

12mo.

AN INQUIRY INTO THE SCRIPTURE-MEANING OF CHARITY. By John Witherspoon, D.D. Formerly Minister of the Gospel at Paisley. Now President of the College of New Jersey.

Edinburgh: Printed for A. Kincaid & J. Bell, and W. Gray.

MDCCLXVIII.

pp. 28. 12mo.

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF VISIBLE RELIGION. A Sermon. By John Witherspoon, D.D. Formerly Minister of the Gospel at Paisley. Now President of the College of New Jersey.

Edinburgh: Printed for Kincaid & Bell, and W. Gray.

MDCCLXVIII.

pp. 36. 12mo.

*The same.* In *Liberality in Religion*, taken from the *Christian's Magazine*, edited by the Reverend Dr. Mason of New York, together with "An inquiry into the Scripture meaning of Charity," extracted from the writings of the Reverend Dr. Witherspoon.

Portland: Published and sold by A. Lyman & Co. Insurance buildings, Exchange street. J. McKnown, printer, 1811.

pp. 40. 16mo. The Inquiry begins on page 22.

## APPENDIX A

1769

[REPORT to the Synod of New York and Philadelphia on the affairs of the College of New Jersey. 1769.]

At the meeting of the Synod on May 23, 1769, Dr. Witherspoon was appointed chairman of a committee, consisting of himself and Messrs. Blair and W. P. Smith, to draw up a statement of the affairs of the College; on their report the next day, he was ordered to have five hundred copies printed. No copy has been found.

1770

PRACTICAL DISCOURSES ON THE LEADING TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL.  
See 1768.

1772

ADDRESS to the Inhabitants of Jamaica, and the West-India Islands, in Behalf of the College of New Jersey.

Philadelphia: Printed by William and Thomas Bradford, at the London Coffee-House. M.DCC.LXXII.

pp. 27. 12mo.

*The same.* Reprinted in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 28, 1772, and the *New York Gazette*, November 16, 1772.

*The same.* In New Jersey Archives, vol. XXVIII, pp. 289-308.

1775

A COMPARISON OF THE PASSIONS OF PRIDE AND VANITY.

In *Pennsylvania Magazine*, vol. I, January 1775, pp. 12-15.

Unsigned, but admitted to be by Epaminondas, Dr. Witherspoon's pseudonym, in the next essay. Not in Dr. Witherspoon's Works.

ON FIRMNESS AND OBSTINACY.

In *Pennsylvania Magazine*, vol. I, March 1775, pp. 115-119.

Signed by Epaminondas. Not in Dr. Witherspoon's Works.

ON PUBLIC SPEAKING.

In *Pennsylvania Magazine*, vol. I, June 1775, pp. 262-263.

Signed by Epaminondas. Not in Dr. Witherspoon's Works.

A PASTORAL LETTER from the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, to the Congregations under their Care; to be read from the Pulpits on Thursday, June 29, 1775, being the Day of the General Fast.

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## APPENDIX A

New York: Printed by Shober and Loudon, at the Newest Printing-Office, the corner of Maiden-Lane and Nassau Street.  
M.DCC.LXXV.

pp. (8). 8vo.

Signed by Benjamin Hart, moderator, New York, May 22, 1775. Written by Dr. Witherspoon for the committee of which he was chairman.

*The same.* In Records of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. (Minutes of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia). Philadelphia. 1841.

pp. 466-469.

### LETTERS ON EDUCATION.

In *Pennsylvania Magazine*, vol. I (1775). pp. 149-153, 197-202, 245-249, 399-405. April-June, and September and vol. II (1776) January.

Prefaced by a note signed "X.Y." stating that the letters were from a minister to a gentleman of rank, and had not been intended for publication. Letter No. 1 (April 1775) is dated "P—Oct. 2, 1765. To Mr. S."

*The same.*

In *The American Museum*, vol. IV (1788) July-November, inclusive, pp. 25-27, 108-111, 217-220, 310-315, 397-401.

*The same.* A Series of Letters on Education. Ascribed to J. Witherspoon, D.D. President of Princeton-College, N. J.

New-York: Printed by J. Buel, for C. Davis. 1797.

pp. 108. 32mo.

pp. 99-108 are a poem "Education intended to fortify the mind against criminal excess in all enjoyments, as exhibited in the Vision of Pleasure," by Dr. Cotton.

*The same.*

Bristol: Printed by J. Rose, for I. James, North-Street; and sold by W. Button, Pater-Noster Row, London. 1798.

pp. 2,196. 32mo.

The two-page introduction is dated Bristol November 9, 1798, and is signed by Isaac James, stating that the volume is a reprint of the New York 1797 edition, and that he has no authority for ascribing it to Dr. Witherspoon, but that he is "fully of opinion, that it would not disgrace the pen of any one."

*The same.* A series of Letters on Education. By John Witherspoon, D.D. President of Princetown (*sic*) College New Jersey.

Southampton: Printed & sold by Baker & Fletcher. Sold also in London by Longman, Hurst, Rees, & Orme, Paternoster Row; and Williams and Smith; Stationers' Court. 1808.

pp. viii, 108. 16mo.

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*The same.* A series of Letters on Education. Ascribed to J. Witherspoon, D.D. Formerly President of Princeton-College, N. J.

Morris-Town: Printed by Henry P. Russell. 1815.

pp. 84. 12mo.

*The same.* Letters on Education. By John Witherspoon, D.D.L.L.D. Late President of the College in Princeton, New-Jersey. Also, Letters on the same subject, from the Christian Observer.

Salem, N. Y. Printed by H. Dodd and Co. Sold by them at the Salem Book Store; also by Collins and Co. New York, and W. W. Woodward, Philadelphia. 1822.

pp. 167. 32mo.

*The same.* Letters on the Education of Children, and on Marriage. By the Rev. John Witherspoon, D.D. L.L.D. President of Princeton College, N. J. (Quotations from Solomon).

Andover: Printed by Flagg and Gould. 1817.

pp. 81. 12mo.

*The same.* Four Letters on Education. By John Witherspoon, D.D. Late President of the College of New Jersey. [Quotation from Proverbs xix:20.]

Glasgow: Printed by Napier and Khull, Argyle-Street. For M. Ogle, Glasgow; J. Ogle, Edinburgh; R. Ogle, London; J. Fowler, Paisley; G. Charles, Hamilton, and R. Nairn, Renton. 1799.

pp. 58, (2) 12mo.

The titlepage is in error as the series contains the usual five letters. These end on page 55 and are followed by three pages of verse: "A parent's prayer," "Obedience to parents," and "Love between brothers and sisters."

### LETTERS ON MARRIAGE.

In *Pennsylvania Magazine*, vol. I, September 1775, pp. 408-413, December 1775, pp. 543-548; vol. II, March 1776, pp. 109-114.

In vol. I, pp. 557-559 and vol. II, pp. 319-323 are his replies to questions he had received with regard to these letters.

*The same.*

In *The American Museum*, vol. IV (1788) July-September inclusive, pp. 21-25, 105-108, 213-217. The issue for October 1788 contains (pp. 315-316) a series of questions respecting marriage from an anonymous correspondent with Dr. Witherspoon's replies.

## APPENDIX A

*The same.*

In A Series of Letters on Courtship and Marriage. Hartford: Lincoln and Gleason. 1806.

16mo.

The Letters on Marriage are pp. 59-94.

*The same.* In Letters on Courtship and Marriage. By various authors.

Trenton: published by Daniel Fenton and James J. Wilson. James J. Wilson, Printer. 1813.

16mo.

pp. 99-158 are: Letters on Marriage ascribed to the Rev. John Witherspoon, Late President of Princeton College.

SERIOUS INQUIRY INTO . . . THE STAGE (Dutch translation).

See 1757.

1776

DIALOGUE ON CIVIL LIBERTY, delivered at a Public Exhibition in Nassau Hall January 1776.

In *Pennsylvania Magazine*, vol. II, April 1776, pp. 157-167.

Said by Dr. Ashbel Green to have been written by Dr. Witherspoon and to be based on his lectures.

A FEW THOUGHTS ON SPACE, DIMENSION, AND THE DIVISIBILITY OF MATTER IN INFINITUM.

In *Pennsylvania Magazine*, vol II, May 1776. pp. 225-229.

Signed "J.W." and written in reply to M[atthew] W[ilson]'s "Proposal for reducing Natural Philosophy to a System" etc., which appeared in the *Pennsylvania Magazine* for March and April 1776.

THE DOMINION OF PROVIDENCE OVER THE PASSIONS OF MEN. A Sermon preached at Princeton, on the 17th of May, 1776. Being the General Fast appointed by the Congress through the United Colonies. To which is added, An Address to the Natives of Scotland residing in America. By John Witherspoon, D.D. President of the College of New Jersey.

Philadelphia: Printed and sold by R. Aitken. Printer and Bookseller, opposite the London Coffee-House, Front Street.

M.DCC.LXXVI.

2 leaves, pp. 78, 1 leaf. 8vo.

Leaf 1 is title; leaf 2 is dedication "To the Honourable John Hancock, Esq." etc; the leaf at the end is: "Erratum. Page 61, line 13 & 14 for reformation of letters, read revival of arts and letters."

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*The same.* The Second Edition, with Elucidating Remarks.

Philadelphia Printed: Glasgow Re-printed; Sold by the Booksellers in Town and Country. MDCCLXXVII. Price Six-pence.

pp. vi, 7-54. 12mo.

The notes are signed by "S.R."

*The same.* The third Edition, with Elucidating Remarks.

Philadelphia Printed: Glasgow Re-printed. MDCCLXXVII.

pp. (7), 8-56.

Contains an Appendix of 2 pages signed by "S.R." who also signs the notes.

*The same.* [The fourth edition.]

Philadelphia printed; London reprinted, for Fielding and Walker, No. 20 Pater-noster Row. M,DCC,LXXVIII.

pp. iv, 44. 8vo.

Date in title is misprinted May 17, 1775. Does not contain the Address to the Natives of Scotland, this being separately printed.

*The same.* [The fifth edition]. London 1779. [Not found].

Samuel W. Stockton writing to Dr. Witherspoon from London April 14, 1779 (Stevens Facsimiles 938), says he sees a fifth edition of the sermon is announced in London.

### THE DRUID.

In *Pennsylvania Magazine*, vol. II, May, June, and July 1776, pp. 205-209, 253-257, and 301-305.

This first series of three essays was reprinted in the *Pennsylvania Journal* for February 14, March 14 and 21, 1781, and was followed by four more essays: No. 4 in *Pennsylvania Journal* for April 11 and 18, 1781; No. 5, *Pennsylvania Journal* May 9, 1781; No. 6, *Pennsylvania Journal* May 16, 1781; No. 7, *Pennsylvania Journal* May 23 and 30, 1781. The closing paragraph of No. 7 announces a forthcoming final essay which did not appear. The *Pennsylvania Journal* for June 20, 1781, contains additional examples of Americanisms contributed by an anonymous correspondent. In the issue for June 30, 1781 another anonymous writer takes Dr. Witherspoon to task for "inaccuracies and Scotticisms."

[ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE.] The Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, to the People in General, and particularly to the Inhabitants of Pennsylvania, and the adjacent States . . .

[Philadelphia: John Dunlap. 1776.]

Fo. Broadside.

Dr. Witherspoon was chairman of the Congressional Committee reporting this Address.

*The same.* Die Repräsentaten der Vereinigen Staaten von America, im Congress versammelt, An das Volk überhaupt, und an die Ein-

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## APPENDIX A

wohner Pennsylvaniens, und der angrenzenden Staaten insbesondere.  
Gegeben in Philadelphia, den 10ten December, 1776.

[Philadelphia; Heinrich Miller 1776.]

Fo. Broadside.

In German script.

[PROCLAMATION FOR FAST DAY.] In Congress. December 11, 1776.  
Whereas, the just war into which the United States of America have  
been forced by Great Britain, is likely to be still continued by the  
same violence and injustice which have hitherto animated the ene-  
mies of American freedom . . .

Baltimore: John Dunlap [1776].

Fo. Broadside.

Dr. Witherspoon was author of this proclamation and chairman of the Congressional  
Committee reporting it.

*The same.*

Hartford: Printed by Ebenezer Watson [1776].

Fo. Broadside.

PRACTICAL TREATISE ON REGENERATION. Dutch translation.

See 1764.

1777

THE DOMINION OF PROVIDENCE. Two editions.

See 1776.

1778

[ON THE TREATMENT OF AMERICAN PRISONERS BY THE BRITISH; reso-  
lutions of Congress of December 19, 1777, and January 21, 1778.]

[Philadelphia: 1778.]

pp. 2, Fo.

[REPORT on Currency and Finance delivered September 19, 1778.]  
Your Committee to whom it was referred to consider and report on  
the Currency and Finance of these United States, begs leave to  
report . . .

[Philadelphia: September 19, 1778.]

Fo. Broadside.

Only 60 copies printed. Dr. Witherspoon was a member of the Congressional Com-  
mittee reporting.

THE HUMBLE CONFESSION, declaration, recantation, and apology of  
Benjamin Towne, Printer in Philadelphia.

In the *New York Packet*. Fishkill; Samuel Loudon. October 1, 1778.

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## APPENDIX A

*The same.*

[Philadelphia: Robert Bell. 1778.]

pp. 5, (1). 8vo.

At the head of the first page is the following: "Some truth, much wit, with a sufficient quantity of satire intermixed, entitles the following laughable composition, which hath been handed about in manuscript at Philadelphia, to preservation in print with other works of greater magnitude. It is reported to be written by J—n W—th—sp—n D.D. one of the Members of the American Congress." The unnumbered page at the end is a list of "Miscellanies for Sentimentalists" for sale at Bell's bookstore "next door to St. Paul's Church, in Third-Street, Philadelphia," and contains in addition to the Towne item the Life of David Hume by himself, the Travels of a Philosopher by Le Poivre, Chesterfield's Principles of Politeness, La Rochefoucauld's Maxims, Murray's Travels of the Imagination, and Freneau's American Independence.

*The same.* Appended to James Murray, Sermons for Ministers of State.

Philadelphia: Robert Bell. 1783.

pp. 76-79. 8vo.

[MANIFESTO ON THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR.] By the Congress of the United States of America. A Manifesto.

[Philadelphia: Printed by John Dunlap. 1778.]

Fo. Broadside.

Issued by order of Congress, October 30, 1778. Signed by Henry Laurens, president, and Charles Thomson, secretary. This manifesto, threatening reprisals, was reported by Dr. Witherspoon, chairman of the Congressional Committee appointed to frame it.

*The same.*

New York. 1778.

pp. 4, 8vo.

AN ADDRESS to the Natives of Scotland residing in America. Being an Appendix to a Sermon preached at Princeton on a General Fast. By John Witherspoon, D.D. President of the College at New Jersey.

London: Printed for Fielding and Walker. No. 20, Paternoster-Row. M,DCC,LXXVIII. Price Six-pence.

pp. iv, 24. 8vo.

pp. iii-iv is "Advertisement" signed by "The Editor."

*The same.* Another edition.

London. Fielding and Walker. 1779.

8vo.

Title taken from Reid, Bibliotheca Americana. London 1789. p. 199.

*The same.* In Sermons.

Edinburgh. 1798.

## APPENDIX A

### DOMINION OF PROVIDENCE.

See 1776.

1779

### DOMINION OF PROVIDENCE.

See 1776.

### ADDRESS TO THE NATIVES OF SCOTLAND.

See 1778.

1781

[PROCLAMATION naming December 13, 1781, thanksgiving day].  
Whereas, as it hath pleased Almighty God, the Father of Mercies, remarkably to assist and support the United States of America . . .  
Done in Congress this twenty-sixth day of October in the year of Our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-one.

[Philadelphia: D. C. Claypoole, 1781.]

Fo. Broadside.

*The same.*

[Exeter. Zachariah Fowle, 1781.]

Fo. Broadside.

### THE DRUID.

See 1776.

1782

[PROCLAMATION naming November 28, 1782, thanksgiving day.] It being the indispensable duty of all nations, not only to offer up their supplications to Almighty God . . .

[Philadelphia: D. C. Claypoole. 1782.]

Fo. Broadside.

*The same.*

Printed at Exeter [1782].

Fo. Broadside.

1783

PASTORAL LETTER to the Congregations of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia on salaries.

In *Pennsylvania Packet*, May 29, 1783.

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Signed by John McCrery, Moderator, but reported by a committee of which Dr. Witherspoon was chairman. This Letter does not appear in the first edition of Dr. Witherspoon's Works but was included in the second.

*The same.*

In Records of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (Minutes of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia) 1841.

pp. 466-469.

*The same.*

In *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society*, vol. V (1909), pp. 127-131.

HUMBLE CONFESSION . . . of Benjamin Towne.  
See 1778.

1786

A DRAUGHT of a Plan of Government and Discipline for the Presbyterian Church in North America. Proposed by a Committee for that purpose.

Philadelphia: Printed by Francis Bailey, at Yorick's Head, in Market Street. MDCCLXXXVI.

pp. (6), 47. 8vo.

On May 23, 1785, the Synod of New York and Philadelphia ordered a committee of which Dr. Witherspoon was chairman to consider the constitution of the Church of Scotland and compile a system of rules for the government of the Synod. This committee reported May 22, 1786 and on May 23 a new committee of which Dr. Witherspoon was also chairman was ordered to print 300 copies of their digest of the report.

*The same.* A Draught of the Form of the Government and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Proposed, by the Synod of New-York and Philadelphia, for the consideration of the Presbyteries and Churches under their care.

New York: Printed by S. and J. Loudon, No. 5 Water-Street. M,DCC,LXXXVII.

pp. (145). 8vo.

On May 28, 1787 the Synod ordered an edition of 1000 copies printed of this revised and amended draft.

ESSAY ON MONEY, as a Medium of Commerce; with Remarks, on the Advantages and Disadvantages of Paper admitted into general Circulation. By a Citizen of the United States.

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## APPENDIX A

Philadelphia: Printed by Young, Stewart, and McCulloch, the Corner of Chesnut (*sic*) and Second-Streets. M.DCC.LXXX.VI.

Leaf 1, pp. 60. 12mo.

*The same.* By a Citizen of the United States, said to be John Witherspoon D.D.L.L.D. President of the College of New-Jersey.

Charleston: Printed and for and sold by A. Timothy. 1786.

*The same.* An Essay on Money as a Medium of Commerce, with Remarks on the Advantages and Disadvantages of paper admitted into general circulation. By John Witherspoon, D.D.

New-York: Printed by S. and J. Loudon, 1787.

*The same* [Extracts].

In *The American Museum*, vol. II (1788). pp. 47-73.

1787

SERMONS, By James Muir, A.M. Minister of the Presbyterian Church, Bermuda.

[Princeton, N. J.] Printed for the Author by James Tod.

M.DCC.LXXXVII.

pp. 228. 8vo.

Page 4 is a notice "To the Reader" signed by Dr. Witherspoon, stating that the sermons were submitted to his perusal with the desire that he superintend their publication. The author was son of the Rev. Dr. George Muir of Paisley. Dr. Witherspoon in all probability not only edited them for the press but financed the venture. The volume is the most ambitious product of the press of James Tod, Princeton's first printer.

*The same.* Sixteen sermons, chiefly on Practical subjects, enforced from our Saviour's Parables. By James Muir, A.M. late of Bermuda. With an Introduction, by Dr. Witherspoon.

New York: Printed for Robert Hodge. 1788.

8vo.

ESSAY ON MONEY.

See 1786.

DRAUGHT of the Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church. See 1786.

CHRISTIAN MAGNANIMITY: A Sermon, Preached at Princeton, September, 1775—the Sabbath preceeding (*sic*) the Annual Commencement; And again with Additions, September 23, 1787. To which is added an Address to the Senior Class, who were to receive the Degree

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of Bachelor of Arts. By John Witherspoon, D.D.L.L.D. President of the College of New-Jersey.

Princeton: Printed by James Tod. M.DCC.LXXXVII.  
pp. iv, 44. 8vo.

*The same.* In *The Youth's Companion; or a Safe Guide to Eminence.*  
Compiled by Amator Virtutis.

Andover: Printed by Flagg and Gould. 1820. Price 62<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> cents.  
pp. xii, 13-159, (3). 16mo.  
Pages vii-44 Sermon on Christian Magnanimity; pp. 45-96 Address to the Senior Class.

1788

AN ADDRESS to the Senior Class of Students, who were to receive the Degree of Bachelor of Arts, and leave the College. Sept. 25, 1787. By John Witherspoon, D.D.L.L.D. President of the College of New Jersey.

Paisley: Printed by Peter M'Arthur. M.DCC.LXXXVIII.  
pp. 23, 12mo.

*The same.* In *the Youth's Companion.*

Andover. 1820.  
See 1787.

*The same.* In *Sermons.*

Edinburgh. 1798.

*The same.* In *Lectures on Moral Philosophy.*

Philadelphia. 1822.

SIXTEEN SERMONS. By James Muir.

See 1787.

ESSAY ON MONEY.

See 1786.

LETTERS ON MARRIAGE.

See 1775.

LETTERS ON EDUCATION.

See 1775.

1789

A SERMON on the Religious Education of Children. Preached in the Old Presbyterian Church in New York, to a very numerous Audience,

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on the Evening of the second Sabbath in May. By the Rev. John Witherspoon, D.D. President of Princeton College.

Elizabeth-town: Printed by Shepard Kollock. M,DCC,LXXXIX.  
pp. 23. 8vo.

*The same.*

New York: Printed and sold by Archibald McLean, Franklin's Head, Hanover-Square, and Hodge, Allen, and Campbell. 1789.  
8vo.

*The same.* The Religious Education of Children. A Sermon, on Mark x: 13, 14, 15, 16. [Quotation.] Preached in the Old Presbyterian Church in New-York, on the second Sabbath in May, 1789. By the Rev. John Witherspoon, D.D. President of Princeton College, New-Jersey, in America, and late Minister of the Gospel in Paisley.

Paisley: Printed by J. Neilson, for G. Caldwell. M,DCC,XC.  
pp. 16. 12mo.

CHARGE OF SEDITION AND FACTION.

See 1758.

1790

SERMON on the religious education of children.

See 1789.

1791

[NINE SERMONS.] In *The American Preacher*. Edited by David Austin.

Elizabeth-town, N.J. Shepard Kollock. 1791-1793.

The sermons are: Ministerial Character and Duty (vol. I, pp. 9-25).

Man in his natural State. (vol. I, pp. 27-41).

An Inducement to come to Christ. (vol. I, pp. 43-55).

On the Purity of the Heart. (vol. I, pp. 343-364).

Seeking a Competency in the Wisdom of Providence. (vol. II, pp. 365-377).

The Danger of Prosperity. (vol. II, pp. 379-390).

The Danger of Adversity. (vol. II, pp. 391-403).

Trust in God (2 sermons). (vol. III, pp. 199-212, 213-230).

*The same* In *Select Discourses from the American Preacher* . . .

Edinburgh: Printed by Adam Neill and Co. and sold by W. Laing and J. Ogle. 1796.

8vo.

Reprints of the sermons: Ministerial Character, Purity of Heart, and Trust in God.

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1791

THE HOLY BIBLE, containing the Old and New Testaments: Translated out of the original Tongues: and with the former Translations diligently compared and revised.

Trenton: Printed and sold by Isaac Collins. M.DCC.XCI.

4to.

An Address "To the Reader" by Dr. Witherspoon (unsigned) takes the place of the usual Dedication to King James. This edition is sometimes found in two volumes. O'Callaghan "List of Editions of the Holy Scriptures" notes the following reprints of the Collins Bible: quartos; Trenton 1807, New York 1814, New York 1815; stereotype editions, quarto, New York 1816, New York 1817, New York, 1819, New York 1821, Boston 1824, Boston 1831, New York 1856. Two editions were issued in octavo, Trenton 1793 and Brookfield 1815; and three editions in duodecimo, New York 1817, New York 1818, and New York 1821. In all of these reprints Dr. Witherspoon's address "To the Reader" is substituted for the dedication.

1792

PRACTICAL DISCOURSES on the leading Truths of the Gospel.

See 1768.

1796

SERMONS from *The American Preacher*.

See 1791.

1797

SERIES OF LETTERS ON EDUCATION.

See 1775.

1798

SERMONS by the late John Witherspoon, S.S.T.D. President of the College of New Jersey. A Supplementary volume including such sermons as are not already published in his works. To which are added, by the same author, the History of a Corporation of Servants, and other Tracts.

Edinburgh: Printed for J. Dickson, J. Fairburn, and J. Ogle. 1798.

pp. xx, 381. 12mo.

The preliminary matter is "Some Account of the Life and Character of the Author" extracted from Dr. John Rodgers' sermon on his death. In addition to the History of a Corporation of Servants, the tracts reprinted are the Address to the Natives of

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## APPENDIX A

Scotland residing in America, and the Address to the Students of the Senior Class. The sermons are twelve in number of which nine are taken in consecutive order from "The American Preacher," followed by the Dominion of Providence (1776), the Seasonable Advice (1762) which appears under the new name On the Sin of Scoffing at Things Sacred, and Christian Magnanimity (1787).

ADDRESS to the Natives of Scotland.

See 1778.

LETTERS ON EDUCATION.

See 1775.

1800

THE WORKS OF THE REV. JOHN WITHERSPOON, D.D.L.L.D. Late President of the College, at Princeton New-Jersey. To which is prefixed An Account of the Author's Life, in a Sermon occasioned by his Death, by the Rev. Dr. John Rodgers, of New York. In Three Volumes.

Philadelphia: Printed and Published by William W. Woodward.

No. 17 Chesnut (*sic*) near Front Street. 1800. Copyright secured.

4 vols. pp. 604, 632, 611, (10). 8vo.

The first edition of Dr. Witherspoon's complete works. The fourth volume has the same title-page as the others, except "In Four Volumes" and dated 1801, pp. (8), 9-368.

*The same.* Second Edition, revised and corrected.

Philadelphia: Printed and Published by William W. Woodward.

No. 52 South Second Street. 1802. Copyright secured.

4 vols. pp. 569 (2); 586; 592; 475 (6). 8vo.

THE WORKS OF JOHN WITHERSPOON, D.D. Sometime Minister of the Gospel at Paisley and Late President of Princeton College, In New Jersey. Containing Essays, Sermons, &c on Important Subjects; intended to Illustrate and establish the Doctrine of Salvation by Grace, and to point out its Influence on Holiness of Life. Together with his Lectures on Moral Philosophy Eloquence and Divinity; his Speeches in the American Congress; and many other valuable Pieces never before published in this Country.

Edinburgh: Printed for Ogle & Aikman; J. Pillans & Sons; J.

Ritchie; and J. Turnbull. 1804-1805.

9 vols. pp. 331, 351, 318, 340, 288, 354, 317, 331, 304. 8vo.

*The same.*

Edinburgh: Printed for J. Ogle, Parliament-Square; M. Ogle,

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## APPENDIX A

Glasgow; Ogles, Duncan & Cochran, London; and T. Johnston, Dublin. 1815.

9 vols. 8vo.

ESSAYS ON IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

See 1765.

1803

THE MISCELLANEOUS WORKS OF THE REV. JOHN WITHERSPOON, D.D.L.L.D. Late President of the College of New Jersey.

Philadelphia: Printed and Published by William W. Woodward.

No. 52 Corner of Second and Chesnut (*sic*) Streets. 1803.

pp. 368. 8vo.

Merely the fourth volume of the 1800 edition of the Works with a new title page.

1804

THE SELECT WORKS OF JOHN WITHERSPOON, D.D., late President of Princetown (*sic*) College, New Jersey. Containing his most admired and popular Treatises, Essays, and Sermons: viz. [follows a list of contents]. To which is prefixed The Life & Character of the Author, by John Rodgers, D.D. In Two Volumes.

London: Printed by W. Nicholson, Warner Street, for W. Baynes, 54 Paternoster-Row. 1804.

pp. xvi, iii-viii, 346; v, (2), 407. 8vo.

The unpagged leaves at beginning of Volume II are the Contents of Volume I. The printer was C. Brightly of Bungay, whose imprint is found on the last page of each volume.

1805

ESSAYS ON IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

See 1765.

1806

LETTERS ON MARRIAGE.

See 1775.

1808

LETTERS ON EDUCATION.

See 1775.

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1810

LECTURES ON MORAL PHILOSOPHY, AND ELOQUENCE. By the Rev. John Witherspoon, D.D.L.L.D. Late President of the College at Princeton, New-Jersey. Published by the American Editor for the Benefit of Schools and Academies. Woodward's Third Edition.

Philadelphia: Printed by and for William W. Woodward, No. 52 South Second Street. 1810.

pp. 304. 12mo.

1811

CHARGE OF SEDITION AND FACTION.

See 1758.

INQUIRY INTO THE SCRIPTURE MEANING OF CHARITY.

See 1768.

1812

SERIOUS INQUIRY IN TO THE STAGE.

See 1757.

1813

LETTERS ON MARRIAGE.

See 1775.

1815

AN ESSAY ON JUSTIFICATION, and a Treatise on Regeneration. By John Witherspoon, D.D. Sometime Minister of the Gospel at Paisley, and late President of Princeton College, in New Jersey. To which is prefixed some Account of the Life of the Author.

Edinburgh: Printed for J. Ogle, Parliament-Square; M. Ogle, Glasgow; Ogles, Duncan & Cochran, London; and T. Johnston, Dublin.

1815.

pp. xxxiii, (34)-331. 12mo.

The biographical sketch is unsigned but is dated Canongate, Edinburgh, August 1804, and states that the material was obtained from Dr. Rodgers' funeral sermon on the President.

*The same.* Treatises on Justification and Regeneration. With an Introductory essay by William Wilberforce.

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Glasgow: Printed for [follows a list of booksellers in Edinburgh, Dublin, and London]. 1823.

pp. 319. 12mo.

In series "Select Christian Authors."

*The same.* Treatises on Justification and Regeneration. By John Witherspoon D.D. Sometime Minister of the Gospel at Paisley, and late President of Princeton College, New Jersey. With an Introductory Essay, by William Wilberforce, Esq., author of "Practical View of Christianity." Third Edition.

Glasgow: Printed for William Collins: [follows a list of booksellers in Edinburgh, Dublin, and London]. MCCCCXXX.

pp. xviii, 19-308. 12mo.

*The same.* [Another edition.]

Amherst. 1830.

12mo.

Listed in Roorbach, Bibliotheca Americana I, 592.

PRACTICAL TREATISE ON REGENERATION.

See 1764.

LETTERS ON EDUCATION.

See 1775.

THE WORKS OF JOHN WITHERSPOON.

See 1800.

1817

LETTERS ON EDUCATION.

See 1775.

1820

CHRISTIAN MAGNANIMITY.

See 1787.

ADDRESS TO THE SENIOR CLASS.

See 1788.

1822

LECTURES ON MORAL PHILOSOPHY. By the Rev. John Witherspoon, D.D.L.L.D. Carefully revised, and freed from the errors of former editions. To which is added, by the same author, An Address to the Students of the Senior Class, and Letters on Education and Marriage.

Philadelphia: Published by William W. Woodward, No. 52, South Second Street. 1822.

pp. 298. 12mo.

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*The same.* Lectures on Moral Philosophy. By John Witherspoon, D.D., LL.D. President of the College of New Jersey. Edited under the auspices of the American Philosophical Association by Varnum Lansing Collins.

Princeton, N. J. Princeton University Press. 1912.

pp. xxxii, 144. 8vo.

The frontispiece is a reproduction of the Woodhull copy of Peale's portrait of the President. The Introduction is a biographical sketch, followed by a Check-list of his published writings.

LETTERS ON EDUCATION.

See 1775.

ADDRESS TO THE SENIOR CLASS.

See 1788.

1823

TREATISES ON JUSTIFICATION AND REGENERATION.

See 1815.

1830

TREATISES ON JUSTIFICATION AND REGENERATION.

See 1815.

ADDRESS to six classes of persons. (Regeneration).

See 1764.

1842

ECCLESIASTICAL CHARACTERISTICS.

See 1753.

1844

REGENERATION.

See 1764.

1850

REGENERATION. French translation.

See 1764.

1855

REGENERATION.

See 1764.

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1876

SERIOUS INQUIRY INTO THE STAGE.

See 1764.

1912

LECTURES ON MORAL PHILOSOPHY.

See 1822.

### NOTE ON "A LETTER FROM A BLACKSMITH"

AN anonymous pamphlet entitled *A Letter from a Blacksmith*, which has been ascribed to President Witherspoon since the end of the eighteenth century, is omitted from the foregoing list of his writings. The *Letter*, which was a protest against prevalent conditions in the Scottish Church, first appeared in London in 1759 and was reviewed in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the *Critical Review*, and the *Monthly Review*. Its popularity was extraordinary, no less than thirteen editions coming out in Great Britain and the United States between 1759 and 1845, nine of them being issued during Dr. Witherspoon's lifetime. It was not until 1791 that its authorship was ascribed to him. The *Monthly Review* noticing a new London edition published that year—it had reviewed the first edition thirty-two years previously—remarked: "This pretended letter from a blacksmith was written, as we have heard, by Dr. Witherspoon, formerly a minister of some eminence in Scotland, and there distinguished for his uncommon abilities; but he has since made a greater figure in America where, if we mistake not, he obtained the honor of a seat at the board of Congress." On the basis of this hearsay ascription Halkett and Laing credited the pamphlet to the President, and have been followed by the British Museum Catalogue and by Sabin, Hildeburn, and Evans. Horne's Catalogue of the Library of Queen's College, Cambridge, on the other hand names the "Reverend Mr. Hume" as author, while the Bodleian Catalogue gives the credit to the "Reverend Mr. Buchanan of Somersetshire."

The pamphlet is not mentioned by Ashbel Green or other biographers of the President. Had he been its author, it is incredible that a production, of which so many editions were published in Great Britain and America before his death, should have remained unassociated with his name in the minds of those most intimately acquainted with him; there is no adequate evidence that he wrote it; and the style and content of the pamphlet reinforce the conclusion that he was not its author.

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## APPENDIX B

### WITHERSPOON ICONOGRAPHY PAINTINGS, STATUES, ETC.

**P**RESIDENT Witherspoon's portrait was painted by Charles Wilson Peale. This is believed to be the portrait formerly owned by the late General Alfred A. Woodhull of Princeton, N. J., the President's great-great-grandson. It descended directly in the family from Ann Witherspoon, to her daughter Mrs. Dirck G. Saloman, to the latter's daughter Miss Caroline Saloman, and from the latter to her nephew General Woodhull. It is now owned by Princeton University and hangs in Nassau Hall. Copies are in Madison Hall, Princeton University, in Independence Hall, Philadelphia; and a further copy by Rembrandt Peale is owned by Mr. S. S. Woods of Lewistown, Pa., having descended from the President's daughter by his second marriage.

Another and earlier portrait by an unknown artist was owned by the Slidell family, formerly of Princeton, and is believed to be at present in Paris. It has proved impossible to trace the origin of this painting.

The President's likeness is in Trumbull's celebrated "Signing of the Declaration of Independence," owned by Yale University. An enlarged copy is in the Capitol at Washington. While planning the enlargement the artist wrote to Thomas Jefferson that the portraits "were done by myself from the Life, being all who survived in 1791." Dr. Witherspoon was still living at this time and it is, therefore, to be assumed that his likeness in the Trumbull group is from life.

The Presbyterian Historical Society at Philadelphia owns a modern watercolor painting of the President.

Another modern portrait is in the New Jersey Room, Memorial Continental Hall, Washington, D. C.

James Tassie, the Scottish cameo maker, modelled Dr. Witherspoon's likeness in 1784. Two copies of this are in America, one owned by Princeton University and the other by Mrs. J. M. Spindle of Norfolk, Va. Mrs. Spindle's copy belonged to David

## APPENDIX B

Witherspoon. The original matrix is in the Tassie Collection, National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh.

There are three heroic statues of the President, one in bronze by J. A. Bailly, at Fairmount Park, Philadelphia, unveiled in 1876; a second also in bronze by William Couper, in front of the Church of the Covenant, Washington, D. C., unveiled in 1909; and the third of stone, by J. Massy Rhind, over the arch of the Library of Princeton University, erected in 1897.

An heroic bust in marble of the President by an unknown artist was presented to the University in June, 1876, by the Class of 1876 and is in the University Library. A bust is mentioned in Breed's *Witherspoon* as being owned in 1876 by the family of John Knox Witherspoon of Camden, S. C. Its history and present whereabouts have not been traced.

A life-size bronze bas-relief medallion of the President by an unknown artist is in Nassau Hall, Princeton University.

### ENGRAVED PORTRAITS

#### 1. TROTTER

*Stipple; full bust turned to the left; right hand resting on edge of standing book. Oval; H. 2 1-8 in.; W. 1 11-16 in. Surrounded by border with bow of ribbon at top and ornamental clasp.*

*Inscription*

"Drawn from the Life, and Engraved by T. Trotter."

"John Witherspoon, D.D. President of New Jersey College in America." "Published as the Act directs April 1<sup>st</sup> 1785. (from the Drawing in the Possession of the Rev<sup>d</sup> Dr Simpson) by J. Simco."

*Nothing is known of the artist or of the drawing on which this unflattering portrait is based.*

#### 2. D. EDWIN

*Stipple; bust, full face. Oval; H. 3 in.; W. 2½ in.*

*Inscription (at top of plate)*

"The Evangelical Intelligencer;"

*Signed*

"D. Edwin, sculpsit."

"Doct. J. Witherspoon." "Engraved for W. P. Farrand & Co. No 185 Market Street Philadelphia." "Page 17."

*Frontispiece to Vol. I, No. 1 (January 1805) of the "Assembly's Missionary Magazine," or "Evangelical Intelligencer."*

*Stauffer No. 917.*

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### 3. RIDLEY AND BLOOD

*Stipple. Oval in line frame; h. 3¼ in.; w. 2½ in.*

*Inscription*

"Ridley & Blood, sculp."

"Rev<sup>d</sup> J. Witherspoon, D.D. President of Princeton College, New Jersey, America." "Published by Williams and Co. Stationers Court. March 1, 1808."

*Frontispiece to the "Letters on Education" Southampton, 1808.*

### 4. ILLMAN AND PILLBROW

*In rectangular ruled frame; h. 3 5-8 in.; w. 2 7-8 in.*

*Inscription*

"Illman & Pillbrow sc."

*Facsimile signature* "Jno Witherspoon."

*Frontispiece to the "Lectures," Philadelphia 1810.*

### 5. J. SCOTT

*The Trotter engraving with architectural design, ornamented with flowers and fruit; figure of child resting on books at base of the design.*

*The whole 4 5-8 in. in h., by 2¾ in. in w.*

*Inscription*

"Eng<sup>d</sup> by John Scott, Glasgow."

"John Witherspoon D.D." "Published by William Collins, Glasgow."

*Frontispiece to the "Treatise on Justification and Regeneration," Glasgow, 1830.*

### 6. Unsigned.

*Stipple; full bust. h. 3 5-8 in.; w. 3 in.*

*Inscription*

"John Witherspoon, D.D."

"From a Painting by C. W. Peale."

"Publ. for the American Quarterly Register."

*Frontispiece to the November 1836 issue of the "American Quarterly Register," Volume IX, facing p. 105.*

### 7. J. B. LONGACRE

*Stipple. Oval; h. 3 in.; w. 2½ in.; in rectangular ornamental frame.*

*Inscription*

"John Witherspoon."

"Engraved by J. B. Longacre from a painting by C. W. Peale."

*In Sanderson, "Biography of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence," Vol. II facing page 205, Philadelphia 1838.*

*Stauffer No. 2127.*

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### 8. A. H. RITCHIE

*Rectangular; h. 3 6-8 in.; w. 3 in.*

*Inscription*

"A. H. Ritchie."

"Rev. John Witherspoon, D.D."

*In the Presbyterian Magazine Vol. I (1851); frontispiece to the December issue which contains a sketch of the President.*

*Also used in 1858 as frontispiece of Sprague, "Annals of the American Pulpit," Vol. III.*

*Also used in 1879 in Hageman, "History of Princeton and its Institutions," Vol. II, facing p. 261.*

*A photogravure of this engraving, without the artist's signature, but with a facsimile of Dr. Witherspoon's signature replacing the title, was used as frontispiece to D. W. Woods "John Witherspoon," Philadelphia 1906.*

### 9. O. PELTON

*In rectangular frame; h. 3 1-8 in.; w. 2½ in.*

"Painted by C. W. Peale. Eng<sup>d</sup> by O. Pelton, Boston."

*With poor facsimile of signature of Dr. Witherspoon.*

*Stauffer No. 2535.*

### 10. PRINCETON BOOK

*Heliotype; from the Peale portrait in Nassau Hall; h. 6 in.; w. 5 in.*

*In "The Princeton Book," Boston 1879, facing p. 45.*

### 11. SESQUICENTENNIAL BOOK

*Copper plate of the Peale portrait in Nassau Hall; h. 6½ in.; w. 5 in.*

*In "Memorial Book of the Sesquicentennial Celebration of the Founding of the College of New Jersey," New York 1898, facing p. 382. The plate was considerably retouched by the artist.*

## WOODCUTS

*Woodcuts of the President are in "Harper's Magazine" Vol. III, (1851), p. 155; "Harpers' Magazine" Vol. VII (1853), p. 154; "Potter's American Monthly" Vol. IV (1875), p. 505; "Potter's American Monthly," Vol. IV (1875), p. 510 (the Fairmount Park monument); facing p. 48 of W. P. Breed, "Witherspoon. Proceedings and address at the . . . unveiling of the statue of John Witherspoon," (in Fairmount Park), Philadelphia, 1877, (the cloth cover of this booklet bears a reproduction of the statue stamped in gold); Duykinck, "Cyclopedia of*

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American Literature," *New York* 1856, *Vol. I*, p. 277; "Scribner's Magazine," *Vol. XIII* (1877), p. 629; "The Church at Home and Abroad," *Philadelphia* 1888, p. 529. "Harpers Weekly," *Vol. XXXII*, p. 360; E. T. Giddings, "American Christian Rulers," *New York*, 1889, facing p. 575; "McClure's Magazine," *Vol. XVII*, (1901) p. 235.

### OTHER PORTRAITS

*Photogravures of the President are found in William H. Michael, "Declaration of Independence," (Washington, Government Printing Office), facing page 38; in the printed proceedings (Washington 1909,) at the dedication of the Witherspoon Statue at Washington, (the statue and pedestal; in the programme of the dedication of the Witherspoon Statue at Washington (the statue only)); in the 1912 reprint of the "Lectures on Moral Philosophy," (the Woodbull copy of the Peale portrait), and in the "Catalogue of the Portraits in Independence Hall," (Philadelphia, 1915) p. 167 (the Independence Hall copy of the Peale portrait.)*

## APPENDIX C

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

THE principal manuscript source on President Witherspoon's life is Dr. Ashbel Green's sketch preserved in the New Jersey Historical Society's Library at Newark, N. J. This manuscript, which was planned to be the introduction to Dr. Green's proposed third edition of the President's *Works* but was never issued, consists of 250 quarto pages and contains the best extant account of the President's personality by one who was intimately acquainted with him. Virtually all the reports presented by Dr. Witherspoon as a congressional committee-man are among the Papers of the Continental Congress now in the Library of Congress. In the libraries of the Pennsylvania Historical Society, the Presbyterian Historical Society, and Princeton University are a few of his letters, but the President's correspondence, which was said to have been extensive, has disappeared. The anonymous "Journal of Nassau Hall in 1786," describing college life at Princeton in Witherspoon's time, is owned by the Library of Congress.

The only extended printed biography of Dr. Witherspoon is that by David Walker Woods, Jr. (*John Witherspoon*, Fleming H. Revell Co., 1906), a volume to be used with caution. The most satisfactory account of the President's congressional career is to be found in Sanderson's *Biography of the Signers* for which both Dr. S. Stanhope Smith and Dr. Ashbel Green supplied material. Professor Moses Coit Tyler in the *American Historical Review* (I, 671) sketched the President's congressional service, quoting largely from his printed speeches and essays. The second volume of Professor Tyler's *Literary History of the American Revolution* contains a sympathetic and delightful chapter on the President. Of great interest is the Reverend J. F. Dickie's pamphlet *John Witherspoon, Patriot* printed without date at Detroit (?). It contains allusions to local traditions connected with Dr. Withers-

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spoon's charges in Scotland. *John Witherspoon and his Times* (Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1890) by ex-President James McCosh is an address delivered before the Presbyterian Historical Society and the Presbyterian Ministers Association of Philadelphia. It is merely a re-working of the printed material.

Of more value is a chapter in Dr. McCosh's volume *Scottish Philosophers* (New York), although the only genuine attempt to assign Dr. Witherspoon his place in the history of philosophical thought is found in Professor Woodbridge Riley's *American Philosophy: the Early Schools* (New York, 1907). His work as a theologian is discussed by Professor Lyman H. Atwater in the *Biblical Repertory* (vol. XXXV, p. 596 etc.)

The fullest account of Dr. Witherspoon's administration at Princeton is in ex-President John Maclean's *History of the College of New Jersey* (Philadelphia, 1877). It is followed by a brief memoir which, however, contains no new material. His administration was entertainingly described by Dr. Ashbel Green in an "Address before the alumni at Commencement in 1840," printed in 1854 in the *Presbyterian Magazine* (vol. IV, p. 467 etc.).

Besides his booklet *Presbyterians and the Revolution* (Philadelphia, 1876), written primarily to create public interest in the erection of a statue of the President, Dr. William P. Breed also compiled and edited the *Proceedings and Addresses at the laying of the corner stone and at the unveiling of the statue of John Witherspoon in Fairmount Park, Philadelphia* (Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1877). This little volume contains a particularly spirited oration by Governor Joseph D. Bedle of New Jersey which has minor errors of fact, but in the main is an excellent portrayal of the President.

The proceedings at the unveiling of the statue in Washington were published in a pamphlet with illustrations, *The Witherspoon Memorial. Sketch of the Association and Unveiling of the Statue* (Washington, 1909). The oration, then delivered by President Woodrow Wilson of Princeton, was a strikingly phrased estimate of Dr. Witherspoon's character, but not intended to be a careful study.

A good account of the President's life and character, based

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upon the biographical portion of Dr. Rodgers' Sermon and upon Dr. Green's manuscript sketch, is found in Sprague's *Annals of the American Pulpit*, vol. III, pp. 288-300.

The funeral sermon by Dr. John Rodgers, "The Faithful Servant Rewarded" is not notable. The biographical portion of the sermon was supplied by Dr. S. Stanhope Smith.

The scattered magazine articles on the President are principally re-statements of one another. The chief exception is the article in the *Christian Instructor* (vol. XXVIII, Oct., 1829) by Thomas Crichton, of Paisley, who signed himself "A Presbyterian of the West."

The Edinburgh *Quarterly Register* for May, 1923, (vol. XII, pp. 581-6) commemorates, under the title "The Witherspoon Bi-centenary," the two hundredth anniversary of the President's birth, in two articles, "John Witherspoon in Scotland," by the Rev. A. Mitchell Hunter, M. A., Librarian of New College, Edinburgh, and "Witherspoon in America," by Professor Frederick W. Loetscher, D. D., LL. D., of Princeton Theological Seminary. These articles, although unavoidably brief, are suggestive and useful surveys of the President's career.

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