

JOHN WITHERSPOON

HIS SCOTTISH MINISTRY



Jno Witherspoon

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by

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Introduction

The subject of this thesis appeared at first to lack promise. It seemed that John Witherspoon's career had been thoroughly described. His place in history is fixed by the great service he rendered in America during the years that include the birth of the United States. He was president of a leading college; he was a member of the Continental Congress; he was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence; and he was moderator of the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the newly founded American republic.

On closer examination, however, the subject showed great promise. The career of John Witherspoon in America has overshadowed his earlier life in his native land. He was born in Scotland, and for twenty-four years he was a minister of the Scottish Church. This period should be brought to light, because it is important in itself and because it contains the elements of his later achievements. V.L. Collins, in his two volume work, President Witherspoon, leaves nothing to be desired in his exposition of Witherspoon's American career; but he has not fully treated his attainments in his native land. No one has written fully on this period. It is the object of this thesis to discover and elucidate the facts of the career of John Witherspoon as a Scottish churchman.

Witherspoon's Scottish ministry naturally divides itself

in such a way that the outline I have followed in this work is almost inevitable. Chapter one supplies the necessary material and spiritual background; chapter two describes Witherspoon's home and formal education. Because Witherspoon separated his parish ministry from his extra-parochial ministry, I have done so. His parish work at Beith and Paisley is treated in chapters three and four, respectively. Of his extra-parochial ministry, the part dealing with Witherspoon's place in the church controversies is considered in chapter five; his general influence, other than controversial, is described in chapter six.

I wish to make grateful acknowledgment of the kindly and helpful interest of all the ministers, librarians and employees in government offices to whom I have applied for information in the course of my investigations.

CONTENTS

Introduction	iv
Synopsis	viii
Chapters	
I Material and Spiritual Background	1
II Early Life and Education	17
III Ministry at Beith	52
IV Ministry at Paisley	70
V Ministry in Ecclesiastical Controversy	114
VI Ministry in Theology and Morals	195
Conclusion	244
Appendices	
1. Table of Patrons of Scottish Benefices	247
2. Date of Witherspoon's Birth	247
3. Alleged Descent of Witherspoon from John Knox	249
4. Witherspoon's Call to Beith	252
5. "Five Feued Houses" of Beith	254
6. Witherspoon and the Beith Militia	255
7. Value of the Scots Merk	257
8. Verdict in the Snodgrass Case	258
9. An Essay Doubtfully Attributed to Witherspoon	258
10. Reference of the Phrase, "strange cattle"	261
11. Conditions of Witherspoon's leaving Scotland	262
12. Financial Status of Witherspoon	263
Bibliography	266

SYNOPSIS

John Witherspoon

His Scottish Ministry

SYNOPSIS

Chapter	page
I <u>Material and Spiritual Background</u>	1
Darren Scheme	1
Act of Union between Scotland and England	2
Scottish Church in the beginning of the eighteenth century	4
Clergy and civil freedom	5
<u>Marrow controversy</u>	7
Simson heresy trials	8
Secession of 1732	10
Law of patronage	10
II <u>Early Life and Education</u>	17
Birth and childhood	17
James Witherspoon	18
Mrs. James Witherspoon (Anna Walker)	25
Haddington Grammar School	27
University of Edinburgh: academic period	31
Professor John Stevenson	41
University of Edinburgh: theological period	46
Licensure	50
III <u>Ministry at Beith</u>	52
Presentation to Beith Parish	52
Call to Beith Parish	53
Ordination to Beith Parish	55
Beith Parish	56
Jacobite rebellion of 1745	57
Prison experience	59
Parish work and discipline	62
The ideal minister	64
Marriage	65
Beith church re-built	66
Controversy over county roads	67
Presentation to Laigh Church, Paisley	69

Chapter	page
IV <u>Ministry at Paisley</u>	70
Delay in call to Laigh Church	70
Opposition from the Presbytery of Paisley	71
Witherspoon's defence	71
Call to the Laigh Church, Paisley	75
John Witherspoon and Thomas Boston compared	75
Theatre and amusements	80
Admission to Laigh Church	83
Burghal Parish of Paisley	84
Laigh Church	85
Witherspoon's part in the life of Paisley	88
Controversy over erecting two kirk-sessions	88
Call to Scots Church, Rotterdam	91
Controversy over uniting offices of session clerk and schoolmaster	93
Call to Dundee	94
Lawsuit against the heirs of Bailie Fulton	96
Snodgrass case, parish discipline	98
Degree conferred by St. Andrews University	102
Sermons	103
Views of secular history	108
Call to Dublin	112
Call to College of New Jersey	112
V <u>Ministry in Ecclesiastical Controversy</u>	114
Moderate Party	114
Controversy over patronage	116
Witherspoon's opposition to Irvine settlement	118
Torphichen case	120
Inverkeithing case	121
Ascendancy of Moderate Party	126
Theology and clerical conduct of Moderate men	128
<u>Ecclesiastical Characteristics</u>	130
The tragedy, <u>Douglas</u>	150
<u>Serious Inquiry into the Nature and Effects of the Stage</u>	152
Controversy over commissions of members of the Assembly, 1757; 1766	164
Controversy over Kilconquhar settlement	174
<u>Serious Apology for the Ecclesiastical Characteristics</u>	178
<u>History of a Corporation of Servants</u>	187
Exclusion from the Assembly of 1766	194

Chapter	page
VI <u>Ministry in Theology and Morals</u>	195
Confession of Faith	195
Theology of the Moderate Party	197
Philosophy of Infidels	200
Conduct of Infidels	204
<u>Essay on Justification</u>	207
James Hervey and John Wesley	208
Witherspoon no seceder	214
<u>Treatise on Regeneration</u>	222
Church of England	223
Foreign Missions	225
John Witherspoon and Hugh Blair compared	229
Subject matter of Witherspoon's writings	232
Style of Witherspoon's writings	234
Call to College of New Jersey	236
Refusal	237
Acceptance of re-election	238
Preparations for leaving Scotland	238
Termination of Scottish ministry	241
Reasons for Witherspoon's going to America	241

CHAPTER I

The Material and Spiritual Background

of

Witherspoon's Scottish Ministry

THE MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL BACKGROUND OF
WITHERSPOON'S SCOTTISH MINISTRY.

CHAPTER I.

The material and spiritual forces that affected Scottish life in the early part of the eighteenth century are essential elements of the environment in which John Witherspoon was born and in which he grew up. These forces made the general background against which Witherspoon rose to importance as a minister of the Scottish Church.

The whole of Scotland was beggared in 1700 as a result of the failure of the Darien Scheme, the unfoundedly hopeful project for making the Isthmus of Panama the commercial crossroads of the world, to the profit of Scottish pockets. Patriotic enthusiasts had subscribed £400,000, an amount equal to the value of two-thirds of all the coin in circulation in the country; ⁽¹⁾ although only a little over half of this ⁽²⁾ subscribed sum was ever paid in, the failure of the scheme brought poverty to the nation and dissipated all hopes of prosperity. But prosperity was "just around the corner", a prosperity less spectacular but more lasting.

1. Graham, Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century, vol.ii, p.245.
2. Graham, Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century, vol.ii, p.242

This surer prosperity began to flow as a result of the Act of Union between Scotland and England in 1707.

The provision of the Act of Union removing all customs barriers between England and Scotland stimulated trading between the two kingdoms. But the results of this trade were slightly in England's favour. ⁽¹⁾ Another provision of the Act relative to trade had the opposite effect on Scotland; this provision removed the restriction that had prohibited Scotland from trading with English colonies. Within the generation after the Act of Union the commerce with Virginia and the Indies brought fortune to Glasgow. Traffic in tobacco brought the first tide of prosperity. The increased possibility for trade stimulated the manufacture of articles suitable for export. Spinning and weaving developed rapidly; the coal mining and iron industries, more slowly. As overseas commerce increased the demand for ships stimulated shipbuilding.

Scotland's union with England marked the beginning of a world-wide point of view for Scotland. At last she needed no longer to keep a watchful eye of the Borders. Looking farther afield she began to see the world as the proving /

1. Graham, Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth century p.247; Cunningham, W., The Growth of English Industry and Commerce, vol.ii. p.334.

proving ground for her sons and her industries. Interest in war paled as the necessity for it disappeared. In the wake of increased commercial activity came improved standards of living; improved standards of living facilitated the growth of culture and letters. The greater part of Scotland's contribution to human progress was made after 1707, in consequence of the Union.

All this directly affected John Witherspoon. Government subsidies given in fulfilment of terms of the Union aided the linen trade in Yester Parish where Witherspoon's father was minister. ⁽¹⁾ As a boy Witherspoon saw the turf on either side of Gifford Water used as drying greens for the newly formed British Linen Company. ⁽²⁾ Paisley, where Witherspoon was minister of the Parish Church after 1757, was as typical in 1700 of the dearth of Scottish life as its thriving prosperity of fifty years later was typical of Scotland's rising success. In 1700 Paisley was a village of thatched dwellings, whose 2,000 inhabitants depended on spinning yarn on rock and reel to supply the 87 handloom weavers, who sold their stuff at the cross in the market to English ⁽³⁾ pedlars.

1. Kerr, History of Scottish Banking, p. 65.
Bremner, The Industries of Scotland, p.216.
2. Collins, President Witherspoon, vol.i, p.3.
3. Brown, History of Paisley, vol.ii, p.94.

pedlars. Within less than twenty years after Witherspoon left Paisley the town's prosperity was proverbial. From a population of 4,000 in 1738 the town had grown to 22,000 by 1786. The narrow, dirty streets and the people with their slovenly manners and dress had been succeeded by "streets spacious and well-paved", new and elegant houses, and gay and polite people; the servant maids were more neatly dressed than were formerly the citizens' wives. Paisley had ceased to be self-conscious about riding in coaches. The town had a new inn, its own bank, and high expectations: "if they go on for twenty years more in the way they have done in the twenty past, Paisley will be a much more considerable place than even Glasgow"⁽¹⁾. In 1789 the total yearly value of manufactures in Paisley was over £660,000⁽²⁾.

The increasing flow of information about America coincided with those years of Witherspoon's boyhood when the mind is acquisitive of information. He grew up accustomed to think intelligently of America.

Because John Witherspoon's father was a minister, and because John himself became one, the character and development of the Scottish Church in the first part of the century/

1. Scots Magazine, XLVIII, p.619. (December, 1786)
2. Statistical Account, vol. vii; p.73; 1793.

century deeply affected his early life and his mature clerical outlook. The force of Presbyterianism in Scotland in the seventeenth century was spent in maintaining itself as the religion of the established church. Most of Scotland was primarily loyal to Presbyterianism; persons were loyal because they preferred Presbyterianism on its merits, or because they disliked episcopacy, or because they feared papacy. Others preferred the Presbyterian form of church constitution on purely political grounds; they resented English efforts to conform the Scots Church to the Church of England. The Revolution Settlement of 1689 provided that the Established Church in Scotland should be Presbyterian; the Act of Union confirmed this establishment.

The Scottish Church emerged from the persecution of the seventeenth century more distinguished for intensity than for culture. Ministers driven from their manse - hunted, imprisoned and tortured -- could not be expected to have much time for leisure, or inclination to cultivate the student's even mind.

The clergy and the people of Scotland were one in this spirit of intense independence. Though the ministers might sometimes tyrannize over the people in matters of parish /

parish discipline, the people remembered that the clergymen were their champions against governmental tyrannies. The Scottish folk were mindful that the ministers of the Church could have made terms for themselves, and secured good livings and court favour by selling popular freedom to autocratic power. But instead, they had died in the Grassmarket of Edinburgh and on the moors of Ayrshire, contending for what was both religious and political liberty. So ingrained was this devotion to liberty that it bore fruit not only in Scotland but in the lands to which it was carried.

"When, for instance, in this [eighteenth] century the Scot went over to America, he carried with him his hatred of tyranny and his courage in public affairs. At the first Declaration of Independence, it was a Scots minister^{*} who brought the Continental Congress to a decision, declaring, 'Though these grey hairs must soon descend to the sepulchre I would infinitely rather that they descended thither by the hand of the executioner than desert at this crisis the sacred cause of my country'. Dr. John Witherspoon had been a leader in the Scots Kirk about the middle of the century, as well as a somewhat broad satirist, but in 1768 he became Principal of Princeton College, New Jersey, and it was to him that Horace Walpole alluded when he said in the English/

* John Witherspoon

English Parliament, 'Cousin America has run off with the
 (1)
 Presbyterian parson'".

At the beginning of the century Scotland was almost devoid of literature. Men of letters there were none; what books there were came from England; the people lived humbly, spent sparingly, travelled seldom, and read little. Even a laird's bookshelf might contain only a few Latin books and a Confession of Faith. (2) From 1617, when Drummond published his book, entitled Forth Feasting, till Ramsay collected fragments of literature and published them in 1721 there had been silence in Scotland. (3)

The Church, both clergy and people, began to mellow from the austerity of the seventeenth century. The change in theology and religious feeling began to show itself particularly in two specific cases. One was the prolonged agitation over the alleged heresies of John Simson, Professor of Divinity at Glasgow; the other was the controversy over a book, The Marrow of Modern Divinity. The Marrow of Modern Divinity was a long-forgotten English book setting forth the teachings of the reformer, Martin Luther; Thomas Boston, of Ettrick, republished it and annotated it as the richest expression /

1. Watson, *The Scot of the Eighteenth Century*, pp.15, 16.
2. Graham, *Scottish Men of Letters in the Eighteenth Century* p.2.
3. Watson, *The Scot of the Eighteenth Century*, pp.319-320.

expression of sound doctrine. Those who condemned the Marrow were hard put to it to prove that it deviated from the standards of the church, but they had uneasy suspicions that the book and its supporters were infected with that antinomianism which often accompanies a well-known type of piety.

The General Assembly of 1720 condemned the book. Twelve ministers --- thereafter known as the Marrow Men --- made a representation against the decision and interpreted as a mark of Divine displeasure the fact that at the moment of the decision against the Marrow "a dreadful tempest of thunder and hail took place, delaying with its fury the proceedings". Boston, who was one of the Marrow men, issued a new edition of the book several years later; all the Marrow men continued to recommend it. The Assembly, however, took no further notice. The people gave these men their devotion and looked upon them as the only faithful teachers in the land. (1)

For over a decade the Church was agitated by the charges of heresy made against Professor Simson. He was brought to trial in 1714 and again in 1726, before the General Assembly, largely at the instance of Alexander Webster, (2) the fervid Evangelical leader. The chief error of which he was /

1. Campbell, Two Centuries of the Church of Scotland, pp.45-46: Graham, Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century, vol.ii,p.88: Raleigh, Annals of the Church in Scotland p.288.
2. Campbell, Two Centuries of the Church of Scotland, p.44.

was accused in his first trial was that he attributed too much to nature, ⁽¹⁾ and too little to God. The year he was brought to trial was the year of the birth of Jean Jacques Rousseau, who was to carry the gospel of nature to conclusions not dreamed of in the philosophy of either Webster or Simson. This case against Simson hung ^{on} for three years, when he was finally excused from the charges made against him, with a slight censure. ⁽²⁾ Other professors were enjoined against following his tenets.

In 1726 Simson was again brought to trial. He had studied Samuel Clarke's Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, a work of Arian tendency. He had framed his teaching accordingly. At his trial his students gave their versions of his lectures as evidence; but their versions varied. The professor had lectured in Latin, as was the custom; the variety of conflicting ideas that the students had gathered from these Latin lectures was so embarrassing that thereafter [?] the lectures were given in English. In 1728 he abjured his alleged errors; but in 1729 he was suspended from teaching, without being deposed. He continued to draw his salary for eleven years more. Nothing was proved by his prolonged trials, except that they articulated the Church's attitude ⁽³⁾ towards Arianism.

1. Raleigh, Annals of the Church of Scotland, p.287.
2. Graham, Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century, vol.ii, p.88.
3. Cunningham, Church History of Scotland, vol.ii,400.

The Simson cases and the Marrow controversy are evidences of two rival tendencies that ran side by side in the church in Scotland. Both were heretical in that both were half truths. The former expressed the religion of reason; the latter, the religion of feeling. Both gained ground from the reaction to the political religion of the seventeenth century. (1) The further development of these tendencies will be discussed as they come abreast Witherspoon's ministry. The Arian tendency showed itself in the paganized Christians against whom Witherspoon directed his satire, the Ecclesiastical Characteristics; the Marrow tendency contributed to the Secession.

The Secession was an accomplished fact before Witherspoon was in his teens. The Marrow men were the leading Seceders. But their tenets of free grace, which their opponents called antinomian, probably never would have carried them to the point of withdrawing from the Establishment. The occasional cause of their secession was their unredressed grievance against the law of patronage -- in its principle and its application. (2)

The law of patronage is the civil law providing for the appointment /

1. Cunningham, Church History of Scotland, vol.ii, p.446.
2. Mathieson, The Awakening of Scotland, pp.146-147.

appointment of the ministers of the Established Church to their benefices by the landed proprietors; these proprietors are called the patrons of the respective benefices at their disposal. ⁽¹⁾ Except for a brief period following 1638, lay patronage had existed in Scotland from the Reformation until the Revolution. In 1690 the right of presentation was taken from patrons. The heritors and elders of a landward parish, or the magistrates and elders of a burghal parish, were to "name and propose" a minister to the congregation. The patrons were compensated for the loss of their privilege by a payment from the heritors and elders of 600 merks for each patronage. If a congregation disapproved of the presentee of the heritors and elders, their reasons for disapproval were weighed by the presbytery; the judgment of the presbytery was to be final. If the heritors and elders presented no minister to a vacant parish within six months, the right of presentation fell to the presbytery, ⁽²⁾ jure devoluto.

In 1712 lay patronage was restored by Act of Parliament in spite of the protests of the Church of Scotland. The Act /

1. See Appendix I.

2. Wellwood, Life of Erskine, appendix, pp.422, 460.

Act of 1712 repealed the Act of 1690 and restored the patrons to their former rights, with the exception that the Act of 1712 retained the jus devolutum, whereby a patron failing to present a minister to^a vacant parish within six months forfeited his right of presentation to the presby-
(1)
:tery.

"For many years after the date of the act restoring patronages, presentations were by no means introduced into general practice"⁽²⁾. Many patrons, including the Crown, consulted the wishes of congregations and presbyteries before issuing their presentations. Public opinion condemned a man who accepted a presentation from a patron without the goodwill of the congregation. But no idea of popular election, as understood today, was then current.⁽³⁾ From 1712 until 1732 "the Assembly pronounced many sentences -
(4)
without much regard to the rights of patronage."

As long as the Church was mainly of one party, the settlement of ministers was determined in great measure at the discretion of the Church. But a division of opinion began to appear as a result of the doctrinal disputes over Professor/

1. Wellwood, Life of Erskine, pp.422, 460.
2. Wellwood, Life of Erskine, p. 436.
3. Witherspoon, Works, vol.vi.p.250: Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol,ii. p.205.
4. Wellwood, Life of Erskine, p.437.

Professor Simson and the Marrow. These disputes had caused much feeling; the opposing parties aggravated their differences until they developed the habit of party spirit. With party spirit came inevitably the desire for ascendancy; the mode of electing ministers, who in due course would be voting members of church courts, became the concern of all partisans. For a number of years after the Revolution Settlement there had not been enough ministers to man the Church. ⁽¹⁾ As the eighteenth century advanced the number of men intending to be ministers increased; the Church began to take more care in ordaining and settling ministers, in order to keep undesirable men from entering the sacred office. ⁽²⁾

The settlement of vacant parishes began to give prolonged trouble to the church courts. Two parties became clearly defined. The first, called the Moderate Party, favoured the exercise of patronage according to the law. They rallied behind the law of patronage because of the merit of the law, and because the law was a part of the Constitution of the Church. The other party, called the Popular Party, felt that the law of patronage was contrary to /

1. Graham, Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century
vol. ii, p.8.
2. Campbell, Two Centuries in th Scottish Church, p.51.

to the Christian liberty of the great body of members of the Church, and that it violated the individual rights of freedom of conscience.

Each year more and more time was taken up in the General Assembly with cases of settlements. The decisions of the General Assembly did not always bring peace. It fell to the presbyteries to execute the decisions of the Assembly; but presbyteries often held Popular opinions and plead^{ed} conscientious scruples against settling a minister against the wishes of a congregation. In 1729 the device was adopted whereby the duty of a recalcitrant presbytery would be done for it by a committee appointed for the purpose by the General Assembly or the Commission. These committees were called "riding committees". Forced, even violent, settlements often occurred. In the hope of delivering the Church from these discreditable altercations another expedient was adopted in 1732. In that year an Act was passed providing that presbyteries, in exercising the ius devolutum, were to proceed upon a call given by the heritors, provided they were protestants, and by the elders of the parish; the heads of families representing the congregation, were omitted from the process of the call, except for a nominal expression of opinion after the call was settled. This Act was passed by the Assembly on their own authority. (1)

The Popular Party resented the provisions of this Act. No sooner had the Assembly risen than Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, minister at Stirling, began to sound an alarm, charging that the act was a gross encroachment upon the rights of the people, that it was a breach of the Constitution of the Church and that it was "a wound given to the prerogative of Christ",⁽¹⁾ The synod censured Erskine for his words; he appealed from their censure to the Assembly of 1733. This Assembly sustained the synod's censure and refused to receive Erskine's protest against their decision. Before the year was out Erskine and the ministers who had joined with him in his stand against patronage were loosed from their charges. In defiance they erected the Associate Presbytery.⁽²⁾

The clamour against the Act of 1732 became so general and so violent that the Assembly repealed it in 1734. For the next six years the Assemblies did all they could to heal the breach between the seceders and the Church. Not only was the Act of 1732 repealed, but the sentence of suspension against Erskine and his friends was removed. All conciliation was in vain.⁽³⁾ In 1740 the seceders, still obdurate, were deposed.

1. Campbell, Two Centuries of the Church of Scotland, p.55
2. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol.ii, pp.1-10.
3. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol.ii, pp.15-18.

It was during this period of increasing commercial prosperity, a period which ushered in a new age for Scotland, that John Witherspoon was growing up. In the Church there was still keen party strife, in spite of the secession of Erskine and other leaders of the Popular Party. Witherspoon was to begin his ministry in the Church within less than a decade after the final deposition of the seceders.

CHAPTER II

The Childhood and Formal Education
of
John Witherspoon.

CHAPTER II.

John Witherspoon was born at Gifford, in East Lothian,
 (1)
 February 5, 1723, the eldest son of James Witherspoon and
 Anna Walker. Mr. Witherspoon was minister of the parish
 (Yester Parish) and Mrs. Witherspoon was a daughter of the
 manse; her father was David Walker, minister of Temple
 (2)
 Parish, near Edinburgh.

His home was comfortable. The manse was new. It
 had been built only 15 years before, in 1708, at the same
 time the church was built. His father's stipend was £100
 a year, including the glebe. (3) If the average income of
 ministers was £40 a year, as Graham says it was, then the
 (4)
 Witherspoon household was above the average. (5) And if the
 income of the clergyman in a parish stood second, exceeding
 that of many of the lairds, then John Witherspoon must have
 been born to circumstances of unusual comfort and position.

Industry was touching Gifford. The linen trade was
 (6)
 employing 15 hands. Beyond the bleachfield there was no
 manufacturing/

1. Fasti Ecc. Scot. vol.iii. p. 174 - see Appendix 2.
2. Fasti Ecc. Scot. vol.i, p.349.
3. Statistical Acct. of Scotland, vol.i, p.346.
4. Graham, Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century,
 vol.ii, p.16.
5. Ibid., p.16.
6. Statistical Account, vol.i, p.347.

manufacturing in the parish. The name of the parish, Yester, is a corruption from a word "ystrad", which describes the local aspect of the parish. For "ystrad" means "strath", and the parish forms a strath on the banks of a rivulet called Gifford Water, a tributary of the Tyne. Various small streams descending from the Lammermoor Hills form the Gifford Water. "This strath is one of peculiar beauty. Although it is 400 feet above the level of the sea, it is highly cultivated, and richly wooded"⁽¹⁾. An older account tells us there were "some very fine trout" in Gifford Water. For the growing boy there was climbing through the heather to the tops of the Lammermoors: Lammerlaw, the highest of them all, is in Yester Parish. There was also fishing. Nearby was Yester Castle; Scott was to mention it in Marmion. Witherspoon long remembered the fishing for we find him in a sermon draw-⁽²⁾ing a metaphor from the careful baiting of a fishhook.

What we know of the Rev. James Witherspoon makes for the inference that he was all that the New Statistical Account⁽³⁾ says of him: "eminent for his piety, learning, and fidelity as a minister of the gospel". An estimate of his ability as /

1. New Statistical Acct. vol. ii. pp.154 ff.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol, iv, p. 177.
3. New Statistical Acct. vol.ii, p.158-159

as a preacher comes through the celebrated Robert Wodrow who reports what he heard from a friend. Under the date of May 13, 1728, Wodrow writes, "Yesterday in the forenoon, Mr. Rouat preached before the Commissioner ... He had very good things and did not meddle at all, almost, but very generally, with what was before the Assembly. However, his successor in the afternoon, Mr. Witherspoon, followed not his example. His text was, 'Contend earnestly for the faith', and those who heard him say he explained very softly, and much over-looked earnestness, and pressed, which are good things, moderation and charity, and showed this contending is about manners of speaking and words of different meanings, and it may be, people who are mistaken may be at the bottom". Wodrow comments further, "Such as preach now are bound to be mistaken by one side or other, and it's no desirable province. I did not hear Mr. Witherspoon, minister at Yester, but went to the Tron Church"⁽¹⁾. He preached before the Lord High Commissioner again on the morning of the second Sabbath of the sitting of the Assembly of 1742.⁽²⁾ In 1744 he was made a King's chaplain-in-ordinary.⁽³⁾ At the age of 66, two years before his death, he/

1. Correspondence, Wodrow Society, vol.iii, p.365.
2. Morren, Annals, of the Assembly, vol.i, p. 335 (appendix)
3. Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae, vol.i, p.400.

he was a member with his son of the Assembly of 1757. The father and the son were both appointed members of the same committee, the committee on overtures.⁽¹⁾ These facts, with other considerations, largely contradict the picture drawn by Alexander Carlyle of the elder Witherspoon.

Although Carlyle, a contemporary and associate of John Witherspoon, gives us our only account of the life in the Yester manse, it is a picture that cannot be wholly relied on. To begin with it was written, not at the time when he visited the Witherspoons, but toward the end of his life. His observations were those of an unformed youth, recollected and recorded in old age. Not only time but John Witherspoon's subsequent greatness must have warped Carlyle's memory. Both father and son are represented as unpleasant; their good qualities are grudgingly mentioned. It is unfortunate for our picture of John Witherspoon that the chief contemporary acquaintance who wrote about him should be a prejudiced witness. Speaking of John he says, "I used sometimes to go with him for a day or two to his father's house at Gifford Hall, where we passed the day in fishing, to be out of reach of his father, who was very sulky and tyrannical, but who, being much given to gluttony, fell asleep early, and /

1. Ms. Records of General Assembly for 1757, p.394.

and went always to bed at nine, and, being as fat as a porpoise, was not to be awaked, so that we had three or four hours of liberty every night to amuse ourselves with the daughters of the family, and their cousins who resorted to us from the village, when the old man was gone to rest. This John loved of all things; and this sort of company he enjoyed in greater perfection when he returned my visits, when we had still more companions of the fair sex, and no restraint from an austere father⁽¹⁾".

Such was the opinion of the youthful Carlyle. It is natural for him to find the older Witherspoon austere (his own father was exceptional in his allowing Carlyle to dance⁽²⁾); he naturally thought him dull, fat, and sluggish for what a stripling lad does not so think of most men of over 45; he refers to James Witherspoon as "the old man"⁽³⁾, although he was just over 45. To this youthful opinion he adds an interpretation that savours of a cynical and bitter old age. Carlyle adds to the above account, speaking of John Witherspoon, "so that I always considered the austerity of manners and aversion to social joy which he affected afterwards, as the arts of hypocrisy and ambition; for he had a strong and enlightened understanding, far above enthusiasm, and a temper that /

1. Carlyle, Autobiography, p. 73.
2. Carlyle, Autobiography, p. 53
3. Carlyle, Autobiography, p. 73.

that did not seem liable to it"⁽¹⁾. In 1758 Witherspoon said, "Men discover such a proneness to disparage every profession of piety superior to their own. How common it is to ascribe such appearance to weakness or hypocrisy"⁽²⁾.

Out of all this there appear the facts that John Witherspoon loved fishing, and indulged in it and in other youthful pastimes, more than his father thought good for him. After he grew up, in his life as a minister in the Scottish Church, he put away his youthful irresponsibility, and took life so seriously that he never "played" again.⁽³⁾ He knew that his austerity of life gave offence to his more worldly brethren. Of the true minister he says, "There are many who will complain of him, as too rigid, and impute to ill-nature and indiscretion, what arises from the dictates of conscience, and a sense of duty"⁽⁴⁾. This he said in the last sermon he preached before leaving Scotland for America.

In the summer of 1744 Carlyle was visiting the clergy of the Presbytery of Haddington, as the forms required that he should perform that duty before he was admitted to trials. In Carlyle's words: "I went to the next manse, which was Yester, where I had been frequently before with John Witherspoon, afterwards/

1. Carlyle, Autobiography, p. 73
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. v, p. 22
3. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 65
4. Witherspoon, Works, vol. iii, p. 291

afterwards the celebrated doctor. The father, who had very few topics to examine on, as the depth of his reading was in the sermons of the French Calvinist ministers, which he preached daily, was, besides, too lazy to engage in anything so arduous as the examination of a student -- how to eat and drink and sleep being his sole care, though he was not without parts, if the soul had not been buried under a mountain of flesh."⁽¹⁾

The truth sorted from the prejudice in this picture shows a man of parts, somewhat a sensualist, not catholic in his reading. But as this was the year he was made King's Chaplain he could not have been immersed in obesity, a might-have-been. He knew young Carlyle well; the presbytery evidently thought well of Witherspoon's abilities, for he was one of a committee of three appointed by the presbytery to examine "Carlile" as a candidate for "T⁽²⁾ryal". He did his work for he was one of only two of the committee of three who reported to/^{the} presbytery the result of their examination. He was an examiner of "Carlile's" thesis.⁽³⁾ The feature of this portrait which is reflected in John Witherspoon is the knowledge of the French Calvinist writers. One of the few illustrative anecdotes that John Witherspoon used in his writings /

1. Carlyle, Autobiography, p.105.
2. Ms. Records of the Presbytery of Haddington, October 16, 1744.
3. Ms. Records of the Presbytery of Haddington, September 2, 1745.

ings and sermons was taken from the history of French Protestants, a story of Des Barreaux who prayed, "Great God, thy judgments are full of righteousness, thou takest pleasure in the exercise of mercy; but I have sinned to such a height, that justice demands my destruction, and mercy itself seems to solicit my perdition. Disdain my tears, strike the blow, and execute thy judgment. I am willing to submit, and adore, even in perishing, the equity of thy procedure. But on what place will the stroke fall, that is not covered with the blood of Christ"? This Des Barreaux was "a foreigner of eminent station, who had been a great profligate, and afterwards became a great penitent"⁽¹⁾. He gives no source of reference for this incident, as he is scrupulous to do usually; he evidently recalled it from his childhood.

From a memoir of Dr. John Witherspoon, the materials of which were chiefly derived from the sermon preached at his funeral, we read that "his father was a worthy man - eminent not only for piety, but for literature, and for a habit of extreme accuracy in all his writings and discourses. Any propensity, when it has once become characteristic of a race, is peculiarly apt to be propagated by the influence of early associations. The father's example, therefore, may be supposed/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol.i, p.283.

supposed to have contributed not a little to form in the son that taste and love of correctness, united with a dignified simplicity, for which he was so much and so justly distinguished through the whole of his life."⁽¹⁾

John Witherspoon's mother was Anna Walker, the daughter of the Rev. David Walker and Margaret Paterson, his wife. The alleged descent of the Walkers from John Knox is the source of the oft-repeated but unproved claim connecting John Witherspoon with the reformer.⁽²⁾

The date of Mrs. Witherspoon's birth is no longer a matter of record. But the baptismal register of Temple Parish shows that she was baptised on July 19, 1696. It is safe to assume that her birth did not precede this date by many days. In his last sermon at Paisley Witherspoon mentioned that the custom still prevailed to baptise babies as soon as possible after they were born.⁽³⁾ Of her personality and character our only knowledge is derived by inference from the facts of her ministerial parentage and her marriage to a Lowland parish minister, and from the early training of her six children, born within ten years. Her death occurred /

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol.i, p.xii.
2. Appendix 3.
3. Witherspoon, Works, vol.iii, p.292.

occurred sometime before 1744, when her husband describes himself as a widower. ⁽¹⁾ James Witherspoon died August 14, 1759, after his son, John, had been settled at Paisley a little over two years. Witherspoon came through to Gifford on this occasion and remained to preach the Sunday following in his late father's pulpit. ⁽²⁾ Of his will, probated the following December, John Witherspoon is the sole executor; the only item of indebtedness to his estate mentioned in this document is the salary of King's chaplain, due from July 5, 1759 until his death. ⁽³⁾

John Witherspoon often mentions parents and children in his writings and sermons. In how far these ideas reflect his home training, and in how far they are the ideals of child-training that he acquired after he had himself left his father's roof he has not told us. In his visits to the Yester Manse Carlyle noticed the firm discipline of the father over the children. Once, in his sermon, Seasonable Advice to Young Persons, John Witherspoon seems to have in mind his own father's discipline. "One of the first and most important lessons which parents and guardians must teach -- is moderation and restraint". "It has been sometimes observed, that persons strictly and piously educated, when/

1. Collins, President Witherspoon, vol. i, p.7
2. Ms. Record of the Presbytery of Haddington, August 1759.
3. Ms. Register of Testaments, Edinburgh, December 20, 1759.

when they have come into the world, have run headlong into the most vicious and abandoned course of life. This has been commonly ascribed to the rigour of their former confinement, and an advice grafted upon it, that parents should be less severe to their children, lest they should more than compensate this early restraint, by the liberties which they afterwards assume. But though I willingly admit that every parent, should temper his authority with gentleness and love, yet I am far from thinking the effect just now mentioned is ascribed to its proper cause; it is not owing so much to the rigour of parental authority, as to young persons getting into the society of men without principle ---." "I have observed that the children of pious parents, who are betrayed into vicious courses, are almost always such as have been most early removed from their immediate inspection." Witherspoon is saying that he did not suffer from a strict regulation in youth; rather he benefited by it. It kept him from evil companions and from forming time-wasting and vicious habits. (1)

At an early age John was sent to the Grammar School at Haddington. He distinguished himself sufficiently to be handed down as an out-standing pupil of the school. (2)

James/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol.v, pp.101-102
2. Miller, Lamp of Lothian, p.194.

James Miller mentions the early scholars of Haddington school and continues: "Such were a few of the early distinguished scholars of Haddington, where the Maitlands -- the Cockburns -- and Knox were educated; and, in later times, Witherspoon and Mylne, men alike distinguished for their literary talents as well as their learning". Of course, Witherspoon's attendance at the school might not have been mentioned but for his later distinction.

In 1724, John Leslie was master of the grammar-school at Haddington. "Previous to this period the school of Haddington had been convened at six o'clock in the morning, summer and winter. On the 14th of December, 1699, the town council ordained, for the health of the children, 'that from Hallowmas to Candlemas, the school should in future meet at nine morning⁽¹⁾'. This change of time was fortunate for young John Witherspoon who had to walk the four miles from Gifford to Haddington every day. The school-house was near the Tyne, which runs through Haddington. It was once spoiled by flood (1673); on its being "redd and cleansed", seats and, later, desks were provided for the pupils. This was the equipment in Witherspoon's day. Within 20 years after he left the school (1753) the town council built a new school. It is likely a new/

1. Miller, Lamp of Lothian, p.195.

new school was needed when Witherspoon attended. He spent the day at the school, with two hours allowed in which to eat the two meals the food for which he had brought from home. In winter it was dark long before he reached home. He was taught Latin, mathematics, grammar, writing and singing. In addition he was given the usual religious instruction in the scriptures and the catechism. ⁽¹⁾ The school was intended principally to impart factual knowledge; home training was relied on to build character. Witherspoon said years later in a sermon, "Public instruction is, in a great measure, useless to those who are not prepared for it by more familiar ⁽²⁾ teaching at home".

For a long period there had existed in Grammar Schools the custom of performing Latin plays. This practice was designed for the furtherance of learning, and not to pander to any weakness for professional play-acting. The Haddington Grammar School had its Latin plays. Alexander Home, schoolmaster of Dunbar, had composed when James VI was king, a piece called "Bellum Grammaticale", in which the various parts of speech are personified and appear to argue with each other their respective claims to precedence over the rest. During John Witherspoon's school days this and such pedagogic moral plays were performed on festive school occasions /

1. Miller, Lamp of Lothian, p. 195.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol.iii, p.226.

occasions; the public functionaries, eminent citizens, and ministers came with subdued excitement to witness the performances. Schoolmaster Leslie's boys' acting was received "with general applause". On one occasion he secured "the most celebrated Scottish poet of the time, the author of the pleasant pastoral comedy of the 'Gentle Shepherd', to introduce his young Thespian heroes to their auditors with an address. To display their appreciation of these Latin dramatic entertainments, the town council defrayed the expenses annually, for erecting the stage.

When in 1756 the Tragedy of Douglas was performed and raised a storm of opposition to the stage, Witherspoon added his "Serious Inquiry into the Nature and ^{Effects} ~~Characteristics~~ of the Stage" to the general hue and cry against the stage. It must have given him some embarrassment to recall that he had taken ordinary parts in the Latin plays of his school days. He carefully explains: "There is a discourse of a foreigner of some note, in which he asserts all his eloquence in commendation of plays, when used in the public schools, for the improvement of youth in action and elocution, under the direction of their masters. As this gentleman was a clergyman, his authority is often used on this subject.

But/

1. Allan Ramsay.
2. Miller, Lamp of Lothian, p.196.
3. Werenfels Oratio de Comoediis.

But it ought to be observed, that as he was a young man when he employed his eloquence in this cause, so, what he says strongly supports the propriety of the distinction" between public plays and school plays. "He expressly confines the argument to such plays as were presented by youths in the schools, and rejects with great abhorrence the public stage, and such as were acted by mercenary players"⁽¹⁾. By the time he wrote his essay against the stage, school plays were banned. And as though answering someone's reminder that the magistrates and town council of Haddington used to sanction their grammar school plays he dogmatizes: "But [the] magistrate can never be safely intrusted with the direction of what regards our moral and spiritual improvement, and he would be going out of his own sphere should be attempt it."⁽²⁾ Nor does he allow to escape mention "the aggravated sin of ministers writing plays, or attending the stage". "The stage is not only improper as a means of instruction, but -- all, or the far greatest number of pieces there presented, must have, upon the whole, a pernicious tendency"⁽³⁾.

In his thirteenth year John Witherspoon was sent to the University /

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol.vi, p.70.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p.92 footnote.
3. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p.126.

University of Edinburgh. Until 1708 the course of instruction at the University was conducted by regents, that is, teachers each of whom carried his class through a three or four years' curriculum, until the class reached the stage of laureation. In that year the method of each regent lecturing on a multiplicity of incongruous subjects was abandoned in favour of the system whereby each subject was treated by one man who made it his special study. Although Witherspoon came to the University in 1736 there still remained a remnant of the "regenting system" that required him to matriculate under a given professor; and so it happens that in the manuscript book of matriculation for 1704-1762 preserved in the university archives is found John Witherspoon's signature under the heading "Discipuli Domini Johanni Stevenson". The date of his signing this register was February 26, 1736. But he must have signed later than his arrival, some months later; because the term ran from November to May, one continuous term without the possibility of a student's entering in February, and because he is mentioned by Dr. Carlyle as one of his house mates in the autumn of 1735.

Coming to the university was merely another step in Witherspoon's /

1. Bower, History of the University of Edinburgh, vol.ii. pp.71-83.
2. Graham, Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century, vol.ii, p.193
3. Carlyle, Autobiography, p.34.

Witherspoon's progress toward his goal, the ministry. His character was well-formed; his purpose was well-defined; he was more mature than the average. The accidents of university life --- living quarters, amusements, and companions -- had small effect on him. He lived in the same house with his childhood friend, Carlyle, and other men whom Carlyle describes as "very good company". John and Alexander Maxwell, with their tutor, were boarded there. Also in the house were kinsmen of the young Maxwells, Sir Harry Nisbet of Dean, and John Dalrymple who with Carlyle shared the benefit of the Maxwell's tutor. "John Maxwell was remarkably tall and well made +-, but of such gentle manners and so soft a temper that nobody could then foresee" that he would be a distinguished colonel in the allied army under Prince Ferdinand in the year 1759. Sir Harry was to become an army officer and fall in battle at an early age. John Dalrymple was later Sir John and made his first appearance before the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale as an advocate defending Alexander Carlyle against the libel brought against him for attending the performance of the tragedy, "Douglas".⁽¹⁾ Witherspoon must have cared little to make any impression on his companions or to partake in their life. Carlyle says, of/

1. Carlyle, Autobiography, p.337.

of Witherspoon, "At the time I speak of he was a good scholar, far advanced for his age, very sensible and shrewd, but of a disagreeable temper, which was irritated by a flat voice and awkward manner, which prevented his making an impression on his companions of either sex that was at all adequate to his ability. This defect, when he was a lad, stuck to him when he grew to manhood ---"⁽¹⁾

In his mature purpose for his life and in his capacity for pursuing that purpose singly Witherspoon was advanced for his years. But this maturity seems to have been at the expense of other sides of his development. In his singleness of purpose he consciously eliminated all influences that he felt to be either not helpful, or inimical to his preparation for the ministry. He was immune to the influences from outside himself which he chose consciously to be free of. Those subtle influences -- the historic traditions of the city, the benefit of meeting the world, the cultivation of taste, and the gaining of "a certain manner and address that can only be obtained at the capital" - left Witherspoon untouched. Those common experiences that bind friend to friend Witherspoon never shared with anyone. But it was by his own choice that it was so, and not by accident. He cultivated /

1. Carlyle, Autobiography, p.34.

cultivated assiduously that which was conducive to the purpose of religion.

In the early years of his ministry he wrote, "The knowledge of history is, in many respects, necessary for the great purposes of religion". "If any ask, how or why the knowledge of history is necessary to the purposes of religion? I answer it is 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⁽¹⁾". This elevated reaction would scarcely be the major one which old Edinburgh would arouse; therefore he spent no time "savouring" its old stones and ways. With respect to the opportunities of city life Witherspoon felt that for all Christians "their duty as Christians should constrain them to be at odds with the delicacies of life, or the polite and fashionable pleasures of the age"⁽²⁾. He often speaks in later years against laymen who conform to the world, but more especially against ministers who make their address and conversation and employments agreeable to men/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol.vi, pp. 97-98.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 78.

men of the world. This ascetic detachment prevented his having friends during his student days, and was to prevent his participation in the fellowship of any clerical group during the years of his Scottish ministry, whether social or political.

During his university years Witherspoon missed the poverty-haunted struggle which many students had to make. His lodgings in a house half way down the Lawnmarket were the best any student had, and in contrast with ^{those of} the great majority of lads who were extremely poor and lived in mean garrets in the wynds; ^{students} those/who were less poor ~~and~~ lived in chambers in the main quadrangle of the university. The poverty of students was acute. Many brought with them in autumn their winter's supply of oat and barley meal, which with occasional supplies from home, lasted by careful stint-
(1)
ing till the session was over in May. Even well-off students lived cheaply. Carlyle says that in 1742 "living at Edinburgh continued to be wonderfully cheap, as there were ordi-
:dinaries for young gentlemen, at fourpence a-head for a very good dinner of broth and beef, and a roast and potatoes every day, with fish three or four times a week, and all the small-
(2)
beer that was called for till the cloth was removed".

1. Graham, Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century, vol.ii, pp.190-191.
2. Carlyle Autobiography, p.71.

Students who could pay it could find board for the session
 (1)
 for £10.

Witherspoon was well advanced in his proficiency in languages when he entered the university. He is reported as saying afterward that he understood Latin and Greek and French at this time as well as he ever did. (2) It was common for the boys coming up to the university from school to know Latin. It was left to the schools to train their pupils in that learned tongue and grammar. Long after the University of Edinburgh established a professorship in Latin, it was usual for students to prosecute their courses and take their degrees without entering a Latin class. (3) The text books were in Latin; the philosophical lectures were based on classic and medieval writers; and the lectures were delivered in Latin. Witherspoon's facility with Latin was the key to much of the benefit he derived from his professors and studies.

The knowledge of Greek helped Witherspoon to progress more rapidly than if he had had to learn Greek at the University. The time he would have devoted to Greek was free for other studies, and the classic Greek writings that he studied were readily open to him through his knowledge of the language.

1. Graham, Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century, vol. ii, p.191.
2. Collins, President Witherspoon, vol.i, p.12.
3. Graham, Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century, vol, i. p.16.

His proficiency in French was more unusual. Because his father was interested in French literature he had seen to it that the boy had a good knowledge of the language. (1) Carlyle, who had been as well educated as Witherspoon in other respects, lacked French. Skill with the use of the French language was so uncommon and the demand for instruction in it general enough that the university gave leave to one, Kerr, to teach French in a college room and to charge his pupils one guinea for the whole session's instruction. (2)

For all who came up to the university with Latin and Greek, as did Witherspoon, only two classes, logic with metaphysics and natural philosophy, were imperative for entering any learned profession or for taking a degree. Up to 1735 the teaching of logic was of the medieval type -- scholasticism which made Aristotle and peripatetic philosophy the sole study. With the instruction of natural philosophy was joined pneumatics, a study of such questions as the being and perfections of God, the nature of angels, the soul of man, and the duties of natural religion. (4) Of more importance than the subjects studied were the men who taught them.

Of/

1. Collins, President Witherspoon, vol.i, p.16.
2. Carlyle, Autobiography, p.49.
3. Bower, History of Edinburgh University, vol.ii, p.71
4. Graham, Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century, vol.ii, p.197.

Of the faculty of the University of Edinburgh at this time able men like Drummond in Greek and Sir Robert Stewart in natural philosophy were past their prime. The tutor living in Witherspoon's house took over for a term the Greek classes of the senescent Drummond. ⁽¹⁾ Stewart's teaching had so paled that young Professor M'Laurin was brought to Edinburgh in 1725 to supplement the old man's lectures with a course of experiments in mechanics. A contemporary of Witherspoon tells that in 1738 M'Laurin was continuing to augment Stewart's course with the experiments and with many excellent lectures in natural philosophy, which fully compensated the defects of the other class. ⁽²⁾

"M'Laurin was at this time a favourite professor, and no wonder, as he was the clearest and most agreeable lecturer on that abstract science [natural philosophy] that ever I heard". This is the opinion of one of his students, who says further, "He made mathematics a fashionable study, which was felt afterwards in the war that followed in 1743, when nine-tenths of the engineers of the army were Scottish officers. ⁽³⁾ The Academy at Woolwich was not then established".

There is a reflection of his teaching in Witherspoon's observation /

1. Carlyle, Autobiography, p.37.
2. Carlyle, Autobiography, p.57.
3. Carlyle Autobiography, p.37

observation in his farewell address when he says, "In teaching every science there is a certain order that must be observed, otherwise the labour will be in a great measure lost".⁽¹⁾ But Witherspoon studied science as he did everything else, not as an end in itself but as it might be valuable for the purposes of religion. In his Treatise on Regeneration he points out: "Even amongst those who are instructed in several branches of human science, it is astonishing to think what ignorance there is of everything that relates to religion."⁽²⁾ Witherspoon reflects little of the influence of this man who was a friend and trusted disciple of Isaac Newton, and a professor of wide renown. Interested though Witherspoon may have been, his ideal for the ministry had in it no element of this "new" scientific truth, although M^r Laurin was its most enthusiastic apostle; through his efforts an astronomical observatory was built in Edinburgh; he delivered a course of popular scientific lectures which was amusing and instructive to "a promiscuous audience of both sexes". "His style of lecturing is represented to have been uncommonly interesting",⁽³⁾ which was in shining contrast to the system that prevailed among most professors of dictating their lectures to their classes /

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol.iii, pp.268-269.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol.i, p. 241.
3. Bower, History of University of Edinburgh, vol.ii, pp.247-281.

classes, in Latin.

The professor who most interested and most influenced young Witherspoon was Mr. John Stevenson, who was elected professor of logic and metaphysics in 1730. As M'Laurin had brought about in the teaching of science the transition from instruction based on the school-men and Descartes to training based on Isaac Newton, so Stevenson re-orientated the teaching of his subjects. He supplanted the school logic with studies in Locke's writings; in addition to the study of the Greek and Roman classics he added instruction that would lead to the appreciation of current English writings. The best English authors were little known in Scotland. Men who in life spoke the broadest vernacular could not easily read or write in English, which to them was a foreign tongue in which they might make more blunders than in school-learned Latin. Stevenson was among the first to point out the works that ought to be read and studied, in order to improve the taste; or to specify authors whose writings were considered as models after which a young writer should copy. (1)

In his careful and appreciative study of literature Stevenson was like Witherspoon's father. The professor continued and confirmed John Witherspoon's study and taste

taste in literature and widened his scope to include contemporary works. Stevenson's classes studied the writings of Dryden, Addison's papers in the Spectator, ^{and} Pope; the class then studied the critical theories of these and other men, such as the Frenchmen, Bossu and Dacier. For comparison and contrast the professor drew illustrations from the rhetorical and critical works of Cicero, Quintillian, and Horace; as fast as the members of the class mastered Greek they were put to reading Homer. He chose Homer that they might improve their Greek and that they might have Homer as a background for the study of Virgil and Milton. They next translated, in the professor's hearing, Aristotle's Poetics, Longinus' Essay on the Sublime, and Heineccius' Logic. The part of the course on Ontology was made as brief as possible in favour of time spent on the history of philosophy, ending with a study of an abridgment of Locke's Essay on Human Understanding.⁽¹⁾

Carlyle says of himself and his fellow-students, "All of us received the same impression - viz., that our minds were more enlarged, and that we received greater benefit from that class than from any other".⁽²⁾

Witherspoon enjoyed this instruction with many other students /

1. Bower, History of the University of Edinburgh, vol.ii, pp.269-281. Wellwood's Life of Erskine, pp.19-20.
2. Carlyle, Autobiography, p.48.

students who were to distinguish themselves as clergymen of letters. "Years after, when a striking similarity was noticed between Dr. Witherspoon's lectures on composition and taste and Hugh Blair's lectures on rhetoric and belles lettres" Witherspoon "declared to Ashbel Green that he had never exchanged a word with his college-mate, the future professor of rhetoric and graceful preacher, and Dr. Green suggests -- that the similarity of their views was due to their common education under Professor Stevenson"⁽¹⁾. As for Witherspoon's own manner of writing, we shall see later how his immaculate style makes even the most minute theological analysis easy to follow.

Professor Stevenson developed in Witherspoon, beside a clear style of composition, a wide acquaintance with literature and a ready illustrative use of it. Of eighteen literary allusions taken at random from Witherspoon's works seven are from English writings, five from the French, four from the classics, and one each from John Knox and Robertson's History of Charles V. But his use of literature is for the purposes of religion. For example, he cites the life of Cato⁽²⁾ to show the silent influence of a good man. "One of the ancient authors gives it as a rule for moral conduct, 'that/

1. Collins, President Witherspoon, vol.i. p.14.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol.iii, p.211.

'that men should always imagine themselves in the presence of such a man as Cato, renowned for gravity and virtue'". But Witherspoon quickly qualifies his implied commendation of a heathen's virtue:"But if the fancied presence of a mortal in whom some faint rays, if I may speak so, of the divine image appear by reflection, has so much influence, how much greater would be the effect of a firm persuasion of the real presence of a holy God, 'who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity'".

During the old system of university instruction one professor, or regent, was responsible for seeing his pupils through the entire three or four years of their course. He was anxious to see that as many students as possible took their degree, for each graduate paid him a guinea fee. When regenting was abolished and each professor no longer carried on his flock of pupils year by year to the end, he no longer had any professional or pecuniary interest in laureation. The number of graduates sank to a negligible few. The catalogue of Edinburgh University graduates shows that in 1705 there were 104 graduates; regenting was abolished in 1708,⁽¹⁾ and by 1745 the number of graduates had sunk to three. The usual Master's degree came to be awarded only as the result /

1. Graham, Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century, vol. ii. p.196, footnote 3.

result of the student's initiative in seeking it. Such was the case with Witherspoon and four of his fellows, one of whom was Hugh Blair.

These young men represented to Principal Wishart and some of the professors that they desired to be graduated and to that end proposed to print theses and defend them publicly. The authorities, ready to redeem graduation from its obscurity, agreed to the proposal; the authorities further "improved the occasion" to encourage other students to seek graduation by agreeing to remit to such students certain university fees. As students under Professor Stevenson, Witherspoon and the others had been required to compose discourses upon assigned subjects, and to impugn and defend philosophic theses in the presence of each other and whoever else chose to attend. ⁽¹⁾ So they were well trained for their trial for graduation.

On February 23, 1739, in the university common hall before a large audience, each of the five theses, in Latin, was defended by its author and impugned by the four other candidates. Witherspoon's dissertation of twelve quarto pages had for its subject, De Mentis Immortalitate, and was dedicated to the Marquis of Tweeddale, the patron of his father's /

1. Bower, History of the University of Edinburgh, vol. ii. p.280.

father's parish. The maturity of the production was remarkable for a boy just turned sixteen. The trials were approved. On February 26, 1739, three years to a day from his matriculation, he was laureated Master of Arts. (1)

The following autumn Witherspoon entered the course prescribed for students of divinity. The study of divinity was ill-regulated. The term of a student's attendance at divinity classes was not accurately determined by law. The professor of theology, by his certificate of a student's proficiency, could ensure the student's acceptance for trials in most presbyteries. Regulations respecting these points were not made until 1782. (2) The professor under whom Witherspoon studied was Dr. John Goldie. (3) The prelections of this man must have been desultory. Of John Erskine, who studied theology about this time his biographer merely says that he studied theology; (4) the education of another contemporary student of theology, William Robertson, seems to have been directed by his father. (5) Carlyle recalls his theological studies in Edinburgh as follows: "I -- passed some part of the winter in Edinburgh, attending the divinity class, which had no attractions,/"

1. Collins, President Witherspoon, vol.i, pp.17-18.
2. Bower, History of the University of Edinburgh, vol.iii.p.30.
3. Bower, History of the University of Edinburgh, vol.ii. p.283.
4. Wellwood, Life of Erskine, p.31.
5. Bower, History of the University of Edinburgh, vol.iii.p.31.

attractions, as the Professor, (Dr. Goldie) though said to be learned, was dull and tedious in his lectures, insomuch that at the end of seven years he had only lectured half through Pictet's Compend of Theology". "There was one advantage attending the lectures of a dull professor -- viz., that he could form no school, and the students were left entirely to themselves, and naturally formed opinions far more liberal than they got from the professor"⁽¹⁾. The divinity course gave Witherspoon time for deepening and developing his mature theology; like Carlyle he formed opinions of his own, but they were scarcely less liberal than ^{those of} the professor. Many of the theological students, Carlyle, John Home, Hugh Blair, and William Robertson and others, were learning theology from one another and laying the foundations of life-long friendships. But Witherspoon did not find their company congenial -- nor they his. The only lasting friendship Witherspoon made in this period was a romantic attachment to a pious and intellectual girl, Miss Anna Hogg. Witherspoon may have proposed marriage to her; if he did she refused him and remained single all her life. Yet she continued his friend and wrote to him regularly until his death. She it was who kept him in touch with Scotland, his family, friends, and the state /

1. Carlyle, Autobiography, p.63.

(1)

state of religion, after he left his native land for America.

Dr. Patrick Cumming lectured to the theology students in
 Church History, from Turretine's Compendium of Church History.
 style="text-align: right;">(2)

Carlyle gives us one more picture of John Witherspoon, as he appeared in 1742, toward the end of his theological studies and just prior to his standing his trials before the Presbytery of Haddington for licensure by that reveredⁿ body. During the summer months there were in East Lothian "no less than a dozen young scholars, preachers and students of divinity" who generally met with the presbytery. "For two or three times we dined with the presbytery by invitation; but finding that we were not very welcome guests, and that whatever number there were in company they never allowed them more than two bottles of small Lisbon wine, we bespoke dinner for ourselves in another tavern; by this time even the second tavern in Haddington -- had knives and forks for their table. -- When I attended in 1742 and 1743, they had still but one glass on the table, which went round with the bottle. Very early in the afternoon, Mr. Stedman, a minister of the town, and one or two more of the clergymen, used to resort to our company, and keep/

1. Collins, President Witherspoon, vol.i, p.20
2. Bower, History of the University of Edinburgh, vol.ii,p.319.

keep up an enlightened conversation until bedtime. The chief subjects were the deistical controversy and moral philosophy, as connected with theology. John Witherspoon was of this party, who was afterwards a member of the American Congress, and Adam Dickson, who afterwards wrote so well on husbandry. They were both clergymen's sons, but of very different characters; the one open, frank, and generous, pretending only to what he was, and supporting his title with spirit; the other close, and suspicious, and jealous, and always aspiring at a superiority that he was not able to maintain⁽¹⁾".

As before, so with this account by Carlyle, the picture must be looked at as the distorted remembrance of an old man whose perspective was warped. The true picture can only be brought into focus by recognising that Carlyle caricatured Witherspoon. Witherspoon was a success in the discussions of his peers, but his disagreement with them they took personally; at least, Carlyle could not brook it. Too, Witherspoon was abstemious in his conviviality.

Witherspoon had little patience with their liberal views and with clergymen who had hobbies that interfered with their /

1. Carlyle, Autobiography, pp.71-73.

their pastoral work. He must have had Adam Dickson in mind when he wrote in his satire, The History of a Corporation of Servants, about the clergyman who had taken agriculture under his patronage. In respect of this clerical agriculturalist Witherspoon had the last laugh for he not only had no improvement in his crops for all his theories but he actually lost (1) money.

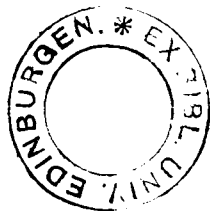
Of Witherspoon's personality at this period Dr. Carlyle's autobiography is again our only first-hand report. The defects that Carlyle describes as characteristic of Witherspoon on his entering the University in 1736 persisted as he grew up, especially his "flat voice and awkward manner"; but his good qualities also developed, his scholarship, shrewdness and good sense. The rest of the qualities attributed to Witherspoon by his antithetically different companion -- the envy and jealousy that Carlyle says were the motives that made Witherspoon decide to go to America -- can be largely discounted.

After four years at the University studying theology, Witherspoon applied to the Presbytery of Haddington to be allowed to stand trials for licensure to preach. It was merely a matter of form for the presbytery to admit to trials a man who had spent the customary years in study. He was assigned his parts of trial: a sermon, a lecture, a popular address, an exegesis of a passage of scripture, expositions of

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol.vi.p.321

of portions of the Hebrew and Greek scriptures. On September 6, 1743, "the Presbytery took a review of all his tryalls and declared their satisfaction with them; and he having answered the questions and subscribed the Formula according to the Appointment of the Act of Assembly was licensed to preach the gospel as a probationer within their bounds"⁽¹⁾. In the manuscript roll of the Presbytery of Haddington for the same day is his well-formed, mature signature, "Jno. Witherspoon"⁽²⁾.

1. Ms. Records, Presbytery of Haddington, (1743) p.214.
2. Ms. Roll of the Presbytery of Haddington, September 6, 1743.



CHAPTER III.

Witherspoon's Ministry

at

Beith.

CHAPTER III.WITHERSPOON AT BEITH.

Witherspoon as a probationer spent nearly a year at his father's manse before he was called to a parish. He must have known in the late summer of 1744 that his name was being considered for the parish of Beith, in Ayrshire. In August 1744 he asked the Presbytery of Haddington for an extract of his license; the presbytery ordered it to be given to him. ⁽¹⁾ If Witherspoon had been sure of his call, it is likely the presbytery record would have included the name of the presbytery and parish to which he was hoping to be admitted. But Witherspoon was not sure of the call. He was only one of four on a leet presented to the parish in the name of the patron, the Earl of Eglinton. ⁽²⁾

Although the presentation was made in the name of the Earl, the conditions are probably those of his mother, the Countess. The Earl was nearly the same age as Witherspoon. ⁽³⁾ He had succeeded to the title in 1729 at the age of six. The four candidates were commended to the congregation that the /

1. Ms. Records of the Presbytery of Haddington, August 7, 1744.
2. Collins, President Witherspoon, vol.i, p.20.
3. Fraser, Memorials of the Montgomeries, vol.i, p.114.

the parish might have a choice. The men were asked to preach in turn; the merit of the preacher was to be considered the best argument in this favour. The time between Witherspoon's lifting his certificate of licensure from the Presbytery of Haddington and his call to Beith must have been spent in fulfilment of the terms of the presentation. When the Presbytery of Irvine, in which was Beith parish, met at Beith on the 24th of January 1745 to decide between the men on the leet, they found that only two had survived the preaching tests; one was a Mr. George Muirhead and the other was Mr. John Witherspoon. Witherspoon was decidedly the choice of the congregation.⁽¹⁾

The presbytery asked the heritors, elders, and heads of families to sign an application to the presbytery to moderate a call at large. This was done. Then the presbytery asked for votes on the two men in order to know which should receive the call; 49 heritors and elders voted for Muirhead, but 106 voted for Witherspoon. Of the heads of families, 119 voted for Witherspoon while only five stood for Muirhead. The record says, "A plain majority being found of legal voters as to numbers upon Mr. Witherspoon's side, his name was filled up in a call". The prebytery's phrase, "as to numbers" is significant./

1. Ms. Record of the Presbytery of Irvine (1743-1759)
pp. 101-104.

significant. A majority of the legal voters of high distinction were not for Witherspoon. The Duke of Hamilton and other heritors voted for Muirhead. Witherspoon's future father-in-law, Robert Montgomerie, who was a heritor, neither was present at the voting nor sent a letter signifying his vote. But, as the numbers show, by far the greatest number of resident heritors who were interested enough to take part in the choice of the new minister, cast their votes for Witherspoon. And as to his popularity with the rest of the congregation, their acceptance of him was so unanimous that the presbytery clerk recorded that the "body of Christian people" were all for him.⁽¹⁾

Those who still favoured Muirhead attempted to delay Witherspoon's call by asking the presbytery to make out a rival call in Muirhead's name. But the rival call fell to the ground. Accordingly, the presbytery presented the call to Witherspoon signed by "Heritors and Elders to ye number of One Hundred and Six" and "also a paper of Consent signed by a vast number of Heads of Families". This was on the 29th of January 1745.⁽²⁾ The next few months were taken up with Witherspoon's trials before the Presbytery of Irvine toward his ordination and admission to Beith Parish.

The/

1. Ms.Records of the Presbytery of Irvine (1743-1759) pp.101-104.
2. Ms.Records of the Presbytery of Irvine, January 29, 1745.

The trials were practically a repetition of those he ⁽¹⁾ underwent for licensure before the Presbytery of Haddington. During the months while he was demonstrating to the satisfaction of the presbytery his proficiency in preaching, exegesis, Hebrew and Greek, church history, and in explaining the English Bible, he was also supplying the Beith pulpit. Among his last trials he was called on to defend his university graduation thesis, and certain of the presbytery were appointed to impugn it. He circulated copies that they might be prepared; he scarcely needed preparation, for he had successfully defended it at his graduation. In all his trials he was approved. ⁽²⁾ The presbytery appointed the day for his ordination. At their meeting that day, 11th April, 1745, in Beith church they waited a considerable time as was the custom to see if any would object to the doctrine, life, and conversation of Witherspoon. No objection being raised, they proceeded to the simple, impressive ordination service. Witherspoon answered the questions put to him, received the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, was given the right hand of fellowship, and was received by the heritors and elders as their minister. The new minister had just turned 22.

In /

1. Above, p.50.
2. Appendix 4.

In the County of Ayr and the district of Cunningham, lies the parish of Beith, centering around the town of Beith. The parish is about 16 square miles in area, and was formed from the two pre-Reformation parishes of the Barony of Beith and the Lordship of Giffen. The newly ordained minister began his preaching and administration of the sacraments in a church which was built soon after the Reformation. In the wall of the building was a stone bearing the date, 1593; in the Giffen loft was a coat of arms bearing the date, 1596. The stipend was 79 bolls of meal, £17:12:60 in money, and a glebe of 31 acres and three roods. The manse was a handsome residence, a former mansion of the Earl of Eglinton. The chief occupation of the people of the parish was agriculture; the usual social gradations resulted, from common labourer to landed gentlemen. In 1688 the village of Beith contained only five dwelling houses, the church and the manse. But village life began to flourish with the beginnings of industrial life. In 1752 the population of Beith had risen to 700; in the surrounding parish lived 1364 more. Witherspoon was the shepherd of more than 2000 souls.

Though Witherspoon was youthful and unmarried, he was not callow. He was now, as when he was at the university, mature /

1. Statistical Account of Scotland, vol.vii.p.316
2. The Book of Beith, p.36: Paterson, History of the County of Ayr, vol.i, p.262.
3. Statistical Account of Scotland, vol.viii, p.316.
See appendix 5.
4. Robertson, Description of Ayrshire, etc. p.270.

mature beyond his years. What he had learned as a child in Yester Manse stood him in good stand; the months when he lived there prior to his call to Beith must have been months of activity and observation. There was talk that he might be his father's colleague and successor. It must have been little more than talk for there is no record that he was offered such a charge. His father's session records show that he preached often at a later date, but no mention is made of his preaching at Gifford before his ordination. He was wise in the ways of the world, judging from the fact that he referred a particularly delicate case of discipline to a grave, married elder.

Within less than four months after his admission into this historic parish the young minister was drawn into the eddies of history in the making. Prince Charles Edward landed at Moidart in the West Highlands late in July. By mid-August he had gathered enough backing to set up his standard at Glenfinnan at the head of 1600 men. Sir John Cope, the King's general, inexplicably marched to Inverness and the Young Pretender led his army to Edinburgh, unopposed. He was welcomed by the capital. His presence in the country, his victory at Prestonpans and his march

1. Ms. Records of Yester Kirk-Session, 1746-1759.

2. Ms. Records Beith Kirk-Session, June 1746.

march to Derby kept the excited people avid for news. Six months after the coming of the Pretender, the Rebellion touched Beith.

The Pretender came north precipitately after New Year 1746. His defeat at Derby had confirmed the latent Hanoverian loyalty of the Clyde valley into open resistance against him. The men of the West were willing to fight in defence of the new prosperity they were enjoying under the new royal house. The men of Beith had seen the rising local industries bring higher standards of living to themselves and their families. ⁽²⁾ The Presbytery of Irvine passed a resolution of loyalty to King George in which they urged each minister to rouse his parish to raise volunteers for the army of the Duke of Cumberland. ⁽³⁾ Witherspoon was not present the day this resolution was passed. But he took a decided part in support of the government, and "though hardly yet known to his parishoners in Beith, he animated them so effectually to enrol themselves as volunteers in the cause of King George, that he prevailed on a considerable number of them to march, along with himself, to Glasgow to join the /

1. Gardiner, A Student's History of England, vol.iii.pp. 739-740.
2. Robertson, Description of Ayrshire, etc.pp. 270-271.
3. Ms. Records Presbytery of Irvine, January 7, 1746.

the royal forces. But here they were informed that their services were not required, and were ordered home." ⁽¹⁾

Witherspoon did not return home. He went with numbers of others toward Falkirk in the hope of seeing a battle. The battle was joined at Falkirk, January 17th, 1746, but the sightseers got more than they expected; they were taken prisoner along with the fleeing soldiers of the King. The prisoners were carried with the army for several days and finally lodged in Doune Castle, which was in a ruinous condition.

Witherspoon was only one of scores of prisoners. There were over a hundred soldiers of the King, and about fifty volunteers, besides sightseers like Witherspoon. Witherspoon, two Aberdonians accused of being spies and in danger of the gallows, and five Volunteers from Edinburgh were lodged together. One of the Edinburgh Volunteers was Lieutenant John Home, whom Witherspoon had known at the university, and who was later to write the tragedy, Douglas. He has left a description of the experience. In the highest part of the castle, next to the battlements, was "a large ghastly room". Opening off one end of this room were two small vaults or cells; in one of these Witherspoon and his seven fellows were/

1. Robertson, Description of Ayrshire, etc. p.273, footnote
See Appendix 6.

were lodged. They had straw to lie on and blankets which they had purchased from some people in the village of Doune. The Volunteers thought of nothing but how they might escape. Escape by force was impracticable, so they decided to get away by stealth. They decided to make a rope of their blankets and let themselves down from the battlements on the west side where there was no sentinel. The two Aberdonians agreed to join in the plan, but Witherspoon said that he would go to the battlements and see what happened, that if they succeeded, he would probably follow their example. With ordinary precautions of secrecy, the rope was finished and the plan carried through without detection. On a moonlight night, the eight crept to the battlements, secured the improvised rope, and descended one by one -- all but Witherspoon. Five escaped without injury; a sixth was slightly crippled; but a seventh was mortally hurt by falling. Witherspoon was released soon afterward. He was not present at the meeting of the Presbytery of Irvine on February 11th, but his absence from that meeting was excused at the meeting on March 11th, at which he was present. His absence was excused without comment. The presbytery added him to a committee /

1. Edinburgh Almanack, 1746.

2. Home, History of the Rebellion, 1745, pp.111-139,

3, Ms. Records Presbytery of Irvine.

committee that had been appointed to wait on the Duke of
 Cumberland with resolutions of the presbytery's loyalty.⁽¹⁾
 This was a tacit comment on Witherspoon's experience of im-
 :prisonment.

Witherspoon evidently did not care to talk about this
 experience. He left no account of it. He told his close
 friend, Dr. Ashbel Green, years later that he had had a
 shock to his nerves soon after his ordination, but Dr. Green
 did not know of the Castle Doune experience until he read
 about it in the Christian Instructor, in which an account of
 it appeared in October 1829.⁽²⁾

For three years after his imprisonment Witherspoon
 suffered acutely from irrational fears, lack of self-control
 and other effects of nervous unbalance. His attendance at
 presbytery meetings was irregular during 1746. Early in
 1747 he failed to have ready a sermon which he was appointed
 the ⁽³⁾ by/presbytery to preach. Later the record of the presbytery
 tells of the postponement of a case because Mr. Witherspoon
 had forgotten to cite the accused persons.⁽⁴⁾ Sometimes in
 divine service he would be seized with a presentiment that
 he would not live to finish the service.⁽⁵⁾ To the end of his
 days/

1. Ms. Records Presbytery of Irvine, March 11, 1746.
2. Collins, President Witherspoon, vol. i, p. 24.
3. Ms. Records Presbytery of Irvine, April 28, 1747.
4. Ms. Records Presbytery of Irvine, February 9, 1748.
5. Collins, President Witherspoon, vol. i, p. 24.

days he had a nervous affection which generally overcame him when he allowed himself to feel too keenly on any subject. He was obliged from his earliest participation in public life strictly to restrain his emotions. This put him under the necessity of substituting seriousness of manner in public speaking for the warmth and fire of which he was naturally capable. ⁽¹⁾ This necessary self-discipline in speaking extended to his writing and to the performance of his clerical duties. The nervous affection might have been his undoing; it certainly was a thorn in his flesh; but he so wrestled with it that he developed valuable self-discipline as one of the elements of his character.

The demanding routine of a quiet, semi-rural parish helped to restore Witherspoon's emotional balance. His father's counsel and encouragement caused him to persevere in his chosen calling. ⁽²⁾ He concentrated on his parish. He was evolving in practice first, and then in theory, the character of a good minister. He studied hard; the number of candles he burned and the number of books he bought surprised the local folk. They often commented that they saw the light burning late in the manse, high on the hill. ⁽³⁾ The session records are /

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol.i, pxxxii.
2. Collins, President Witherspoon, vol.i, p.24.
3. Tradition supplied by Mr. Woodburn, Minister of Beith (1935)

(1)
 are incomplete, but those that remain show that he conscientiously exercised discipline. His discipline was thorough, quickly settled, systematized, and usually settled without recourse to the presbytery. Couples contracting irregular marriages were exhorted and fined five shillings (2)
 drunkenness brought a rebuke from the session and an intimation of the rebuke from the pulpit on a Sabbath, (2)
 immorality was usually censured by several public admonitions of the penitent. But one refractory man and woman were ordered to appear before the congregation the next Lord's day, that they might have one more opportunity of repenting for their impurity; but they were "to appear no more till they desire it, to the end that the church privileges might not seem to be thrown away on those who by their unchristian behaviour evidenced they had no value for or sense of their need of (3)
 them". Discipline was impartially administered. Members of the session who had been present at an irregular wedding (4)
 were rebuked. A local laird accused by a young woman of being the father of her child was brought to trial as quickly as any (5)
 swain. Witherspoon was careful for the business interests of /

1. Ms. Records of Beith Kirk-Session, 1747-1750; 1752-1753; 1756-1757.
2. Ms. Records of Beith Kirk-Session, May 6, 1748.
3. Ms. Records of Beith, Kirk-Session, May 6, 1750.
4. Ms. Records of Beith, Kirk-Session, January 22, 1752.
5. Ms. Records of Beith Kirk-Session, April 5, 1756.

of the parish. There are several instances of his penalising men for encroaching on the "poor lands"⁽¹⁾.

Out of this period grew his opinions with regard to the conduct and belief worthy of a clergyman. He was primarily alive to the positive qualities and practices that made up the acceptable ministry. Admonishing a young man at whose ordination he was preaching the sermon, he gave him in the charge "a few advices as to the discharge of your important trust".

1. "Personal religion is the foundation of all relative duties".
2. "See that you preach the pure and uncorrupted doctrine of Christ".
3. "Preach plainly, or in a way that may be level to the capacities of the hearers, both as to sentiment and expression".
4. "Preach experimentally and practically".
5. "You must be diligent among your people 'from house to house'. You must not neglect family instruction, and personal admonition and reproof".
6. "The exercise of discipline is another part of your duty which must not be omitted".
7. "Beware of the sin of man-pleasing".
8. "Be much in earnest prayer to God". (2)

John Witherspoon's extra-parochial work is described later; suffice it to say here that he took an active interest in all the church courts. He was first elected Moderator of the Presbytery of Irvine within two months after his ordination;⁽³⁾ /

Kirk-session

1. Ms. Record of Beith/~~Beith~~, December 29, 1752.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. v, pp. 42-51.
3. Ms. Records of the Presbytery of Irvine, June 11, 1745.

ordination; he was subsequently moderator several times.
 He appeared at meetings of the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr.⁽¹⁾
 He was four times a commissioner from his presbytery to the
 General Assembly; 1747, 1751, 1756, 1757.⁽²⁾ He published
 his satire against the Moderate party, the Ecclesiastical
Characteristics, in 1753; in 1756 he published a treatise
 on the doctrine of justification; and in the following year
 he wrote a pamphlet against the theatre.

In the midst of his occupation with his parish work,
 his participation in the church courts, and occasional indul-
 gence in recreation, Witherspoon found time to become en-
 gaged to marry Miss Elizabeth Montgomerie, daughter of Robert
 Montgomerie, of Craighouse, near Beith. At the time of
 their marriage on September 2, 1748, the bride was twenty-
 seven, two years older than the bridegroom.⁽³⁾ To this marriage
 were born ten children, within fifteen years. Only five
 of the children survived to go with Dr. and Mrs. Witherspoon
 in 1768 to make their new home in America. Two are buried
 in Beith churchyard.⁽⁴⁾

The essay on an aspect of the doctrine of justification,
 which /

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. viii. p. 246.
2. Ms. Records of the Presbytery of Irvine.
3. Ms. Records of Beith Parish, H.M. Register House, Edinburgh.
4. Ms. Records of Beith and Paisley Parishes, H.M. Register House, Edinburgh.

which he published in 1756, Witherspoon describes as the substance of two sermons put together in the form of an (1) essay. He was evidently giving his hearers sermons flavoured with current theological interest; the essay was published to refute certain Wesleyan doctrines.

In 1754 the church building had to be enlarged to (2) provide room for two hundred more sittings. A new wing was added; with this addition, the building had four wings and the ground plan was that of an equilateral cross. In each of the four wings was a gallery. Three of the "lafts" belonged to local lairds; the fourth gallery, that in the new wing, belonged to the town. The niches in the walls where the seats rested are still to be seen. Each gallery was entered by an outside stair. The church was without architectural pretensions, and appears to have been as plain inside as out. The floor is said to have been of bare earth. Whether there were pews or not is uncertain. When a new church was built in 1810, the older portion of the "auld Kirk" was razed, leaving only the wing (3) which was built during Witherspoon's ministry. The cost of the enlargement of the church was borne by the kirk session, with the advice and consent of the heritors. The session paid for the work out of the funds for the poor and reimbursed the/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol.i, p.39.
2. Statistical Account of Scotland, vol.iii, p.316.
3. Personal observations, February, 1935.
Book of Beith, p.35; Paterson, History of the County of Ayr, vol.i, p.262.

the poor funds with the money collected for sittings in
 the new wing. ⁽¹⁾ The Presbytery of Irvine "cheerfully con-
 :curred in rebuilding Beith Church". ⁽²⁾

⁽³⁾
 One of Witherspoon's biographers relates that the Beith
 minister took an active interest in the improvement of the
 local roads. For a short time he was one of the overseers
 of the roads in the parish. In 1754 the county commissioners
 proposed repairing the roads according to the provisions of
 the old law requiring the labour of the men whose land ad-
 :joined the roads. This made necessary a list of every man
 who farmed in the parish, together with the number of labour-
 :ers he employed and the number of horses he owned. The
 commission announced that the most public roads would be re-
 :paired first. But Witherspoon and others found objections
 to the plan. It was easy to list the farmers, but difficult
 to list the number of their labourers or their horses, as the
 number of both varied with the season. Further differences
 arose as to which roads should be repaired first -- the local
 roads by which the farmer went to his neighbours', the market
 and church, or the roads leading across the county. The
 gentry were criticised for their lack of interest in the pro-
 :ject. These objections Witherspoon put into a paper in
 which/

1. Statistical Account of Scotland, vol.viii, pp.314-328,
 Book of Beith, p.35.
2. Ms.Records, Presbytery of Irvine, April 8, 1754.
3. Woods, John Witherspoon, pp.27-30.

which he championed the popular rights. But he did it in such a way as to win the respect of the landed class. He found no fault with the existing social order. He sought justice for all alike, not the preferment of any one class, nor demagogic distinction for himself.

Though this episode cannot be authenticated, it is typical of Witherspoon. He often took up cudgels on behalf of his parishoners, both in Beith and, later, in Paisley. The "deep and evil ways" leading to the "Kirk of Baythe" are mentioned in an act of the Scots Parliament of Charles I in 1633 as sufficient obstacles to keep the people from attending church services. It is natural that the parish minister should take an interest in their improvement. ⁽¹⁾ The records in possession of the Ayrshire County Council go back as far as 1767; in that year begin the minutes of the County Road Trustees. The County Surveyor of Ayrshire thinks that the office of road trustee came into existence only in 1767, which is later than Witherspoon's incumbency at Beith. During Witherspoon's time at Beith the roads were under the Justices of the Peace or any other men of intelligence or position in the parishes who were willing to take an interest in their improvement. The roads were maintained under statute labour and the levying of /

1. Ms. Letter from James Anderson, Esq., District Officer, Beith, February 5, 1935.
Robertson, Description of Ayrshire, etc. p.272.

of tolls; there were no road taxes.

John Witherspoon at thirty-three was the minister of a flourishing church and a devoted parish. He had a reputation in Beith and beyond, for popular sympathies and stout leadership. He was known through his published works and through his participation in the church courts. It is little wonder that the Magistrates and Town Council of Paisley, the patrons of the Laigh Church in Paisley, knew of John Witherspoon. When the Laigh Church fell vacant, in 1756, they presented him to the congregation.

The session records show that Witherspoon was careful for the financial interests of the parish. The last entry in the records before he left to go to Paisley is made in his own hand, and is a complete accounting for all the parish funds to date. That he owned property in Beith shows that he was careful for his own financial interests, too. The title of one of the oldest feus in Beith is the title Witherspoon gave to a house and land that he sold in 1757, after he had removed to Paisley. Three hundred and thirty five merks was the purchase price.

1. Ms. Letter from George S. Barry, Esq., County Surveyor of Ayrshire, February 2, 1935.
2. Ms. Records Town Council, Paisley; October 8, 1756.
3. Ms. Records, Beith Kirk Session, April 1757
4. Appendix 7.
5. Book of Beith, p.43.

CHAPTER IV.

Witherspoon's Ministry

at

Paisley.

CHAPTER IV.WITHERSPOON AT PAISLEY.

Between the time the Magistrates and Town Council of Paisley determined to call Witherspoon from Beith to the Laigh Church, and his ordination to that charge nearly a year elapsed. In June, 1756, the presentation of Witherspoon to the Laigh Church was duly made out and sent to Witherspoon for his concurrence. On Witherspoon's acceptance, it was sent to the Presbytery of Paisley with a request that a call be moderated to the minister of Beith. The Presbytery of Paisley had considered the presentation at their meeting in August, but had delayed action. The Council protested against this undue delay and appealed to the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, the court superior to the Presbytery of Paisley, to order the presbytery to moderate ⁱⁿ the call to their presentee. In October they appointed commissioners to appear before the meeting of the Synod when their appeal would be heard to "follow forth and prosecute said appeal before the said Synod or any committee of them and employ Lawyers for the purpose and to do everything necessary" which the magistrates themselves would do if they were ^{there} "in order to the speedy Procuring of the Moderation of the foresaid Call and a speedy settlement for Mr. Witherspoon as /

as minister of said Laigh Church both before Synod or any
 other higher church judicature"⁽¹⁾.

The Presbytery of Paisley had never given their reason for opposing Witherspoon's call. But Witherspoon surmised it was due to their animosity against him as the alleged author of the anonymously printed Ecclesiastical Characteristics. Their opinion had been voiced that the publication was harmful to the interests of religion and injurious to the characters of many ministers of the Church. Witherspoon's defence before them is skilful, adroit and brilliant.⁽²⁾

He says that it is unfair that he should appear as one accused, but he will be glad, none-the-less, to stand in his own defence. He gladly accepted the handicap because on his side he can plead that the Presbytery of Paisley has passed a sentence condemning him for being author of the Characteristics when he was not and could not be regularly before them; he next avers that the presbytery was out of order in voting a charge of censure which they have not only not proved, but have not even properly brought. He says that the Presbytery of Paisley has no right to judge whether or not he/

1. Ms. Records Paisley Town Council, October 8, 1756.
2. Witherspoon Works, vol. viii, p.249.

he is fit to be minister at the Laigh Church, especially as he has a clean character from his own presbytery and a unanimous call from the Laigh Church. He further points out that the Presbytery of Paisley could not be his judges by any law, ecclesiastical or civil, because they are themselves the parties who are aggrieved at him; under no law is a man judged by those who are prejudiced.

Witherspoon charges that their opposition to him was not only on account of their exception to him personally as the author of the Characteristics, but also to him and the Characteristics, because he and this anonymous work have hurt the Moderate Party. He identifies himself with the Popular Party and intermixes defence of the party with his own defence.

The Characteristics next come up for defence. "Sir, I would have had nothing to do with it, but would have suffered the book to answer for itself, since its author does not think fit to appear, in its defence, if they had not been pleased to load me with suspicion."⁽¹⁾ This excuse for defending his own work is as clever as Moses' mother getting the care of her own infant son from Pharoah's daughter. He defends its being written ironically and its attack on the characters and credit of part of the clergy of the Church of Scotland. He/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. viii. p. 251.

He says that his character has been attacked, and that by ways worthy of the Spanish inquisition. The Presbytery of Paisley had assumed him guilty of writing the Characteristics until he could be proved innocent; in common equity a man is assumed innocent until he is proved guilty. Moreover, Witherspoon continues, the Presbytery of Paisley had appointed a committee to consult him secretly and then spread publicly on the minutes of the presbytery their findings.

"Thus, Sir, I hope I have made it appear, that the Presbytery of Paisley have been guilty of most irregular procedure, and flagrant injustice to me, in passing a sentence on my character, whereat they had no title to judge me; in finding a relevancy without examination of the subject, and when I could not be heard in my defence; and, lastly, in appointing an inquisition for discovering the fact, directly in the face of law and equity.⁽¹⁾

In his closing paragraph Witherspoon even takes the offensive. He offers to submit to questioning "either instantly, or upon a month's preparation, not only as to this point, but all that they shall think fit to ask, as to my character, from my birth to this day" if "the ministers of that presbytery/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. viii, pp.272,273.

presbytery do submit themselves to be interrogated by me in turn, on their doctrine, their diligence in their pastoral duty, their care and government of their families, and their personal truth"⁽¹⁾.

Only after long discussions did the synod give its decision in favour of the Paisley Town Council and against the Presbytery of Paisley. Not until after the ruffled dignity and hurt ecclesiastical pride of the accusing presbytery had been mollified was the truth of Witherspoon's reasoning allowed to bring its weight in favour of his call to Paisley. The synod appointed a committee to canvass the members of the presbytery; at length it was agreed that the synod should order the presbytery to moderate the call to Witherspoon without discussing the presbytery's right to enquire into Witherspoon's connection with the Ecclesiastical Characteristics, and without either approving or disapproving the presbytery's delay of the call. Hurt feelings were thus soothed.⁽²⁾ The

Presbytery of Paisley authorised the call to John Witherspoon on December 29, 1756.⁽³⁾ But the end was not yet; a new call had to be made out in February, 1757, because a mistake had been made in the former one.⁽⁴⁾ It was not until May that the day was set for Witherspoon's admission to the Leigh Church.⁽⁵⁾ The induction took place, however, without further delay on the day appointed, June 16, 1757.

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. viii. pp. 245-275.
2. Ms. Records of the Presbytery of Paisley, November 17, 1756
3. Ms. Records of the Presbytery of Paisley, December 29, 1756
4. Ms. Records of the Presbytery of Paisley, February 15, 1757.
5. Ms. Records of the Presbytery of Paisley, May 11, 1757.

Thus was effect finally given to the presentation of the patrons of the Laigh Church, and to the church's concurrence in "a most Harmonious Call to the said Mr. John Witherspoon To be minister of the said Church subscribed by the Magistrates of the Council and Members of the Kirk Session and a concurrence therewith signed by the Incorporations within the Burgh and other proprietors of the seats in the said Church And by the Heritors Heads of Familys and other Burgesses and Inhabitants within the Burgh"⁽¹⁾. By November, 1757, Witherspoon received his first semi-annual payment of £50 on his stipend.⁽²⁾

This was a period of contested settlements. The attempt of the people of Jedburgh to secure Mr. Thomas Boston as their minister parallels in many ways the efforts of the people of Paisley in prosecuting the call to Witherspoon to the Laigh Church.⁽³⁾ A comparison of the two episodes should expose the vexed conditions under which settlements had to be made, and, also, should bring out the character and churchmanship of Witherspoon.

When the church at Jedburgh fell vacant, the congregation decided /

1. Ms.Records of the Paisley Town Council; March 8, 1757
Ms.Records of the Presbytery of Irvine, March 15, 1757
2. Ms.Records of the Paisley Town Council, November 9, 1757.
3. Struthers, History of the Relief Church, pp.131-153.
Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol.ii, pp.82; 101; 134;151.

decided that they wanted Thomas Boston, the minister at Oxnam to be their next minister. But the Crown held the patronage of Jedburgh and the patronage was bestowed at the suggestion of the Marquis of Lothian who presented another man instead of the desired Boston. The presentee was refused, not because he was not good but because Jedburgh had their hearts set on Boston. The Assembly of 1756 decided the presentation need not be prosecuted, but might be laid aside; the Crown was asked to present another man. This time the presentee was not only not Mr. Boston, but was a man wholly unacceptable in himself, Mr. Douglas of Kenmure. The second presentee had the backing of the patron and the Assembly, but only five of the congregation voted to accept him. The Assembly of 1757 ordered the settlement; the presbytery obediently settled the unwanted man. But they did not so act until after they were sure that Boston was resolved to leave the Established Church and become minister of a free congregation.

The Jedburgh magistrates, the town council, several heritors, inhabitants of the town and parish, and friends from the neighbouring parishes united in the project to desert the Established Church and build in Jedburgh a meeting-house. Boston's consent was secured to become their minister. The project, first agitated in May 1757, resulted in contributions in /

in money, material, and labour being offered in sufficient amount that by December the same year the new congregation met in their new building and inducted Mr. Boston as their minister.⁽¹⁾

Boston and Witherspoon were both sons of the manse; both took seriously their father's profession. Both published controversial works in 1753, agreeing in their stand with the Popular Party in the Church. Boston had the invitation of the town magistrates and congregation to be the minister at Jedburgh; Witherspoon had a like invitation from Paisley; in each case a church court opposed the translation. Jedburgh was a larger parish than Oxnam, and Paisley was considered a step up from Beith. Both men were persistently backed by their friends. But here the parallel ceases.

Their fathers were both ministers but of very different kinds. The elder Boston's name was a household word for evangelical piety that often questioned and opposed the Establishment; James Witherspoon was a devoted churchman and King's chaplain-in-ordinary. The publications of the younger Boston and his contemporary, Witherspoon, in 1753 were evangelical in character. But Boston's work had been a preface to a new edition of his father's sermon on schism and smacked /

1. Struthers, History of the Relief Church, p.141.

smacked of secession: Witherspoon's was a satire designed to purify the church from within. The opposition to Witherspoon was from a local presbytery within his own synod, within fighting range; Boston was opposed by the remote General Assembly and the more remote patron, His Majesty, George II. The Presbytery of Paisley blocked Witherspoon's call on personal grounds; the Assembly opposed Boston because the patron had not presented him -- technical grounds. The Assembly's decision against the wishes of the Jedburgh congregation were not so much against Boston as they were to uphold the prestige of the Assembly and the rights of patronage.⁽¹⁾

Witherspoon was defending the ideal operation of the law of patronage. He was presented to the Laigh Church by the patrons; the presentation was ratified by the heritors, elders, and seatholders, and concurred in by the congregation. To Witherspoon this constituted a call which a presbytery was bound to moderate as requested. It was for this complete operation of the law of patronage that he was contending, as against construing as a call either an invitation by a congregation only, or only the presentation by a patron.

At Jedburgh Boston considered the invitation of the congregation/

1. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, p.152.

congregation and the community as a valid call to the church there, without regard to the patron's rights. The people of Jedburgh disregarded the rights and wishes of the patron. The Assembly took the part of the patron. Boston felt that he might stand in the presbytery until the day of his death protesting against this "oppression" without bringing relief to the congregation of Jedburgh. So he broke his ties as a minister of the Established Church. He became a pioneer in the exodus from the church of protesting ministers and people into a fellowship known as the Relief Church. He was formally deposed by the Assembly in 1758. Mr. Douglas of Kenmure, whose presentation the Assembly had honoured as a call because five of the congregation ratified it, was settled in the Jedburgh parish church.⁽¹⁾

There was only the slightest difference between Witherspoon and Boston after the events recounted above, except for the fact that Boston was professionally dead, as far as the Church of Scotland was concerned. In doctrine they both adhered to the Confession of Faith, and the larger and shorter catechisms; Boston, however, held to the standards of the English Presbyterian dissenters -- the confession of faith and the catechisms, while Witherspoon held, in addition to these, /

1. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, pp.153-154.

these,^{to} the books of discipline and church order of the Church of Scotland. As a minister of the Established Church Witherspoon could hold his pulpit as long as he preached the gospel. As long as he fulfilled this condition he was legally entitled to his stipend and could sue at law for its non-payment. Boston, as the minister of a meeting-house, held his office by the consent of the congregation, and only as long as they were pleased with him. He had no legal recourse against non-payment of his stipend until a number of his members signed their names to a bond that he should receive £120 sterling annually.⁽¹⁾

More than presbyterial opposition occupied the minds of Witherspoon and his clerical and lay friends during the interim between his call to the Paisley Leigh Church and his induction into that charge. In December, 1756, a play was enacted in Edinburgh that set the clerical, literary and social worlds in a great stir. The play was the tragedy, Douglas, written by a minister and attended by ministers; this was enough, irrespective of other interests centering around the play to bring from Witherspoon's pen A Serious Inquiry into the Nature and Effects of the Stage.⁽²⁾ It summed up as soberly /

1. Struthers, History of the Relief Church, p. 144.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, pp. 36-128.

soberly and fairly as the prejudices of the times permitted the position of the Popular Party, "being an attempt to shew, that contributing to the support of a public theatre, is inconsistent with the character of a Christian"⁽¹⁾. This pamphlet left the Laigh Church in no doubt as to the opinions of their minister-elect on the subject of the stage, in particular, and recreation, in general.

Any of his future parishoners who read the pamphlet found that in Witherspoon's opinion the use of recreation is the same as the use of sleep, and must be some action indifferent in its mature. And as to the amount of time that recreation should occupy, he says, "The need of amusement is much less than people commonly apprehend, and, where it is not necessary, it must be sinful"⁽²⁾. Further, he says that labourers need recreation which is cessation from toil and that those exhausted by the application of the mind need bodily exercise. But he again warns against excess or indulgence: "Ninety-nine of every hundred are such as do not need recreation at all"; and for most of those who do indulge, it is recreation from idleness, not from work. In his view recreation should, in most cases, cost no money.

The /

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi. p. 42.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 55.

The Paisley people would have found Witherspoon's principles on deeper subjects, too, in this pamphlet against the stage. He says in the pamphlet that the greatest number of the world in general are ungodly and that nothing will improve the world -- literature nor philosophy nor culture -- except the application of Christianity. They would find that his Christian emphasis is not on missions or social service, for he says: "The progress of his sanctification is the supreme desire and care of every Christian", for "he is continually liable to be seduced by temptation, and infected by example"⁽¹⁾. But they would also find inescapable implications for Christian living here and now, for he says that one's piety shows only in its fruits; that true actions can only come out of a true heart; and that all visible actions have an effect on others -- "we contribute every moment to form each others characters"⁽²⁾.

The Magistrates could expect plain dealing from a man who would write: "However useful an ordinance of God magistracy be for public order, there is very little security in the direction of magistrates, for sound and wholesome instruction in religion and morals ... unless they are themselves persons of true piety. Now it is not reasonable to hope, that magistrates /

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol vi, p.63
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol.vi, p.111.

magistrates in any country, will be always, or even generally persons of true piety".⁽¹⁾

One more concern occupied Witherspoon before he turned himself to his new parish. He was commissioner from the Presbytery of Irvine to the Assembly of 1757. In the Assembly he read for himself and seven associates Reasons for Dissent against receiving the commissions of elders not attested in terms of Act 9, Assembly of 1722.⁽²⁾ The controversy over the tragedy, Douglas, occupied the Assembly; Witherspoon must have taken active part in the debates for his keen feeling in the matter had prompted him to write the pamphlet against the stage, mentioned above. He had personal interest in the only individual case brought up to the assembly, a libel against his friend Carlyle, now minister of Inveresk.

During the month following the Assembly Witherspoon was at length settled as minister of the Laigh Church in Paisley. The events of the months immediately preceding his induction -- his argument before the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, his pamphlet against the stage, and his dissent from the actions taken by the Assembly -- were well-known in Paisley. He came to his new charge with the aura of a champion of law and morals.

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi. p.91 footnote.
2. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol.ii, pp.103-108.

In 1736 the Burgh of Paisley had been disjoined from the parish of the Abbey of Paisley and formed into a separate parish. The Magistrates and Town Council were the patrons of this new parish. Justifying their new independence, the Council and the townspeople built a new church; from its situation they called it the Laigh Church. It was the only church of this burghal parish until 1754. The increase of population made it necessary in that year to erect a second church, which was ingenuously called the High Church because it stood on high ground. The cost of the building was borne almost entirely by citizens who obtained sittings in return for their contributions; the Council paid about one-tenth of the cost. Mr. James Baine was inducted as the first minister of the High Church in 1756, just a year before Witherspoon was settled as minister of the Laigh Church.

When Witherspoon was inducted to the Laigh Church he found himself the colleague of Mr. Baine; their two churches were in one parish and under a common Kirk Session. Despite Witherspoon's efforts in 1758, to secure the erection of separate sessions, the two churches continued under one session until 1781, long after Witherspoon had gone to America. In 1781 a third church was built in the parish, called the Middle Church./

1. Not minister of the Abbey, as Collins says, President Witherspoon, vol. i, p. 50.

2. Brown, History of Paisley, vol. ii, pp. 30-32

3. Ms. Records Paisley Town Council, April 25, 1758.

Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, p. 167.

4. Brown, History of Paisley, vol. ii, p. 31.

Church. The difficulties of operating three churches under one session were obvious enough that ^{the} presbytery agreed to divide the parish into three and thus to give each church the right to its own session. Witherspoon's policy was vindicated.

Witherspoon was the third minister of the Laigh Church. It had been opened for worship in 1738 when the population of the town was 3500. It contained over 1300 sittings of which nearly three-fourths were retained by those who subscribed to the cost of the building, a sum around £2000. When Witherspoon was called to the church Paisley had a population of over 5000 and was growing. ⁽¹⁾ Some said Paisley would rival Glasgow. This thriving, young city must have presented an exhilarating prospect to the rising young minister, Mr. Witherspoon.

The church building where he was inducted is still standing. It takes very little effort of the imagination to recapture the picture of the people flocking to the induction service. To-day the church sits in its grassless yard in a side street, within the shadow of the handsome Russell Institute. Garish shop fronts look down their awnings at/

1. Brown, History of Paisley, vol.ii, p.94.

at it from across the street. As one walks through the churchyard, past the tombstones standing crazily against time, up to the door of the kirk, one seems to be walking back into the eighteenth century. When one turns at the door to survey the surroundings from the step of the church, one's perspective has changed. The old stone church seems bigger, seems to remind its neighbour, the Russell Institute, that the Laigh Church was once the centre of all the social service there was in Paisley. The garish shop fronts are thin disguises to venerable buildings. Although the church was plainly built without an architect, it has dignity -- and crow-foot gables. Far from being effete, the building seems alive with pious evangelicalism and unornamented efficiency. Today's visitor, loitering at the church door, can easily imagine himself as one of the eighteenth century audience, who, having arrived early for the induction of the new minister, waits to be present this 16th day of June at the long-anticipated settlement of Mr. Witherspoon.

This place of worship of the Laigh Church is in New Street, just off Causewayside Street. In 1820, when New Street was no longer new, the congregation built another building, with the aid of the corporation, and changed the name of the parish to St. George's.⁽¹⁾

1. Brown, History of Paisley, vol.ii, p.345.

The old Laigh Kirk, after various vicissitudes, is now the place of worship of a non-Presbyterian sect.

Mr. Baine, the minister of the High Church, preached the sermon at the service. It has survived in published form, overlaid with an apology by the author for printing it, and shored up with footnotes. Mr. Baine had some purpose in mind other than welcoming his new colleague. In his preface to the published sermon he suggests that it will perhaps occur to some that "something else than its merits brings this little performance to light". From the fact that in 1766 Mr. Baine withdrew from the Established Church into the relief church, it may be inferred that the "something else than its merit" which induced Baine to publish the sermon must have been its feeble attack on the Moderates. There is little in the sermon to justify Baine's reputation for graceful preaching,⁽¹⁾ The sermon whines with mock erudition, dull evangelism, pretended classical knowledge, and well-advertised orthodoxy. The only worthy part of the sermon is the text, which finds mention only at the beginning: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things"⁽²⁾.

1. Christian Instructor, vol. XXVIII, 1829 p.680 speaks of Witherspoon's "popular colleague, Mr. Baine, whose manner and address were peculiarly attractive".
2. Baine, James, M.A., A Sermon preached at the translation of the Rev. Mr. Watherspoon etc.

The new Minister began to identify himself with the life of Paisley. He secured the services of the new English schoolmaster as precentor and reader for the Laigh Church. He encouraged the local trades societies to continue their sittings in his church. The year after his admission to his new parish, he loaned the town council £100. The year following he bought a corner property, facing on the High Street, in that section of Paisley called Townhead. The charter of confirmation describes the property as a "third part of an acre of Burghal land with the kiln house and barn thereon now converted into one big house or tenement with the office houses yard and pertinents thereto belonging, lying within the burgh of Paisley in the Croft called priors Croft". He sold the property, however, after he went to America; since then it has changed hands several times and is now the site of a large cinema.

In 1758 Witherspoon joined with his colleague, Baine, to petition the presbytery to divide the general session into two, one for the Laigh Church and one for the High Church.

As /

1. Ms. Records of the Paisley Town Council, January, 1758.
2. Ms. Records of the Paisley Town Council, March, 24, 1758.
3. Paisley Chartulary, 1751-1767, p.144.
4. Ms. Records of the transfer of property, Office of Paisley Town Clerk.

As the Laigh Church was the older, the first in the burghal parish of Paisley, the general session was considered to be the session of the Laigh Church. The High Church felt their dignity compromised and their work hampered because they had to join with the other church under the one general session.⁽¹⁾ Judging from the session records of the day, much of the work of any kirk-session, had to do with overseeing the morals of the parish. Their minutes are engrossed with cases of discipline of members of the parish for immorality and drunkenness. The processes for dealing with these cases occupied a great deal of time; procedure often required their reference to the presbytery. Another item on the session's docket that took much time was the care of the poor of the parish. When one realises that all the cases of discipline and all the cases of care of the poor for both the Laigh and the High Church had to come before one session, it is plain that the two ministers were asking aright when they petitioned the presbytery for the erection of a second session for the High Church.⁽²⁾

The Presbytery of Paisley, to whom Witherspoon and Baine applied for the separate session, thought proper to refuse. No reason was given, but personal spite against Witherspoon/

1. Ms. Records Presbytery of Paisley, March 29, 1758.
2. Struthers, History of the Relief Church, p. 568.

Witherspoon may have had something to do with their refusal. It had only been two years since he had confuted their efforts to prevent his settlement in Paisley and perhaps they were stooping to revenge, "the right hand of false greatness of mind."⁽¹⁾

The two ministers appealed against the judgment of the presbytery to the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr. The synod reasoned that the request was fair and granted their petition. The presbytery was nettled by the Synod's reversal of their decision and appealed against the judgment of the synod to the next General Assembly. Then the town council stepped in. They resolved to petition^{the} presbytery to withdraw their opposition to the second session, but they must have had little hope of succeeding in influencing the reverend brethren, for they provided that if the petition were refused the magistrates and town council would throw in their weight with Baine and Witherspoon in appealing to the General Assembly to obtain their ends.⁽²⁾ But Witherspoon's and Baine's efforts proved vain. The Assembly (1758) prohibited the erecting of the separate session for the High Church till that part of the town should be legally disjoined and formed into a separate parish.⁽³⁾

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol.vi, p.100.
2. Ms.Records of the Paisley Town Council, March 25, 1758.
3. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol, ii. p.167.

parish.

In the autumn of 1759 Witherspoon received a call to the Scots Church in Rotterdam. The consistory, in trying to fill their vacant pulpit, had enlisted the help of two prominent Edinburgh divines, John Erskine, colleague of William Robertson at Old Greyfriars, and Robert Walker, one of Hugh Blair's colleagues at the High Church. Both Erskine and Walker were leaders of the Popular Party. Walker preached before the Lord High Commissioner in 1751, the same year as did John Witherspoon. The Scots Church wanted John Bonar of Perth, but he refused to consider a call. Messrs. Erskine and Walker thereupon recommended Witherspoon "as one who possesses all the qualifications required by us in a minister, and that in an eminent degree," assuring them that "he is esteemed to be one of the most worthy ministers in the Church of Scotland". Witherspoon took the call under consideration.

The Consistory immediately put Witherspoon's name at the head of a leet of three, secured sanction for the leet from the burgomasters (the "Noble, Great and Venerable Lords of the Weth"), and "with perfect unanimity" elected him their minister. Without delay, the Consistory notified the burgomasters of Witherspoon's election and received civil sanction for it. The call to Witherspoon was forwarded to him;/

him; a copy of it was sent to Mr. Erskine and Mr. Walker in order that they might urge the call on Witherspoon and on the town and Presbytery of Paisley. "Reasons of ye call of ye Scots Church to Mr. John Witherspoon" were urged by the Consistory as follows: 1. The call was perfectly unanimous and prayerfully arrived at. 2. The Scots Church needs Witherspoon's eminent qualifications more than Paisley/^{needs them}; the church in Rotterdam is one designated by the Assemblies of 1596, 1633, and 1742 as an Eminent Congregation, and serves persons of the highest quality from Great Britain and Holland. The church in Paisley could easily be filled, but it is difficult to find and obtain one that is sufficiently qualified for such a congregation abroad. 3. The Church of Scotland should send a good man as an evidence of gratitude to the city of Rotterdam for its kindness to Scottish refugees from persecution. 4. The post is a good one in point of salary, church building, and the goodwill of the Lords of the city. This document is a most cogent appeal. In addition to the call, the Consistory wrote Witherspoon a letter pressing him to accept their call.

The Scots Church in Rotterdam rested their call on Witherspoon's willingness to accept it. They instructed their representatives, Messrs. Erskine and Walker, not to apply/

the
 apply to/presbytery for his transportation unless he were
 heartily in favour of it. At the last meeting of the Con-
 :sistory for the year 1759 a letter was read "wherein Mr.
 Witherspoon thanks the Consistory for the honour they had
 done him, but refuseth to accept their call--" ⁽¹⁾ .

Another controversy arose in 1760 between the Town Coun-
 :cil of Paisley and the ecclesiastical courts. In that year
 the Council and the Kirk-Session agreed to unite the offices
 of English Schoolmaster and Session Clerk. The plan was that
 the magistrates, who had by law the right of nominating the
 session clerk, should draw up a leet of three names, submit
 them to the session for approval, and nominate the session's
 choice for the position. All was going smoothly; the min-
 :utes of the Council record the election of one, William
 Adie, for the new post, ⁽²⁾ and the close harmony between the
 Council and Kirk-session.

Baine, the minister of the High Church, opposed the
 merger of the two positions, not because he primarily opposed
 the union of the two positions but because he thought the Coun-
 :cil's cho^osing the session clerk was an Erastian practice and a
 fetter/

1. Mss. Records of the Consistory of the Scots Church, Rotter-
 dam; from October 21, 1759 - December 28, 1759.
2. Ms. Records Paisley Town Council, September 22, 1760.

(1)
 fetter on the spiritual independence of the Church. As the Council's right to nominate the session clerk was a matter of privilege conferred at the erection of the parish in 1736, Mr. Baine's reason for opposing the merger and his time for urging that reason were both irrelevant. He appealed to the presbytery to prevent the union of the two offices.⁽²⁾

The presbytery forbade the union of the two offices. Witherspoon appealed to the synod. The synod upheld the sentence of the presbytery, contrary to Witherspoon's pleading. He forthwith appealed from the decision of the synod to the General Assembly. In all this he had the staunch backing of the town-council. He appeared in behalf of his fellow-townsmen in the Assembly of 1761. The case was fully laid before the Assembly and that reverend body found "that they cannot disapprove of the conduct of the session in approving the plan of accommodation given in by the town-council, and that there is nothing in it injurious to the rights of the kirk-session"⁽³⁾. Witherspoon came home to his parish and town the victor in this litigation.

In 1762 the town of Dundee tried to call Witherspoon and applied to the Presbytery of Paisley to moderate the call and/

1. Ms. Records of the Presbytery of Paisley, November 26, 1760.
2. Struthers, History of the Relief Church, p.200.
3. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol.ii, p.243.

and have him transported. This attempt to call their minister brought out expressions of Paisley's great regard for the minister of Laigh Church. Local trades associations protested against the transportation, particularly the "taylor⁽¹⁾s" who as a society had sittings in the Laigh Church. The Magistrates and town-council recorded that they were "much satisfied with the said Mr. John Witherspoon and are greatly against his transportation, and likewise judging that such a Transportation would be much to the hurt of the Community and Lay them under very great Hardships and Inconveniency Therefore they hereby resolve to oppose the said Transportation to the utmost of their power⁽²⁾". They forthwith named commissioners to appear in the interests of defeating the Dundee project before the presbytery or any other court. The whole town stood behind the council in their resolution. The documents filed in the case attest their attachment to Witherspoon. The arguments on both sides were too difficult for the presbytery to settle. The case ultimately came up for decision before the Assembly of 1762.

The Assembly heard the appeal of the magistrates, town-council, town-session and incorporations of Paisley against the transportation. They also heard Witherspoon express himself /

1. Ms.Records Paisley Town-council, January 1, 1757.
2. Ms.Records Paisley Town -council, May 17, 1762.

himself as unwilling to go to Dundee. This they weighed against the pleading of the representatives from Dundee who also appeared before the bar of the Assembly. Witherspoon was continued at Paisley.⁽¹⁾

When one of the bailies of Paisley, Robert Fulton, died, Witherspoon was called in to take charge of his papers and to make arrangements for his funeral. This duty was customarily performed by the nearest of kin of the deceased. But not even the man's widow knew who was his nearest of kin; as the necessity for providing "mournings" for the widow and her household and burial for the late bailie was pressing, the widow and her friends asked their minister if he would underwrite the expenses, until the heir could be found and the will opened. Mr. Fulton's estate was known to be in excess of £12,000. Witherspoon complied with her request; he and the town clerk stood surety for the expenses to the amount of £98:16:1.. In due course a cousin came forward as the nearest of kin; when the will was opened, the cousin and the widow found that each had benefitted handsomely by its provision.

Mr. Fulton had died in April, 1756. On May 1st Witherspoon and the town clerk had paid for the mournings for his relict/

1. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol.ii, p.261.

relict and the expenses of his funeral. When they applied to the widow and the other heir for reimbursement, they were refused payment. Being left no alternative, the two men decided to sue at law for the repayment of the money that they had advanced. On the 18th of November they gained a judgment against the cousin and the widow of Mr. Fulton for the amount they had spent on their behalf, with interest. ⁽¹⁾

John Witherspoon was typical of his contemporary brother ministers in his attitude toward parish discipline. He charged a young minister that the exercise of parish discipline is a part of the ministerial duty that cannot be omitted. "There must needs be offences in the Christian church. But when discipline is neglected, then the offence becomes unspeakably more dangerous, especially to the young and weak". Witherspoon says further that discipline must be strict, regular, and impartial. He favoured public correction for public offences, citing the scripture, "Them that sin, rebuke before all, that others also may fear"; he thinks "superiors of all sorts, magistrates, ministers, and heads of families, may, and ought to reprove, both with authority and severity, because the end is not the reformation of an individual/

1. Unextracted Processes, Adams Office, Letter W, Bundle 2. No.10; 1766: His Majesty's Register House, Edinburgh.

individual, but the preservation of others, and the general good.⁽¹⁾ This rigid ecclesiastical discipline had the close co-operation of the civil authorities.

Persons who came afoul judgments of kirk-sessions usually made the required amends. Sometimes they fled the parish. Occasionally they were not submissive, although they knew that insubordination to the session meant social ostracism. Such was the case with a young lawyer of Paisley named Snodgrass, who with his associates withstood the censures of Witherspoon and his elders.

On the Saturday night before the first communion Sabbath February, in/1762, a party of young men met in a tavern for a drinking bout. Their tippling came to the notice of the session because they had made a midnight disturbance. Further investigation brought out that there had been some vague references to the Holy Communion and to the local ministers; one of the roisterers had even produced a communion token. The enormity of the drinking and alleged blasphemy was overshadowed by the fact that young Snodgrass was unrepentant and defiant. The stir in Paisley over the case was unprecedented. At the height of the public interest Witherspoon preached a sermon entitled Seasonable Advice to Young Persons.⁽²⁾ In his zeal /

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol, iii. p.132; p.135.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. v, pp.90-125.

zeal to improve the occasion to the warning of the young, he assumed as proven all the misdemeanours that had been charged against Snodgrass and his friends and named Snodgrass especially as a young man of vicious habits and character.

The case became so aggravated that the session appealed to the Presbytery of Paisley to deal with the young men. The presbytery found that many of the allegations had not been proven, especially the heinous one of sacrilege, and sentenced the accused only to rebuke at the bar of the presby-
 (1)
 :tery. Witherspoon was aggrieved that the presbytery had dealt so lightly with the case and resolved to publish his sermon and to appeal to the General Assembly. His sermon he did publish, with a prefixed "authentic narrative of the disorderly and riotous meeting on the night before the celebration of the Lord's Supper", which gave occasion to his discourse. But by the time of the Assembly in May, by agreement with the presbytery, he ~~agreed~~ withdrew his protest to the
 (2)
 Assesmbly. He suffered temporary discredit through his prosecution of this case. The discredit was largely local and
 (3)
 quickly forgotten by the parish. However, Snodgrass and the Presbytery/

1. Ms. Records of the Presbytery of Paisley, April 28, 1762.
2. Register of Decrees, Mackenzie Office; vol. 663; March 9, 1776. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, p. 263.
3. Ms. Records, Paisley Town council: April 5, 1766; October 28, 1766.

Presbytery of Paisley were disappointed that Witherspoon had not insisted on his appeal to the Assembly where they hoped they might have made his reputation suffer throughout the church. The Assembly that heard the Snodgrass protest against Witherspoon's failure to carry through his appeal was also the Assembly that prohibited Witherspoon's transportation to Dundee.

The sale of the sermon had been suspended, until after the Assembly should decide whether or not Witherspoon should be translated to Dundee. After the Assembly had risen, the sermon was put on sale again. Witherspoon decided to republish the sermon in self-defence against the wide allegations Snodgrass was making, that Witherspoon "was actuated by mere carnal passions of pride and resentment".⁽¹⁾ The matter was brought to an issue when Snodgrass prevailed upon all of his companions in the notorious revel, except one, to join with him in suing Witherspoon for criminal libel; they asked for £100 each damages and £100 costs. Before the case had come up for hearing, public opinion decided in favour of the minister. Snodgrass and his friends found themselves very unpopular in Paisley; they said they even went in danger of their lives. They had not the reputation sufficient to stand against the minister; one submitted to/

1. Register of Descreets (Mackenzie Office) vol.663; March 1776: p.50: His Majesty's Register House, Edinburgh.

to censure; two more left Paisley; finally, Snodgrass himself removed to Glasgow.

The courts were not as quick as public opinion in rendering a verdict. Snodgrass, who had some skill in law, prolonged the case until 1776. He was angling for a favourable judgment, but he was equally anxious to damage Witherspoon in the eyes of his own generation and for posterity. Witherspoon's fame as an author and his increasingly prominent career Snodgrass tried to poison; this was his avowed intention, and probably gave rise to most of the rumours that Witherspoon left Scotland because "Paisley became so hot for (1) him". A final decision was handed down on March 9, 1776. It provided that Witherspoon should pay £150 damages to Snodgrass and his fellows, and £20 costs. Technically this decision is against Witherspoon, but the amounts provided are so small, compared to what was originally asked, that it is (2) (3) practically a decision in his favour.

This simple case of parish discipline assumes such importance and publicity because it was aggravated by Witherspoon's excessive zeal. Though his motives were unimpeachable, his enemies /

1. Paterson, History of the County of Ayr, vol.i, p.262.
2. Register of Descreets, (Mackenzie Office) vol.663; March 9, 1776.
3. See Appendix 8.

enemies laughed at him for outrunning his usual good judgment. The wording of the sermon indicates that Witherspoon was as outraged by the fact that he had been mocked by these tipplers as he was by their supposed sacrilege. He complains, "They employed a good part of their time in mock preaching and that not merely imitating the tones or gestures of ministers in different words, but -- the words of Scripture"⁽¹⁾. The man who made the whole church laugh at the Moderates by his satire, the Characteristics, was not able to laugh at himself. He practically admits that his pride has been hurt when he says, "Contempt -- is intolerable to pride, some remains of which, capable of being irritated, are to be found in the very best men on earth". Witherspoon says that true piety "is always in this world attended with human infirmity, this affords a handle to profane persons to load it with reproach". Witherspoon's nervous infirmity made him speak in a slow unemotional manner, which may have been easy to caricature. If Witherspoon had seen with his usual perspicuity he would have recognised that the infirmity his enemies were laughing at was not a physical one, but his pride in his zeal for discipline.

But Witherspoon was losing none of his eminence in the eyes of the Church. In 1764 the University of St. Andrews conferred/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. v, p.92
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. v, pp.111-112.

conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity.

It was from his pulpit that he exercised his permanent influence. A number of his sermons were printed at the request of his congregation, just before he went to America. Because he was going away he did not hesitate at publishing them for he was anxious "to speak, while absent, and continue to in-struct those whom it is so much my duty to love and serve". These sermons are published as they were delivered to the Paisley people. Yet there are few allusions or subjects peculiar to Paisley. In only two sermons, beside his farewell sermon, does he refer to Paisley. Once when he was preaching on the danger of poverty he said that he was sorry the subject was so "well suited to the circumstances of this place". In his sermon against the roisterers, Snodgrass and his companions, he says, "I think I can discover, in the aspect of the audience, that you already suppose I have been led to the choice of this subject, by the late atrocious and flagrant offence committed in the near neighbourhood of where I now stand; and which hath filled every thinking person in the place, with a mixture of indignation and scorn."

The subjects of his sermons Witherspoon chose so as to show /

1. Ms.Minutes of St. Andrew's University, vol. vii. p.49.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol.iii, advertisement.
3. Witherspoon, Works, vol.iv, p. 113
4. Witherspoon, Works, vol.v, p. 114.

show the plan of salvation from sin through Christ. His objective Sunday by Sunday was the same as that which he expresses in the preface to one volume of his sermons: "The following sermons have been selected in order to form a little system of the truths of the gospel, to point out their relation to one another, and their influence on practice. -- The choice of the subjects for publication was made in such a manner as to give a pretty full view of the revelation of divine mercy in the gospel. -- But as there is a great danger of running too much into controversy and speculation, the best way to avoid this seemed to be, to let the sermons retain everything particular and practical, intended for the instruction, reproof, or consolation, of the audience, when they were first delivered"⁽¹⁾.

The social system of his day Witherspoon accepted as constructed by divine providence, and therefore beyond necessity of question. In one sermon he says that social differences are "the various stations in which God hath thought fit to place us". "This difference of station requires supplies of the conveniencies of life, suited to the part we are bound to act"⁽²⁾. He speaks harshly of the poor who act "as if they had a title to rectify the mistakes of providence, in the distribution of worldly possessions". "The rich are indeed, in point /

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. ii, p. iv.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. iv, p. 93.

point of conscience, bound to assist the poor", he preaches farther, but "no person has a right to make them generous and charitable against their-wills, or to exercise their own generosity and charity at their expense"⁽¹⁾. The final check on the rich was left to the "Supreme Judge at the last day".

Witherspoon's salvation for the inequalities and hardships of the social system of his day was not primarily of this world, but of the next. He was less keen for social justice here and now because he was so sure that God would put all right in the life after death. But Witherspoon preached that religion strengthened the social tie and a feeling of mutual responsibility between classes. The fellowship of Christian believers is the fountain head of poor relief, hospitals, self-government, education and social integrity,⁽²⁾ Witherspoon points out. Witherspoon sought for all classes the things he valued most; preaching, sound discipline and catechising, material prosperity arising from righteousness, and education. He was not conscious of the need of good housing conditions, old age pensions, recreational facilities, and such. The highest good in life, in his opinion, was saving preparation for the life to come -- to be sure of hell, but to be surer of heaven. If one is tempted to condemn him for lack of social vision, he must remember /

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. iv, p.115.

2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. iv. p. 326.

remember that the present industrial system was in its first infancy. Hargreaves did not invent the spinning jenny until 1767 nor Watt the steam engine until 1785.⁽¹⁾

Witherspoon felt that he preached by sacred authority and that preaching was on a par with the sacraments. "Our blessed Redeemer hath established in his church a standing ministry, and the regular administration of ordinances. -- And -- yet in no other way doth he now communicate his will, and vouchsafe his presence to his people, but by the reading and hearing of his word, and attendance upon his instituted worship."⁽²⁾ Speaking in another place of ministers Witherspoon says that they speak in the name of God, and carry a message from the King of kings.⁽³⁾ In closing one sermon Witherspoon rises to this emphasis: "I bear from God himself this message to you all--"⁽⁴⁾ The content of his preaching did not consist of his own ideas primarily, but the truth he found in the word of God. Scarcely a page but has a scripture reference as an illustration or proof. His preaching is naturally his interpretation of scripture, but the scripture is always the subject. He distorts no passages to suit his interpretation; on the contrary, he suits his arguments to what appears to him as the /

1. Gardiner, A Student's History of England, vol.iii, pp.815-816.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. iv, p.39.
3. Witherspoon, Works, vol. iii, pp.285-286.
4. Witherspoon, Works, vol. iv, p.278.

the compelling truth of scripture. Of thirty-six sermons the texts of twenty are chosen from the Old Testament and sixteen from the New; seven of the Old Testament texts are from the Psalms. His sermons took between forty-five minutes and an hour to preach.⁽¹⁾

Anyone who went to worship in the Laigh Church found the order of service simple; the minister distrusted as superstitious all but the simplest forms of liturgy.⁽²⁾ But the worship was deeply reverent, and all took part. The congregation were taught by their minister that social worship was peculiarly acceptable to God. And when the minister rose to preach he spoke in simple, direct language, a sermon that evidenced spiritual and literary preparation. His discourses were not like "painted windows, which with fine colours upon themselves keep out the light" -- as Witherspoon once described excessive elegance of pulpit style.⁽³⁾ He spoke to the capacity of his hearers, both as to subject matter and expression. For those who came to church to censure or admire the preacher Witherspoon had no patience. Not only his jealousy for the worship of God, but also his sensitiveness of his own emotional limitations in speaking, made him averse to criticism of pulpit style./

1. The average time calculated from reading aloud slowly.
2. Witherspoon Works, vol. iv, p. 324.
3. Witherspoon Works, vol. v., p.46.

style.

The November Commission of the Assembly of 1757 requested the King to proclaim a day of national fasting and prayer, on account of "the present situation of affairs in the nation". Accordingly by royal proclamation February 16, 1758 was appointed a fast day.⁽¹⁾ In his sermon on that day Witherspoon spoke fully about national life under the title, Prayer for National Prosperity, and for Revival of Religion, Inseparably Connected.⁽²⁾ But for this sermon little might have been known of the interest of the minister of the Laigh Church in national secular affairs.

Witherspoon pointed out the reverses which the nation had suffered. Britain had lost Hanover, the Island of Minorca, and certain forts in America. Paisley had particular interest in the American wars for the Earl of Dundonald, who was well-known locally, was fighting in America.⁽³⁾ British trade had been obstructed; the government was in the hands of Newcastle, Devonshire and Pitt whom Witherspoon thought to be factious politicians lacking in public spirit; the £200,000 spent for the defence of Hanover had been lost; the conditions of the colonies abroad were deplorable.⁽⁴⁾ This "series of abortive projects", makes the most obstinate and inconsiderate stand and pause, /

1. Morren, Annals, of the Assembly, vol.ii.p.150.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. v, p.57.
3. Semple, History of the Shire of Renfrew, p.254.
4. Gardiner, A Student's History of England, vol.ii,p.748.

pause, and seriously ask, Is there not a cause?" Witherspoon propounds what he considers the cause to be.

The sermon is built on the Old Testament belief that prosperity is a sign of God's favour, and that adversity is a sign of his disfavour. This test of godliness Witherspoon applies to nations as well as individuals, in temporal as well as spiritual matters. The nation has suffered reverses; nothing is said to bring any light into the dark picture of national life. Anything good the nation may do is of God; citizens may take no credit for it nor hope from it. Any evil thing the nation does is its own doing, and citizens must be responsible. Any national achievement is of the grace of God and it cannot be urged to balance the weight of national failure. All men can do is to pray further and confess their sins. "The fault, doubtless, lies in ourselves. Our fasts have not been such as God has chosen, and therefore he hath refused to hear our prayers."⁽²⁾

The remedy is prayer for spiritual revival first, and temporal mercies next, according to Witherspoon; the two always stand related in that order of importance. He proceeds to denounce the nation as irreligious, tainted with infidelity, boastful ✓

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. v, p.58.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. v, pp.58-59.

boastful, and dependent on the "arm of flesh". He exhorts with the measured thunders of a prophet. Like a prophet, he cites history to re-enforce his expectations of the divine mercies that will flow upon a repentant nation.

Witherspoon's view of history is black and white with sentiment rather than coloured with a blend of truth and falsehood. In his view of history all men were either all good or all bad. He says of the King of Prussia, Frederick the Great, "While we give thanks to God for raising up an eminent prince in Germany as the head of the reformed interest, and signally supporting him hitherto", let us also "pray that he may continue his protection to him, -- and fight his battles". He says that under King George, Britain has had a mild and legal government and enjoyed as much happiness as our national guilt would allow. He must have known little about Frederick the Great and his objectives; as for his remarks about Britain, Witherspoon himself in other parts of the sermon complains of the "weak and divided counsels" of these who govern. ⁽¹⁾ More remote history he sees ideally -- the Protestant wars on the continent, the Covenanting times^s in Scotland and the revolution of 1688, all of these he cites as times of pure religion when the church appeared in unblemished purity and dignity./

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. v, p.86.

dignity. He says, "Even those who preserve some regard for religion, fall very short of that eminent and exemplary piety which some alive have seen in Christians of the last age, and of which our fathers have told us".⁽¹⁾

But Witherspoon faces facts with regard to the colonies. He assesses the fighting in America as more important than that on the continent of Europe. He points out Britain's supremacy on the seas and her general progress in her colonial contest with France. His national outlook is British, rather than merely Scottish; he speaks in terms of an empire rather than merely a kingdom.

Those who sat under the preaching of Witherspoon found their minister well-informed. His sermons had not the high polish of those of Hugh Blair,⁽²⁾ nor the emotional spontaneity of the sermons of men like Alexander Webster⁽³⁾ (who could pass from jollity to the most fervent devotion),⁽⁴⁾ or George Whitefield, whose preaching was sweeping Scotland during Witherspoon's incumbency at Paisley.⁽⁵⁾ The Paisley folk of the Laigh Church had a well-rounded ministry. Their minister was zealous without being fanatical. And his zeal was tempered with /

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol.vi, p.267.
2. Graham, Scottish Men of Letters in the 18th Century, p.123.
3. Morren Annals of the assembly vo.ii, p.375.
4. Carlyle, Autobiography, p.251.
5. Butler, Wesley and Whitefield in Scotland, p.63.

with toleration. He concludes one sermon thus: "Everything is beautiful in its place and season, and is then not only most acceptable to God, but most useful to men"⁽¹⁾.

During the summer of 1766 Witherspoon received a call to Dublin which he declined.⁽²⁾ A few months later a very different call came -- the call to Princeton. He refused at first; finally he accepted. The Paisley town records contain references to the esteem in which Dr. Witherspoon was held. Besides the townspeople's efforts in prosecuting his call in 1756-57, and their stand against the Dundee call, in 1762, there is recorded their additional appreciation in 1766 in the following minute; The magistrates and town council "considering the good services done To the Community by the Reverend Mr. John Witherspoon minister of ye Gospell in ye Laigh Church Hereby agree to give to said Mr. Witherspoon a compliment of fifteen pounds sterling..."⁽³⁾ In the same year Witherspoon's stipend was increased by twelve pounds in order to make his equal with that of the minister of the High Church, successor to Mr. Baine. There can never be any doubt that Witherspoon left Paisley much regretted and entirely on his own decision.

The/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. ii, p.318.
2. Ms.letter, Witherspoon, to Wallace, an Edinburgh merchant, quoted by Collins, President Witherspoon, vol.i, p.80.
3. Ms.Records Paisley Town Council; April 5, 1766.
4. Ms.Records Paisley Town Council; October 28, 1766.

The words of the record are eloquent: "The Magistrates and Council being Informed that the Reverend Mr. Witherspoon minister in the Laigh Church in this place is to give in his Demission to the Prebytery of Paisley tomorrow the tenth day of May seventeen hundred and sixty eight years Do hereby appoint" a commission "to attend the Presbytery and signify to them that though they have lived in the greatest harmony with him since he was their minister and could have wished that he had continued in his present charge, yet since he has seen it his duty to accept of another office from respect and friendship for him they resolve to give no opposition But are willing that the Presbytery accept his Demission"⁽¹⁾.

1. Ms. Records Paisley Town Council; May 19, 1768.

CHAPTER V.

The Ministry of
John Witherspoon in
Ecclesiastical Controversy.

WITHERSPOON'S PART IN THE GOVERNMENT
OF THE CHURCH.

Besides being a successful parish minister Witherspoon was a leader in the life of the church. His interests were by no means confined to his own flock. Rather, his interest was broad. He was not content to limit their vision or his activities to the bounds of the parish. From the beginning of his ministry he took an aggressive part in the life of the Church of Scotland. His people benefited by his national outlook.

As the eighteenth century advanced Scotland's prosperity increased. Religion had no political repercussions in this century. The nation was freed from the bonds of extreme poverty and religious persecution -- an age which was to be remarkable ⁽¹⁾ on its secular side for unprecedented industrial change and progress, and in its ecclesiastical side for the triumph of liberalism. The second half of the eighteenth century gave more distinguished names to Scottish history than any other similar period. The men who carried these names/

1. Mathieson, The Awakening of Scotland, p. 200 footnote.

names were born very nearly together. Hugh Blair, the rhetorician and graceful preacher, was born in 1718; Robertson, the historian, and Smollett, the novelist, in 1721; John Home, the author, in 1722; and Adam Smith, the economist, in 1723, the year of Witherspoon's birth. David Hume was only seven years older than Blair. Witherspoon's acquaintance with Blair, Home, and Robertson began during their days at the university. Yet from the beginning of his career Witherspoon found himself opposing his friends. Blair and Home became prominent members of the Moderate Party of which Robertson became the leader, Witherspoon's childhood friend, Alexander Carlyle, ranged with the leaders of the Moderates. Witherspoon stoutly opposed the Moderates, and stood high in the Popular Party, as the opponents of the Moderates were called. There is no indication that Witherspoon regretted the necessity of opposing his friends. He held no social intercourse with them, although many of the men of the age who could not see eye to eye, yet sat knee to knee over a bottle of claret. There was a warm friendship between Hume, the sceptic, and the Moderates, Carlyle, Home, Blair, Jardine and Robertson. But by the time Witherspoon sat in his first Assembly in 1747 he felt so strongly the issues that were vexing the church that he would not

1. Carlyle, Autobiography, p. 250; Graham, Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century, vol. iii, p. 92. Graham, Scottish Men of Letters, p. 250
2. Carlyle, Autobiography, p. 251

not distinguish personal from ecclesiastical loyalties.

Controversy over the operation of the law of patronage was coming to a new crisis. Since the Secession in 1732 the Assembly had dealt leniently. Settlements had been protracted and vexed, but had been made with a conciliatory hand. But neither side was satisfied with permanent compromise. As the men who had accepted presentations began to predominate in the General Assembly, the Assembly's opposition to patronage steadily declined. The presbyteries showed a growing reluctance to differ with the Assembly. But the populace who knew that the Secession church was open to them as a refuge in case of defeat, became more obstinate and headstrong in asserting their claims.⁽¹⁾

In the Assembly of 1747, the first in which Witherspoon sat as a commissioner, ten disputed settlements came up for consideration. The disputes varied: one was between the backers of rival candidates for the call; another between a presbytery and a synod; another between patron and parish; and a fourth between presentee and members of the congregation to which he had been presented. The decisions of the Assembly seemed consistent with no rule; only their enforcement was/

1. Cunningham, Church History of Scotland, vol. ii, p. 534.

was uniform. In the settlement at Barrowstounness the call to a probationer was sustained against the appeal of the patron, the Duke of Hamilton. In the settlement at Balmaclellan a libel against the presentee was dismissed and "the Assembly's dissatisfaction with the libellers intimated to them". In the dispute at Scone two rival probationers were both set aside and a new call ordered. The Presbytery of Glasgow had refused to settle at Govan the man presented by the patrons; the presbytery was ordered to proceed with the settlement. Subsequently the presbytery refused and the Assembly finally resorted to the expedient of ordering the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr to settle the man. Each of these various settlements could be cited as precedents in similar disputed cases in later Assemblies. Thus the confusion ⁽¹⁾ grew.

Witherspoon was a keen observer of what went on in the church courts. In a speech before the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr he referred to the refusal of the Presbytery of Paisley to settle a Mr. James Campbell as minister of the Abbey ⁽²⁾ Parish of Paisley. The case came by appeal to the Synod ⁽³⁾ and to the Assembly of 1748. The Assembly confirmed the decision not to settle Mr. Campbell, and directed the presbytery to moderate a new call at large. But the Assembly cleared/

1. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. i, pp. 98-106.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. viii. p. 271
3. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. i, p. 113; p. 361

cleared Mr. Campbell of implications of Episcopalian disloyalties to the Establishment. Witherspoon cites the attitude of the presbytery toward Campbell as inquisitorial, and exposes the irregular method by which they prejudiced Campbell's character by unproved insinuations. He further charges that the presbytery's action in this case disobliged the people and fostered jealousies. This sort of personal difference fed Witherspoon's opposition to the Moderate Party as much as differences of principle.

In the Presbytery of Irvine in 1751 Witherspoon had his first fling at the rights of patrons.⁽¹⁾ In that year the Earl of Eglinton presented Mr. Charles Bannantine to the parish of Irvine. Witherspoon led a faction who took exception to one point in the presentation. In his letter presenting Mr. Bannantine Lord Eglinton indicated that he was reserving to himself any sum of money derived from the church lands in excess of the stipend of the minister. The presbytery accepted the presentation, including this condition. But Witherspoon dissented and carried a complaint to the General Assembly. The Assembly dismissed the complaint and handed down a decision that the patron had a right to make such a condition as Lord Eglinton had made; but this condition was not to be construed as preventing the minister from seeking
an/

1. Ms. Records of the Presbytery of Irvine, March 28, 1751

an augmentation of his stipend if there were ground for it.

Witherspoon was not present at the admission of Mr. Bannantine
(1)
to Irvine.

The Assembly of 1751, before which Witherspoon presented his appeal in the case of the settlement at Irvine, is the same Assembly at which he preached before the Lord High Com-
(2)
missioner. As a member of this Assembly he heard the report of the failing cause of the augmentation of stipends, he heard the lengthy discussions of the Torphichen case, he witnessed the beginning of the ascendancy of William Robertson, then minister at Gladsmuir, to the leadership of the dominant party in the church. This Assembly dealt with a number of vexed settlements.

Witherspoon was increasingly in touch with the life of the Church. Besides his attendance at Assemblies he was active in his presbytery and synod. He sometimes preached for his father at Gifford during communion seasons. On one occasion
(3)
William Robertson was one of the clergymen assisting with him.

In these first years of Witherspoon's ministry two contested settlements of the usual kind, occurring in succession, brought/

1. Ms. Records of the Presbytery of Irvine; Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. i. p. 218; p. 367.
2. Ms. Records of General Assembly, 1750-1753, p. 186.
3. Ms. Records of the Kirk-session of Yester Parish, August 15, 1746

brought the controversy over patronage to an issue. The first was the Torphichen case; the second, the Inverkeithing case.

The minister of Torphichen, Mr. John Bonar, one of the twelve Marrow men, died in 1747. This left the highly evangelical parish vacant. In order to meet the delicate question of a successor, Lord Torphichen, the patron, submitted a leet of five candidates to the parish. One of these, a Mr. Watson, received a call from twenty-four heritors, and was therefore presented by the patron; but a majority of the heritors, all but one of the four elders, and almost all the heads of families persisted in demanding a Mr. Turnbull, whose name, despite their petition, had not appeared on the leet. The Presbytery of Linlithgow referred the Torphichen case to the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, whose decision in favour of Watson was confirmed by the Assembly of 1749. In 1750 and, again, in 1751, on a reference from the synod, in consequence of the presbytery's persistent delay of the ordination, the same judgment was given. On this, the third and last occasion, the mutinous presbyters, after pleading in vain their conscientious reluctance to fan the flame of secession, were rebuked at the bar of the Assembly for their disobedience. A committee was appointed, with or without their concurrence, to/

to ordain the presentee. This committee was the last
"riding Committee"; William Robertson was a member of it. (1)

From this censure against the Presbytery of Linlithgow Principal Wishart and twenty-two others dissented; they considered it harsh and unnecessary. More extreme in the opposite direction was the motion of John Home to suspend the presbytery; he was seconded by William Robertson. It was the first time either had spoken in the Assembly. Robertson took the opportunity of unfolding those principles of ecclesiastical government which were next year acted upon in the case of Inverkeithing, and which formed the guide of his policy when he established himself as leader of the Moderate Party a decade afterwards. The way in which the Torphichen case rebounded from court to court, and the contradictory results arrived at during its litigation certainly weighed in the arguments for the exercise of more vigour, as well as uniformity, in the discipline of the church.

The settlement of a new minister at Inverkeithing was already assuming a serious aspect when the case came before the Assembly in 1750. (2) A vacancy had occurred at Inverkeithing in/

1. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. i, pp. 156, 181, 198, 367.
2. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. i, p. 182.

in 1749. The congregation moderated a kind of call to an English dissenting minister, a Mr. Adam. They were not very serious in the prosecution of this "call", but they were determined at all events that they would not accept the minister of Broughton, Mr. Richardson, of irreproachable attainments and character, who, with the concurrence of several aristocratic heritors, had been presented by the patron. The Presbytery of Dunfermline deferred to the wishes of the people and refused to induct Mr. Richardson. The patron appealed to the Synod of Fife, who in turn referred the matter to the Commission of ^{the} Assembly. The call to Richardson was sustained by the Commission, but the presbytery refused to give effect to this decision. The Commission of 1751 insisted on the presbytery's compliance with the former decisions and even threatened "very high censure" if they ⁽¹⁾ disobeyed. The presbytery, however, continued to disobey. If any presbytery had grounds for opposing a forced settlement the Presbytery of Dunfermline had; they had seen the leaders of the Secession withdraw from their own fellowship twenty years earlier. They were chary of any action that might fan this ⁽¹⁾ fire again.

When the Commission met again they had reversed their attitude toward the Dunfermline Presbytery. They admitted the/

1. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, pp. 222-227.

the reasons alleged by the presbytery for their continued disobedience; they not only inflicted no censure but they relieved the presbytery by devolving their task upon the synod. This solution of the case by the Commission was bitterly attacked, even by the members of the Commission itself; a minority, led by William Robertson, dissented from the decision and published their reasons for dissent. This Reasons for Dissent was immediately looked upon as the manifesto of the Moderate Party. It was answered by the Popular Party with an equally ultimate statement of their views.⁽¹⁾ The case of Inverkeithing was still unsettled and came up before the Assembly again, in 1752.

The Assembly flatly reversed the lenient decision of the March Commission.⁽²⁾ A resolution, agreed to without a vote, expressed the opinion that the Commission had exceeded their powers. On the same day a drastic motion was passed ordering the entire Presbytery of Dunfermline to meet at Inverkeithing on the fourth day for the purpose of admitting the presentee, raising the quorum from three to five (a number which it was known could not be obtained), and requiring every clerical member to appear on the fifth day at the bar of the Assembly to/

1. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, pp. 228-260
2. Stewart, Life of Robertson, P. 171

(1)
to answer for his conduct. From the examination on that day it appeared that only three of the presbytery had been present at Inverkeithing for the induction and had been unable to act as they had not a quorum. Six mutineers gave in their defence in written form, which they refused to modify or retract. The Assembly resolved that one of the six should be deposed. The next day Gillespie of Carnock presented a "humble representation" in his own name. It is probably owing to this circumstance, and to the fact that he had been ordained by a sect of English Independents that the vote of deposition fell on him. He felt himself a martyr and closed his reply to the Moderator's sentence of deposition thus: "I rejoice that to me it is given in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake"⁽²⁾. The sentence of deposition was debated by subsequent Assemblies, but he was never reponed. In 1761 Gillespie joined ⁽³⁾ Boston of Jedburgh and one other to form the Presbytery of Relief.

Richardson was finally admitted to Inverkeithing;⁽⁴⁾ but three ministers of the presbytery who were absent from the induction service without excuse continued for thirteen years under a sentence which suspended each one of them from acting in/

1. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. i, p. 263.
2. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. i, p. 271.
3. Struthers, History of the Relief Church, p. 161
4. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. i, p. 272.

(1)
in any church court but his own session.

The cleavage between parties was sharp. The Moderates rallied around the principles set forth in the Reasons for Dissent. The Answers to the Reasons for Dissent was the manifesto of the Popular Party. Both parties held that the Church could prosper only under the exercise of strong authority by the General Assembly. But the Popular Party said the Church could not prosper unless the rights of individuals were considered. The Moderates held that freedom could exist only on the basis of law which all accept. The Popular Party maintained that law can exist only where due protection is accorded the individual. This dilemma is common to all forms of representative government. (2)

The Moderate Party was the dominant party, the Popular, the minority party. The Moderates, after the usual practice of dominant parties, stood on the principle of authority; the other party, being the opposition, was true to type in asserting the rights of the individual. The Moderate Party had just begun to control the Assembly. In the Assembly of 1751 Robertson was able to muster only eleven votes, and these had been corralled from "a select company of fifteen" who "were called together in a tavern/

1. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. i, p. 274
2. A Just View of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland;
A Juster View of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland

tavern, a night or two before the case was to be debated in the Assembly"⁽¹⁾. In the Assembly the next year in the vote to depose one of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, Robertson was able to marshall a majority of 93-65. After the deposition of Gillespie the Moderates entered upon fifty years of unrivalled supremacy in the Church. The first twenty years Robertson was the acknowledged leader of the dominant party.

The Moderates found the government and the landed classes on their side as a result of the abortive effort of the Church to secure from Parliament the augmentation of the stipends of the clergy. The Assembly of 1750 resolved to approach Parliament for financial relief. They had every right to expect it, both because the clerical loyalty to the Hanoverians had been of great value to the government in the Uprising in 1745, and because the stipends had not been increased to keep pace with the costs of living. The landed class opposed the augmentation scheme with all their power, both in the Assembly and at Westminster. The claims of the Church were rejected. Parliament cast reflections upon the haphazard enforcement of the law of patronage and reminded the Church that she should be more careful about obeying the laws before asking for increased stipends.⁽²⁾ The crown controlled one-third of the/

1. Carlyle, Autobiography, p. 257.
2. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. i. pp. 370-376.

the livings in Scotland; the nobles another one-third. They resolved to assert their influence in the Church by the more rigorous exercise of their rights as patrons. Thus it was that the Moderates found their policy backed by the government and the landed classes.

The controversy over patronage was the expression of a more basic difference between the Moderates and their opponents, the Popular Party. The difference lay between the humanism of the Moderates and the evangelicalism of the Popular Party. During the first half of the century the austere religious character of Scotland was disintegrating. The growth of interest and employment in trade gave new occupations to the people and new outlets to their energies. Social life began to change. As long as there was social stagnation their thoughts remained in the old grooves. But with changes men began to discuss material concerns more and spiritual concerns less; fuller intercourse with the world rubbed off many a prejudice. Increased identification with England opened a more cosmopolitan life to all classes of the rising generation.

The Church and the character of the clergy were naturally affected by these changes. The party that followed Robertson was an intellectual and liberalising, as well as an ecclesiastical force.

In the first half of the century the church began to break with the past, and its narrow theological views. The Assembly of 1720 condemned the Marrow of Divinity; Professor Simson's heresy charges were dismissed by a later Assembly with only an admonition to the inoffensive old man;⁽¹⁾ Professor Campbell, who was later to answer Hume, survived a charge of heresy in 1735 in connection with his pamphlet, Apostles No⁽²⁾ Enthusiasts. The humanistic philosophy of Shaftesbury, expounded and systematized by a Glasgow professor, Francis Hutcheson, had a wide influence. Simson's opinions, which had been condemned as too favourable to nature and to reason had anticipated to some extent Hutcheson's new "gospel". He disputed no dogma, and taught no heresy as he discussed the beauty of moral virtue, and descanted on the "harmony of the passions" and the dignity of human nature. His personality was attractive, his methods of teaching were original. He lectured in English instead of Latin. But he aroused rather than controlled the new spirit. Some of his pupils preferred the master to the disciple and openly avowed their admiration for Shaftesbury. His pupils began to talk of virtue, liberality and benevolence where their predecessors had talked of grace, charity and holiness. They extolled as righteousness that which/

1. See above, p. 9, this thesis
2. Graham, Social Life of Scotland in the 18th Century, vol. ii. p. 89.

which Witherspoon and all Evangelicals referred to in scriptural language as filthy rags. These paganized Christian divines extolled Socrates and Plato in their sermons but spoke patronizingly of the apostles. (1)

These men constituted a new school of clergy. They differed from older clergymen like Principal Wishart and Dr. Robert Wallace, who were considered as Moderates by such fervid men as the Marrow men and the Seceders. These older Moderates were evangelicals in comparison with the new Moderates. The older Moderates sought to spiritualise, not to humanise; realised the emptiness rather than the fullness of life; were the saintly, not the gentlemanly school.

It was not only the theology -- or lack of it -- that offended the evangelical clergy and laity, but also their worldliness of manner and occupation. (2) "Many a clergyman will not yield the one-half of those things to be sins that were admitted to be so a century ago; nor do they see the one half of the evil of sin, either in clergy or laity, that was once taken for granted. -- Though I should produce the names and surnames of those clergy, who, mounted upon their coursers/

1. Mathieson, The Awakening of Scotland, pp. 190-196.
2. Witherspoon's Works, vol. vi, p. 256.

course at the public races, join the gentlemen of the turf, and are well skilled in all the terms of that honourable art: though I should name those who are to be found at routs and drums, and other polite assemblies of the same nature, and can descant with greater clearness in the laws of the gaming-table than the Bible, instead of being commanded to produce a proof of the facts, I should expect to find many who denied the relevancy of the crimes". The latter was even more objectionable as it was the more obvious. Witherspoon found himself in the Popular Party more because he was opposed to the Moderates' theology and conduct and ecclesiastical policy, rather than because he saw eye to eye with all the aims of the Popular folk. There was never the same unity either of sentiment or action among them as among the Moderates.

Witherspoon first came into national prominence in the Church in 1753. That year he published a satire entitled the Ecclesiastical Characteristics ⁽¹⁾ against the Moderate Party. The Characteristics brought a storm of criticism, but it ran through edition after edition. It was seriously received, ^{was} and opposed with the stoutness and persistence that worthy champions draw. One satire in imitation of the Characteristics (Andrew Moir, Letter to the Author of the Ecclesiastical/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, pp. 139-223.

Ecclesiastical Characteristics) received little more than contempt. One aspiring satirist was expelled from his position as professor and from the presbytery of which he
(1)
was a member.

In later years Witherspoon wrote a defence of the Char-
acteristics in which he tells how he came to write the satire. "I am now to let the reader into a secret", he writes, and continues, "What very much contributed, or rather indeed what chiefly brought me to a resolution of publishing the Characteristics, was a pamphlet published a few months before it, called, A Just View of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland. This universal fame contributed to the late Dr. H-----n; [Hyndman] and the express purpose of it is, to represent a certain set of ministers, as agitators of the people, and in general, as not acting upon conscience, even where they pretend it, but from a love of popularity. Besides this he tells a story, which he calls a 'scene of iniquity' with the initial letters of the names of the persons supposed to be
(2)
guilty." The pamphlet approved the action of the Assembly in deposing Gillespie and charged the lenient resolutions of the immediately preceding Commission were "manufactured in a certain place and by certain hands, while others were employed as/

1. Collins, President Witherspoon, vol. p. 41 footnote.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 241: A Just View of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland, p. 32.

(1)
as the dupes to propose and support it." The piece was evidently aimed at Alexander Webster, the leading Popular party man, and at Witherspoon, who was closely associated with him in the Evangelical fight against Moderatism. Witherspoon was one of the "dupes".

Witherspoon felt impelled to make some reply. He felt that the Moderates had been the aggressors "both in censuring ministers for/scrupling obedience to their unconstitutional decisions, and attacking their characters in print"⁽²⁾. He composed most of the work while he was under the sting of the Moderate triumphs. He originally intended to show a general view of the different parties in religion and learning in Scotland. "What first induced me to write", he explains, "was a deep concern for the declining interest of religion in the Church of Scotland, mixed with some indignation at what appeared to me a strange abuse of church-authority in the years 1751 and 1752". The Assembly's authority was chiefly exercised in these years in the settlements at Torphichen and at Inverkeithing. Witherspoon expanded his original satirical List of Self Evident Truths of Moderatism into the Characteristics, which he published at Glasgow, anonymously, in September, 1753.

The/

1. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. i, p. 243.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 242.

The very name of the work, Ecclesiastical Characteristics,
(1)
is a satire on Lord Shaftesbury's Characteristics published
in collected form in 1711. In the sub-titles the work is
described as "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
satire is well sustained throughout the work.

The preface, first found in the second edition, makes
sure that the Moderate Party does not disclaim the term
"Moderate" and thereby side-step the shafts of the satire.
The Moderates should not mind being written about, for mortifi-
cation, self-denial, humility and silence have no longer a
place among the virtues; they are now, according to a late
author's scheme of moral philosophy, in the column of the vices.
Those who feel exposed should realize that they are the neces-
sary true examples for making the work live. He does not
wish to incorporate all the material that he might, for he
wishes to keep the volume to a handy pocket size, easily
carried about for reference. He indicates that he will add
a thirteenth maxim, which he does in the third edition.

The/

1. Appendix 9.

The author complains that the task of writing about moderation has devolved upon him because no one else would take time from acting moderation to write about it. But he is glad to do it for he comments how disastrous it would be to take any of the Moderate men from the helm of the Assembly.

The work is dedicated to a departed Moderate clergyman in order to avoid the Earl of Shaftesbury's charge that dedications were flattery to selfish ends. No one could charge the author with expecting any benefit from a man already dead. In dedicating the work to one who is deceased the author is not worshipping saints, because the late clergyman was never a saint nor thirsted after the title. How shall he present the work to his patron? Pope says that departed ladies' ghosts frequent the places where they have most delighted to be; following this principle, the author will take his writing up to the General Assembly at Edinburgh where he is sure his patron will be and where he is sure he will accept the work. The author knows it is customary to flatter patrons; the shade of his patron need but read the whole of the ensuing book to find the most complete and complimentary description of himself.

Maxim I "All ecclesiastical persons, of whatever rank, whether principals of colleges, professors of divinity, ministers/

ministers, or even probationers, that are suspected of heresy are to be esteemed men of great genius, vast learning, and uncommon worth; and are by all means to be supported and protected*.

The story of St. John fleeing from the baths because Cerinthus, the heretic, was there and he feared the baths might fall as a judgment on Cerinthus' heresy, is wrong and untrue. As to the justice of this maxim the author gives many solid reasons: compassion itself; zeal to match the persecution of heresy hunters; the kinship of heretics and Moderate men, which may be such a beautiful example of friendship; and the greatness of the character of the heretics. The author hopes no one will be so fanatical as to think the devil the source of error.

Maxim II. "When any man is charged with loose practices or tendencies to immorality, he is to be screened and protected as much as possible; especially if the faults laid to his charge be, as they are incomparably well termed in a sermon, preached by a hopeful youth, that made some noise lately, good-humoured vices".

A libertine is a practical heretic, therefore, the reasons/

reasons in Maxim I hold good here. Shaftesbury says that the best time for thinking on religious subjects is when a man is merry and in a good humour. Good-humoured vices are social pleasures and are conducive to religious contemplation. This maxim is not true if the vices are charged against a man of reputed orthodox principles. Good-humoured vices are allowed only to the Moderates. An example is cited of a young orthodox man whom a Moderate presbytery would not settle because of his reported laxness of conduct, a laxness which they troubled not to prove or disprove.

Maxim III "It is the necessary part of the character of a moderate man, never to speak of the Confession of Faith but with a sneer; to give sly hints, that he does not thoroughly believe it; and to make the term orthodoxy a term of contempt and reproach".

"No complete system can be settled for all ages, except the maxims I am now compiling and illustrating". The Confessionⁿ of Faith is a "vile hedge of distinction". It is not charitable to say that we sacrifice sincerity when we subscribe the Confession of Faith. It is as uncharitable to charge the clergy of the Church of England with insincerity although their printed sermons are often diametrically opposite to the articles which they subscribe. We are no more insincere than we/

we are in ordinary daily civilities of speech. One way of avoiding insincerity is to know nothing of the contents of the Confession of Faith.

Maxim IV "A good preacher must not only have all the above and subsequent principles of moderation in him, as the source of everything that is good; but must, over and above, have the following special marks and signs of a talent for preaching. 1. His subjects must be confined to social duties. 2. He must recommend them only from rational considerations, viz. the beauty and comely proportions of virtue, and its advantages in the present life, without any regard to a future state of more extended self-interest. 3. His authorities must be drawn from heathen writers, none, or as few as possible, from Scripture. 4. He must be very unacceptable to the common people".

The moderate preacher will avoid the use of the word "grace" as much as possible, and will substitute "moral virtues" for "graces of the Spirit" and "a high pitch of virtue" for "a great degree of sanctification". He must be able to take an evangelical text and explain away its evangelicalism. "How often have I heard parts of Mr. Addison's Cato, Young's Night Thoughts, and divers other poems, in sermons? and, to say/

say the truth, they were none of the worst parts of them".

Maxim V. "A minister must endeavour to acquire as great a degree of politeness in his carriage and behaviour, and to catch as much of the air and manner of a fine gentleman, as possibly he can".

Maxim VI. "It is not only unnecessary for a moderate man to have much learning, but he ought to be filled with a contempt of all kinds of learning but one; which is, to understand Leibnitz's scheme well; the chief parts of which are so beautifully painted, and so harmoniously sung by Lord Shaftesbury, and which has been so well licked into form and method by the late immortal Mr. H-----n". [Professor Hutcheson]

"Much study is an enemy to politeness in men". This scheme excels in brevity as do some schemes published for teaching children to read by way of diversion. Every year gives us a shorter method of learning some branch of knowledge.

"In short, in these last days the quintessence of everything has been extracted, and is presented to us -- in little phials; so that we may come to all learning by one act of intuition".

"Have we not seen -- many students of divinity -- who have become speakers in general assemblies, and strenuous supporters of a falling church, before their beards were grown, to the perfect astonishment of an observing world!" "As to poetry

it/

it will be sufficient to read -- the Tragedy of Agis (by John Home), if it be published; because in it dramatic poetry is carried to the summit of perfection: and it is believed, by the author's friends, that there never will be a tragedy published after it, unless by somebody that is delirious". The sum of what a moderate should know and believe is presented in The Athenian Creed:

"I believe in the beauty and comely proportions of Dame Nature, and in almighty Fate, her only parent and guardian; for it hath been most graciously obliged (blessed be its name) to make us all very good. I believe that the universe is a huge machine, wound up from everlasting by necessity, and consisting of an infinite number of links and chains, each in a progressive motion toward the zenith of perfection, and meridⁱan of glory; that I myself am a little glorious piece of clock-work, a wheel within a wheel, or rather a pendulum within this grand machine, swinging hither and thither by the different impulses of fate and destiny; that my soul (if I have any) is an imperceptible bundle of exceeding minute corpuscles much smaller than the finest Holland sand; and that certain persons, in a very eminent station, are nothing else but a huge collection of necessary agents who can do nothing at all.

"I believe there is no ill in the universe, nor any such thing/

thing as virtue absolutely considered; that those things vulgarly called sins, are only errors in the judgment, and foils to set off the beauty of Nature, or patches to adorn her face; that the whole race of intelligent beings, even the devils themselves (if there are any), shall finally be happy; so that Judas Iscariot is by this time a glorified saint, and it is good for him that he hath been born.

"In fine, I believe in the divinity of L.S....., the saintship of Marcus Antoninus, the perspicuity and sublimity of A.....e, and the perpetual duration of Mr. H.....n's works, notwithstanding their present tendency to oblivion. Amen."

Maxim VII "A Moderate man must endeavour, as much as he handsomely can, to put off any appearances of devotion, and avoid all unnecessary exercises of religious worship, whether public or private."

Religion as an acceptable subject for discussion has disappeared since the reaction under Charles II. Fasts and thanksgivings have been curtailed because a fast day in Scotland loses 50,000 pounds to the nation, while nobody can make any calculation what it wins. Whatever is forced is unnatural and ought to be avoided. Try to accommodate the church worship to the gentry.

Maxim/

- (1) Lord Shaftesbury
- (2) Aristotle
- (3) Professor Hutcheson

Maxim VIII "In church-settlements, which are the principal causes that come before ministers for judgment, the only thing to be regarded, is, who the patron, and the great and noble heritors are for; the inclinations of the common people are to be utterly despised".

Presentations were formerly thought a grievance. Now they are welcomed because they are necessary to bring out the greatness and nobility of the heritors. Shaftesbury has said, "It belongs to men of slavish principles to affect a superiority over the vulgar, and to despise the multitude".

Maxim IX "While a settlement is carrying on, the candidate against whom there is a strong opposition from the people, must be looked upon, and everywhere declared to be, a person of great worth, and remarkable abilities; providing always, that if ever the same person, after he is settled, be at pains, and succeed, in gaining the peoples's affection, he shall then fall as much below the ordinary standard in his character, as before he was raised above it".

Moderates should back a man opposed by the people in order that they may win another to their ranks in voting. But if he fails to show moderate works and votes, he must be repudiated. The moderate man is "an angry bigot for good-nature".

"That/

"That inch of truth, in courtesy,
To span of interest should give way;
And pound of gain, for ounce of lie,
Is cheaply bought".

Moderates claim no infallible perseverance of moderates in moderatism, as do the orthodox for saints in grace.

Maxim X. "Whenever we have got a settlement decided over ~~over~~ the belly of perhaps the whole people in the parish, by a majority in the General Assembly, the victory should be improved, by appointing some of the orthodox opposers of the settlement to execute it, especially those of them that pretend to have a scruple of conscience at having an active hand in any such settlement".

If they obey they are in disfavour with the people. If they disobey they are purged from the church. In either case, the Moderate Party benefits. 1. The command of a proper authority is sufficient to make any action innocent, lawful, right, and strictly obligatory. If a Christian soldier had been ordered to put Christ to death he would have had to, had he been a Moderate. 2. The disobedient brethren have but one reason for their conduct, which is groundless, viz., a scruple of conscience. 3. If any indulgence is granted to these tender-hearted inferiors there would be an end to all government in an instant. 4. The best method of convincing our/
our/

our opponents is the exercise of authority supported in its highest rigour by censures such as suspension and deposition from benefice and office. This method is favoured by the lay members of the Assembly who could never fall under such censure, anyhow.

Maxim XI "The character which moderate men give their adversaries, of the orthodox party, must always be that of 'knaves' or 'fools'; and, as occasion serves, the same person (if it will pass) may be represented as a 'knave' at one time, and as a 'fool' at another".

Fools -- because they are contrary to us whose principles are reason.

Knives -- they act from hypocrisy in pleasing the people, because they get something out of it. We, on the other hand, please the gentry, but we get nothing out of it. We even get trampled upon, as of late, when parliament denied our application for augmented stipends.

Let different persons spread these different calumnies "and thus, as the several wheels of a watch, by opposite motions, promote the same end".

In giving the minister's character all the antiquated orthodox phrases are to be avoided. "Suppose I should say of Momus, he was a youth of early, and continues to be a man of eminent piety, walking with God, and spending many hours every day in secret devotion; has a deep and a strong sense, upon his mind, of the worth and value of time, and lays it

it out wholly in fitting other^s, and himself, for eternity; has so sacred a regard for truth, that he never tells a lie, even in jest; has a most humble deportment, and is perfectly free from that prevailing fault, of triumphing over the weak or shamefaced by raillery or impudence; has been frequently heard to express his displeasure at all levity of carriage, and frothy, unprofitable discourse, in persons of the sacred character; and as he was always himself remarkable for a purity of conversation, so he cannot allow the most distant allusion to obscenity to pass without a reproof: in short, his whole behaviour commands both reverence and love of all who have the happiness of his acquaintance". Momus would^{have}/no reason to thank me. But it is possible to draw the character of such a person as a modern. "He is a man of most sprightly and lively fancy, of an inexhaustible fund of wit and humour, where he pleases to display it, though the iniquity of the times has, in some measure, checked its indulgence. He is, notwithstanding the grimness of his countenance, entirely free from any sourness or moroseness of temper, so that, in his conversation, a man may enjoy all manner of ease and freedom. He is a most genteel and elegant preacher and poet; and, to my knowledge, a man of a warm and a good heart."

Maxim XII "As to the world in general, a moderate man is to have great charity for Athetists and Deists in principle, and for persons that are loose and vicious in their practice; but none at all for those that have a high profession of re-

religion, and a great pretence to strictness in their walk and conversation".

Charity should be for those who manifestly need it -- evildoers.

Charity should not be for those who do not need it -- the righteous.

Maxim XIII "All moderate men are joined together in the strictest bond of union, and do never fail to support and defend one another to the utmost, be the cause they are engaged in what it will".

"If any entertain a doubt of the truth asserted in the maxim they are referred, for satisfaction, to the history of the proceedings of this Church for these twenty years bypast, which I take to have been the true reforming period".

Witherspoon closes the satire with a summary indicating the chief characteristics of moderatism which are most ominous. He says that the preaching of Moderates is humanistic, temporal and heathen -- lacking in concern for the salvation of souls, life after death and the Scripture. Or if the Moderates use scripture they distort it, as one preacher he heard who took the text from Acts xxiv, 25, where Paul made Felix tremble by his discourse, and proved from it that ministers ought not/

not to rais^e the emotions of their hearers. "An ignorant observer would have thought that the passion of terror was raised in Felix, to a great degree, and that he was little better than a Cambuslang convict." But the Moderate preacher took the phrase, "as he reasoned of righteousness", and brought out only the word "reasoned" to mean that Paul argued and proved by rational considerations. The author says that it is well known that many reckon Socrates and Plato to have been much greater men than the apostles. He cites a Moderate who spoke in Whitefield's style, when his settlement had the misfortune to depend on the people, with good success. But mainly, he objects that Moderate sermons are "random flights and general declamations".

Witherspoon recognises the strong party loyalty among the Moderates. Their attitude toward everything is based on their primary loyalty to their party. This is especially true in the matter of their voting together in the Church courts. What the satire says about settlements has behind it Witherspoon's recollection of certain vexed settlements. At his ordination at Beith the non-resident heritors were the majority of those who opposed his call. In 1748 the Presbytery of Paisley refused to settle Mr. Campbell because of objections to him which they could not prove. The violent settlement at Lanark had/

had been common talk, and the Assembly's actions in settling Torphichen and Inverkeithing had been prolonged before the public eye. At Alloa a riot prevented the presbytery from serving a presentee's edict; yet this same presentee was admitted although soldiers had to be brought in to keep order on the day of his ordination. Witherspoon is shocked at this, but he does not mention the shocking sentences pronounced on the Alloa rioters by the justiciary courts. The rights of the patron had triumphed in the settlement at Irvine in 1751, a settlement against which Witherspoon had objected to the Assembly.

The Moderates had attacked in writing and in speeches the character and conduct of men of the Popular Party. Witherspoon retaliates because he feels the Moderates are as open to criticism as the men of his own party. He attacks the gentlemanliness of which Alexander Carlyle was the example and exponent; he attacks the turn for literature which characterized John Home, the clerical poet and playwright; he attacks the participation of young men, like William Robertson, in the affairs of the Assembly. He resents the threat of a lawyer in the Assembly to reach the consciences of the Popular men through their stipends. He/

1. A Letter from a Gentleman in Town to his Friend in the Country
2. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol.i, p. 365
3. Memoirs of Mas-John Magopico: A Just View of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland

He takes exception to the unequal friendships of Moderate clergymen with so-called profane men. Meanwhile, he has a sly laugh that for all their cultivating the company and manners of the gentlefolk, the clergy lost **their** cause for the augmentation of their stipends.

In Witherspoon's words, the Characteristics is "often a sorry and motley mixture of grave and comic;" which shows "the propriety, not only of contradicting what is false, but smiling at what is absurd."⁽¹⁾

The caricature was sufficiently telling to bring a storm of opposition from the Moderate men. They were "fierce for Moderation" and Witherspoon was glad he had provided himself the shelter of anonymity from the storm; "it is not to be supposed but I heard it well enough rattling over my head",⁽²⁾ he later wrote. After three years the suspicion that he was the author of the Characteristics began to be general. In his appearance before the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr when he defended himself from the opposition of the Presbytery of Paisley to his translation from Beith to the Laigh Church in Paisley, he also defended the satire -- without admitting his authorship of it. In his speech he stood as much as an advocate for the Popular Party as he did for his own good name./

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 246.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 231.

name.

He points out that the Moderates have censured him and others for taking conscientious exception to some of the acts of Assembly, and have attacked their characters in print. "If some nameless author has with great success retaliated the injury of the last kind, they ought to lie as quietly under it as possible, both from equity and prudence -- from equity, because they have given the provocation; from prudence, because it will bring many to say, that charge must have been just, or it would have been treated with contempt; surely that stroke must have been well aimed, the wound must have been very deep, since the scar continues so long, and is never like to be either forgotten or forgiven."⁽¹⁾

This speech marks the peak of his identification with the Popular Party. He unfurls his banners in the faces of the opposition: "Let me, Sir, speak plainly out: whatever may be pretended about the interest of religion being concerned in the fate of this pamphlet, there is strong reason to suspect, that it is the credit of a party that is really at stake. We all know that there are great differences of sentiment among us, as to the government of the church; and it seems to be my misfortune, to be of opposite principles from several members of this presbytery on that point.

This/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. viii, p. 255.

This is the cause of my being charged with ill-nature and unpeaceableness. -- As I reckon the glory of God, and the edification of his church, to be deeply concerned in this cause, I am resolved, in his strength, to maintain and support it to the utmost of my power, so long as I draw breath. -- I have supported what I esteem to be truth with resolution, but without violence. I cannot pretend to the polite and courtly style in the same degree with some of my opposers, yet I have endeavoured to maintain the meekness of a Christian, believing that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God⁽¹⁾".

Social, literary and clerical Edinburgh was thrown into intense excitement over a play performed for the first time at the Canongate Theatre, the same house that Allan Ramsay had been compelled to close in accordance with Walpole's ban on the theatre, on December 14, 1756⁽²⁾. The play was Douglas and its author was the Reverend John Home, Witherspoon's university classmate and fellow prisoner at Doune Castle, and now a leader of the Moderate Party. It was he who moved the vote of suspension in the Torphichen case, and had seconded Robertson in bringing the Reasons for Dissent before the Assembly of 1752. The "fiery Charioteer" who had ridden/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. viii, pp. 273-274.
2. Graham, Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century, vol. i, p. 95.

ridden down the opponents of patronage, was now to vanish from the ecclesiastical arena in the shape (diabolical in their eyes) of a dramatic poet.⁽¹⁾

Alexander Carlyle and other clergymen had assisted at the rehearsals of the play. Carlyle was present at one of the performances and made himself conspicuous by turning some tipsy men out of his box; he had written an advertisement for the play that filled the house for two nights. But the success of the play and its merits and demerits were forgotten in the furore that arose over this identification of clergymen with the theatre.⁽²⁾ The stage had not been sanctioned by law during this part of the century, much less patronised by the clergy. This performance of a play made specific the general opposition between the Moderates and the Popular Party.

Antagonists and champions rushed into print. For the months following the play, the bookshops were flooded with sermons, abusive essays, and satirical doggerel. Personal abuse was conspicuous. Carlyle, for one, complains of "all the clamours of tongues and violence of persecution which I afterwards underwent"⁽³⁾, for his part in/

1. Ms. Records of the Presbytery of Haddington, June 7, 1757
2. Carlyle, Autobiography, pp. 325-330
3. Carlyle, Autobiography, p. 330

in the whole episode. A process of ~~of~~censure against him dragged through presbytery, synod, and General Assembly; it took all his executive and party skill to avoid conviction. The Presbytery of Edinburgh declared themselves against the "illegal and dangerous" entertainments of the stage"; suspended for three weeks a minister "who had gone to the playhouse only once and had endeavoured to conceal himself in a corner"; and exhorted other presbyteries to call to order any who had been touched with the buskin. The General Assembly earnestly recommended to the several presbyteries "to take care that none of the ministers of this church do, upon any occasion, attend the theatre⁽¹⁾".

The best type of anti-theatre essay is Witherspoon's Serious Inquiry into the Nature and Effects of the Stage⁽²⁾. It summed up as soberly, as fairly as the prejudices of the times allowed, the Popular Party's position, "being an attempt to show, that contributing to the support of a public theatre, is inconsistent with the character of a Christian⁽³⁾". The work appeared in the midst of seething public interest as a rallying point for evangelical thinking⁽⁴⁾. It was written before the censures had been meted out, and is, therefore, /

1. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, p. 130.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi. p. 36
3. Bowers, History of Edinburgh University, vol. iii, p.73.
4. Bull's Life of Newton, p. 226.

therefore, truly contemporary. Here is no anonymous party satire, but sonorous prophetic utterance, fearlessly signed. Home and his friends, by precipitating such an avowal from their able opponent, had raised a question far larger than clerical decorum; the Church which had dallied with humanism whilst professing to maintain its Puritan tradition had come at last to the parting of the ways.

The play had been played, says Witherspoon, and there is little prospect that its influence will be for the better. The stricter sort may be provoked to un-Christian resentment, or be tempted to draw rash and general conclusions from the conduct of the few of the character of all; some may withdraw from the Established Church. "The chief danger is that -- it must give very great offence -- to -- such as have least religion, or none at all".

"The self-denying apologies common with authors -- I wholly pass, having never read any of them with approbation. How far I am sensible of my own fitness of treating this subject, and of the reputation that is risked in attempting it, the world is not obliged to believe on my testimony; but in whatever degree it be, it is greatly overbalanced at present, by a view of the declining state of religion among us, the prevalence of national sins, and the danger of desolating judgments."/

judgments". "I deny not the lawfulness of using ridicule in some cases, or even its propriety here, yet I am far from thinking it the test of truth. It seems to be more proper for correction than for instruction. The matter seems -- to require a very serious consideration". He is too stirred to use his former device of satire. "It is our different views of the nature of religion, that causes different opinions upon this subject" of the stage.

Witherspoon finds it difficult to ^{select} ~~find~~ the right mode of attacking plays. He finds that not many who need this instruction will look at what he writes; it is hard to marshall arguments that will move those who are already in favour of the stage; and one must attack plays as they are while defenders of the stage defend the stage as it should be. The stage in reality is:

1. Such a number of plays as will furnish an habitual course of presentation.
2. These plays of such a kind as to procure an audience of voluntary spectators, who are able and willing to pay for being so entertained.
3. A company of hired players.
4. Representations frequent enough to secure profits in amounts equal to supporting the /actors and their apparatus.

Those favouring the stage urge that it is worthy because it affords amusement and recreation, and that it is an incentive to virtue./

virtue.

The first aim of the theatre, that it is an amusement, Witherspoon denies. An amusement must be of an indifferent nature and the theatre is certainly not indifferent. It is improper as an amusement because it is a waste of time; "it is a constant and powerful invitation to sin, and cannot be maintained but by the commission of it". It is improper as a recreation because it agitates the passions too violently and induces emotional indulgence. Even if stage plays were good, they yield much less recreation than other forms of amusements. The stage is costly and expensive. Refraining from attending the theatre is not being extreme, for it is only through sin that custom authorises it and fashion justifies it. Theatrical amusements are inconsistent ^{with} two essential Christian characteristics; self-denial and mortification, and spiritually and heavenly mindedness.

The stage is not good for us. Its friends have argued that it is a warm incentive to virtue and powerful preservative against vice, that tragedy makes us a lecture on our duty and comedy laughs us out of our frailties by making us ashamed of them. "It is not to be denied, that ~~there~~ may be, and are to be found, in some dramatic performances, noble and excellent sentiments. These indeed are much fewer than is/

is commonly supposed. There is a great difference between the shining thoughts that are applauded in the world by men of taste, and the solid and profitable truths of religion". But it is impossible to find a number of pieces agreeable to the purity and holiness of the Christian character sufficient to support a public theatre. Most stage pieces have a pernicious effect, because they are designed to please the majority of those who frequent the theatre; and that majority are bad. If it is useful, it is satan's kingdom divided against itself. In this case there lies no appeal from the judgment of the public or the multitude "(as David Hume has said for once according to truth)⁽¹⁾" to the judgment of the wiser few.

The poets may improve the public taste in letters, Witherspoon admits. The Greek dramatists did for Greece. But that is a very different thing from improving their morals. God is not pleased with human art or the perfection of art unless it is done with a single eye to the glory of God.

The Serious Inquiry asserts that vice in the theatre wears the garb, assumes the name and claims the reward of virtue. This deceives conscience and makes sin easier. Taking/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 82.

Taking for example the subject of love, constantly represented on the stage, the author says, "There women are swelled with vanity, by seeing their sex deified and adored; there men learn the language, as well as feel by sympathy, the transports of passion; and there the hearts of both are open and unguarded to receive the impression, because it is covered with a mask of honour⁽¹⁾." Good plays are true representations of life; most life is bad; therefore, good plays must be bad.

The job of an actor is an unchristian occupation, for "it is a mean prostitution of the rational powers, to have no higher end in view, than contributing to the pleasure and entertainment of the idle part of mankind", -- to make amusement "the very business and employment of life"⁽²⁾. Witherspoon summarises his argument against actors in the following points:

1. Actors lives are idle and vain and bad.
2. The taste of audiences is always for the bad and evil.
3. Successful plays must be bad, or prevailingly bad.
4. The greatest part of characters represented are bad and vicious.
5. The actors must enter into these characterizations whole-heartedly.
6. Plays are bad for the audience; proportionately worse for the actors.

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 91
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 103.

7. Actors are cisterns of pollutions, obscenity, vanity and impiety which is collected from their plays and distributed to their hearers.

"And will a Christian, upon any pretended advantage to himself, join in this confederacy against God, and assist in endowing and upholding the dreadful seminary?"⁽¹⁾ An author of a truly good piece would rather bury it in oblivion, than lend his own credit, and that of his work, for the support of those that are bad". Witherspoon thinks Home, the author of Douglas, more guilty than those who acted or attended the play.

Adam Ferguson had written a pamphlet, The Morality of Stage Plays Seriously Considered. Ferguson, ~~was~~ an ex-chaplain, was on the eve of beginning his career as professor of Natural Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh.⁽²⁾ Although he was one of the Moderates, he said what he pleased for he was beyond clerical censure. He argued that it was the duty of the best people to patronize the stage in order to improve its tone. He admits that it cannot be abolished; therefore, it must be improved. Ferguson pleads further for plays, that the young need them for education, that folk must have some amusement and the stage is not as bad as some, and that Edinburgh has prospered materially and culturally since/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 105
2. Bower~~s~~, History of the University of Edinburgh, vol.iii, p.9

since the opening of the theatre. A refutation of Ferguson's pamphlet occupies the remainder of the Serious Inquiry.

Witherspoon took particular offence at Ferguson's words, "What they do to this purpose (improving the theatre), either in opposing the bad or promoting the good, is a matter of duty, and their conduct in it is not to be regulated by the opinion of any person who is pleased to take offence at it"⁽¹⁾. He answers that till the majority of those who attend the theatre are good, its entertainment cannot be fit for the Christian ear; and because that can never be, no Christian ought to go there. Witherspoon hopes to abolish the stage as well as other vices. In answer to Ferguson's last three arguments, Witherspoon says that anything truly valuable must be innocently learned and that innocent learning is impossible in the theatre; that bring^{ing} up the standard of amusement is only civilising the world, not sanctifying it; and that wealth and culture are the parents of the stage, not its offspring. Witherspoon finally deals with Ferguson; Ferguson argued that St. Paul's use of a quotation at Athens from a Greek poet sanctions the play and stage; no more, says Witherspoon, than a minister's quotation from/

1. Ferguson, Morality of Stage plays Seriously Considered. p. 23.

from Horace or Juvenal sanctions all the obscenities of these poets. But he does not answer this argument until he has corrected Ferguson in what Witherspoon finds to be a mistaken citation of St. Paul's quotation.

"The truth is" -- Witherspoon is drawing to a close -- "a serious person can scarce have a stronger evidence of the immorality of the stage, than the perusal of these little pieces of satire, which have been published, in so great a variety, against the Presbytery of Edinburgh, within these few weeks, because of their public admonition against it. They offer no other defence, but deriding the preaching of the gospel, blasphemously comparing the pulpit with the stage, and recrimination upon some who are supposed to live inconsistently with their character. It is not worth while to spend three words determining whether drunkenness, deceit, and hypocrisy are worse than the stage or not; but if that is the strongest argument that can be offered in its support woe to all those who attend it. The new reformed tragedy has indeed been very unlucky in its advocates. There is an old saying, That a man is known by his company. If this be true also of a play, -- by those who have appeared in defence of/

of Douglas, it is a work of very little merit"⁽¹⁾.

Witherspoon pretended to no first-hand knowledge of Douglas. He got his information "from printed accounts, and the public bills of what plays are to be acted"⁽²⁾. Neither does Witherspoon have first-hand knowledge of actors; he comments that he has never exchanged a word with one of that employment in his life.⁽³⁾ But for those ministers who had anything to do with the play, Douglas, Witherspoon can only find words of scripture adequate to the occasion; "Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die." Isaiah xxii, 14.

Witherspoon's Serious Inquiry and Ferguson's Morality of Stage Plays appear in all their dignity and seriousness when contrasted with the others of the plentiful crop of pamphlets and ballads. Carlyle admits that he wrote a satire, Argument to Prove that the Tragedy of Douglas should be Burnt by the Hangman.⁽⁴⁾ Most of the ballad writers were on the opposite side from Witherspoon, though some preferred to ridicule the dramatic genius of Home, the country parson. The Moderates in the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale are called "Satan's agents" by one writer,⁽⁵⁾

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 126-127.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 116.
3. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 118.
4. Carlyle, Autobiography, p. 328,
5. The Players' Scourge, pp. 1-2.

writer, who denounced the stage as "Satan's school, the seminary of the devil and a nursery for hell", and insisted that the Canongate Theatre ought to be razed to the ground and its very site, "salted with brimstone in abhorrence of the abominations that have been committed there".

In less than three months after the play was performed opposition to the stage began to wane. The Presbytery of Dunse in a letter answering the Presbytery of Edinburgh's demand for censure of all clergymen who had attended Douglas, told the reverend presbytery to mind its own business and that they did not find attending plays censurable by the Word of God, or by any act or universal custom of the Church.⁽¹⁾ John Wesley wrote in his diary on the 9th of June 1757, "Today, 'Douglas', the play which has made so much noise, was put into my hands. I was astonished to find it is one of the finest tragedies I ever read. What a pity that a few lines were not left out! and that it was ever acted at Edinburgh!"⁽²⁾ Carlyle recalls that "in the year 1784 when the great actress, Mrs. Siddons, first appeared in Edinburgh, during the sitting of the General Assembly, that/

1. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, p. 120.
2. Butler, Wesley and Whitefield in Scotland, p. 237.

that court was obliged to fix all its important business for the alternate days when she did not act, as all the younger members, clergy as well as laity, took their stations in the theatre on those days by three in the afternoon.⁽¹⁾ But Witherspoon never forewent his opposition to the stage and to Douglas, although he found himself in a dwindling minority. In 1758 he said in a fast day sermon, "Though we have seen a new thing on the earth, a minister of Christ leaving the pulpit for the stage, let us not be discouraged"⁽²⁾. John Home had demitted the ministry and gone to London to devote all his talents to writing for the stage. In his apology for the Ecclesiastical Characteristics, published in 1763, Douglas is still on his mind: "A few years ago -- did not several ministers think themselves at liberty to attend the entertainments of the stage"? He complains, "The offence has been repeated since that time with absolute impunity."⁽³⁾ Witherspoon was hurt by the lack of backing he received and, on the contrary, by the attacks made on him; he is evidently describing himself when, in his farewell sermon, he says, "By hearing open testimony against the introduction of fashionable amusements, or conformity to the world, he will often incur not only the hatred of the profligate, but/

1. Carlyle, Autobiography, p. 339.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. v, p. 83.
3. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, pp. 270-271.

but the ~~dis~~approbation of those prudent compliers, who are at once ashamed to approve, and unwilling to oppose any sinful relaxation⁽¹⁾".

In his attacks on the Moderate Party Witherspoon saw that neither satire nor direct argument affected the party's rising power or their increasing majorities in the General Assemblies. He, accordingly, challenged the party from another angle. He appeared before the Assembly of 1757, which was occupied with the stage controversy and the settlement of a minister at Jedburgh, with reasons for his dissent from the vote of the Assembly receiving the commissions of elders not attested in terms of the Act 9, Assembly of 1722⁽²⁾. For several years he had realized that the Moderates were culpable under this act. He satirizes in the Characteristics a Moderate layman who "would have been chosen an elder, and sent up, 'duly attested', to the General Assembly,"⁽³⁾

A commissioner to the General Assembly must be either a minister or an elder. The presbytery he purports to represent must be in such connection with the General Assembly that it is entitled to representation. In Witherspoon's day there was a particular condition a man had to fulfill in/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. iii, p. 291
2. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, pp. 103-108.
3. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 191

in order to have his commission accepted; he had to qualify under the Act 9, of the Assembly of 1722, which was:

"The Assembly earnestly beseech, exhort and require, elders and deacons to be faithful in the discharge of their respective offices, tender and circumspect in their walk, and punctual in their attending upon ordinances, -- and strict in their observation of the Lord's Day, and in regularly keeping up the worship of God in their families, and appoint the judicatures of the Church to take good heed, that none be admitted to, or continued in, these offices, but such as are found qualified, and do behave themselves as above required"⁽¹⁾. If this be a qualification for eldership, and eldership in good standing be a qualification for lay commissioners to the Assembly, then these qualifications must characterize any laymen who present commissions to sit in the Assembly.

In the Assembly of 1757 the committee for reviewing the commissions of members in the Assembly reported irregularities in the commissions of the representatives of the Presbyteries of Earlston, Linlithgow and Dunbar in that they wanted the clause declaring that the elders were qualified under the above mentioned act of 1722. Further, commissions/

1. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, p. 102 footnote

commissions from the Presbyteries Stranr^ear, Mull, and Dunkeld bore, in general, attestations that the elders were in every way qualified; but they did not bear in particular that they were qualified according to the Act of 1722. The committee reported these deficiencies to the Assembly. The Assembly reasoned long as to whether these commissions should be received, notwithstanding the informalities, or not. When the question was put, it carried in the affirmative by a vote of 70 to 55. "Those who look upon family worship -- as an unnecessary piece of devotion will never be brought to imagine that an Assembly is one whit worse for consisting of so many members who habitually neglect that duty"⁽¹⁾. Witherspoon and six other ministers dissented; a seventh joined them later. The reasons were given in by Witherspoon, were read by him, and ordered to lie in retentis.

Witherspoon reasoned; "We are sensible, that there may be decisions against which it would be unnecessary, nay, indecent, for a minority to dissent; but we judge the above sentence of such dangerous tendency, that we are bound to testify our disapprobation of it, in as strong and public a manner as good order, and the respect we owe to this venerable court/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 256.

court, do permit.

1. "This sentence appears to us a manifest violation of a standing law, by which, until formally repealed, our ordination vows bind us to conduct ourselves. Our commissions from our constituents empower us, in all causes that come before us, to determine according to the constitution of the Church of Scotland; but vest us with no power of determining in a manner contrary to that constitution. It is the glory of our Church, that she hath noble and excellent laws to direct every part of her discipline: laws which, without the consent of a majority of the presbyteries, even a General Assembly cannot abrogate. But claims of dispensing power will as effectually invalidate laws, as even a formal repeal of them. It is the very essence and security of a free constitution, that there, not men, not judges, but laws, bear rule. When laws are suspended, dispensed with, or set aside, by the decisions of any executive court, that security ceases, and despotism prevails.

2. "This vote opens the way to other and greater breaches of our constitution". The commissions were not sustained, but the men were received as members. So that in the very violation of the law its legality is acknowledged. "Any person, on this principle, may be introduced to the Assembly;/"

Assembly; though he has no title, the court may receive him!"

3. "The sentence dissented from was not a strained interpretation, or temporary suspension of a statute in a private cause, but a breach of it in the constitution of that court which has the decision in the last resort of all other causes, and a great share too of legislative power. No class of laws are more justly accounted barrier-acts, and thought to be more sacredly preserved from contempt of violation, than such as these. A power to dispense with law in other instances, will not infer it in this; because if a court is limited in any respect, it must be limited by those laws which regard the admission of its members. The giving therefore a seat in this Venerable Assembly to men who have no legal title to it, appears to us a great stretch of power, as it would be to exclude one whose title was clear and uncontested. Other laws, by distance of time, may lose their force; but the laws in question are annually applied, and therefore may be justly considered as annually renewed".

"There were few more weighty speakers in the Church courts on the popular side than Dr. Witherspoon, minister of Paisley. His manner was inanimate and drawling; but the depth/

depth of his judgment, the solicity of his arguments, and the aptitude with which they were illustrated and applied, never failed to produce a strong impression on the Assembly.⁽¹⁾"

Witherspoon used the logic of this situation against the Moderates who claimed to stand for the strict adherence to law. He forestalled their arguments by answering them in advance. He knew the procedure of the Assembly and had the readiness of wits to take a leading part in these affairs as they rose, and to do so within the bounds of decorum.

Witherspoon gave his reason further:

4. "Whoever are not attested in terms of Act 9, Assembly 1722, for anything legally known, may be persons of notour and disorderly lives, despisers of divine ordinances, and unwilling, afraid, or ashamed to bear rule in their own families: and shall a door be opened to such to bear rule in the Church? The man who is devoid of true piety is but poorly qualified to be a civil judge: but here the danger is vastly greater". "Such may be expected to turn the edge of discipline the wrong way, --. Would they not give their votes and influence for filling vacancies with useless ministers? would they not discourage/

1. Somerville, My Own Times, pp. 99-100.

discourage all attempts at censuring immorality, and exercising discipline upon ministers or others who live unsuitably to their profession? and would not diversions of the most ensnaring tendency, find in them assured patrons and zealous supporters?" These last inferences evidently apply to the business of the current assembly; mainly to the conclusion of the long-drawn-out settlement of Jedburgh, the trial of the case of a Mr. Brown who had deposed for immorality, and the agitation anent the recently produced play, Douglas.

5. "Such a decision is peculiarly unseasonable at this time, when the decay of religion is great and visible, -- especially among those of higher rank. Is not the Lord's day openly profaned, by unnecessary travelling, idle visits, and ill-timed amusement"?

6. "Had not the Assembly -- just ground to suspect, that -- the presbyteries, however willingly, did not, because they could not, attest them?" "Family worship is not the only religious qualification which presbyteries are straitened to attest".

7. The Assembly of 1744 declared that all informal commissions were to be rejected; an action by the Assembly of 1753 in overlooking a formality at that time was declared to be no precedent. Witherspoon said, "A period therefore seems/

seems to be put to all questions on this subject, and a new phrase introduced, of not sustaining the commissions, but receiving the members that bear them".

8. "This decision must naturally be productive of the greatest confusion," continued Witherspoon. Presbyteries might take exception to the acts of an Assembly that had irregularly qualified members in it.

9. His concluding point is to the effect that parties affected by the civil law and civil property implications of the Assembly's acts might take exception to the acts of an Assembly wherein sat voters irregularly qualified. "Many less plausible pleas have occasioned processes carried even to the court of Parliament". "And as we have often ^{do} to/with bodies of men in the settlement of parishes, if they should learn this way of bringing on a new trial, -- how troublesome and unhappy would be the consequences!"

Although these Reasons for Dissent were allowed to lie in retentis they were not read in vain. The sentiment favouring strict observation of the law regarding commissions of the members of Assembly grew. The Assembly of 1766 reaffirmed the Act 9 of 1722, and strictly enjoined the necessity of scrupulous attestation of commissioners upon future assemblies/

assemblies by prescribing the very words to be used. (1)

In the Assembly of 1757 Witherspoon was a duly commissioned member. His Reasons for Dissent were moved against men who had presented faulty commissions. In the Assembly of 1766 he and his fellow representatives from the Presbytery of Paisley were to fall afoul the Assembly's ruling favouring the strict examination of commissions. In 1757 he had argued that the acts of an irregularly constituted Assembly might be questioned at law. In 1766 the Assembly found that the meeting of the Presbytery of Paisley that had elected him and his fellow commissioners had been irregularly constituted; therefore, the Assembly adjudged the acts of that meeting (which included electing Witherspoon and the other commissioners) null and void.

The Presbytery of Paisley had refused to admit two elders as members, and against this Witherspoon had protested. His protest had been upheld by the synod; but the presbytery had appealed to the Assembly. After reading the papers presented and hearing the parties, and ^{after} long reasoning, the Assembly voted 107^{to} 33 to confirm the judgment of the synod, reverse the sentence of the presbytery whereby the two elders had been rejected, and ordered the elders' names to be enrolled as members of the ~~Pr~~esbytery of Paisley. This

1. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, p. 354.

This was the judgment Witherspoon was contending for. But his victory was short-lived.

The Assembly proceeded to consider what effect this decision should have upon the election of members to represent the presbytery in the present Assembly -- whether or not, in consequence of the presbytery's having excluded a constituent member from voting, their election should be found void. After reasoning, the Assembly, without a vote, found and declared the commission from the Presbytery of Paisley to the representatives in the present Assembly void and null, and ordained the members' names to be scored out of the roll of the Assembly. The irony of the situation was that Witherspoon was "hoist with his own petard"⁽¹⁾.

But his defeat was not in vain. This case had occupied the Assembly for two days⁽²⁾. The question of commissions was more thoroughly aired than it had been nine years before when Witherspoon and his friends had protested against the Assembly's action in accepting faulty commissions. This affair occasioned a new act relating to the form of commissions. The Act 9 of 1722 was reaffirmed and the scrupulous attestation of the commissioners to future assemblies was assured by enactments prescribing the very words to be used to make commissions legal/

1. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, p. 312.
2. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, p. 313.

legal and acceptable.

Witherspoon's disappointment must have been supreme. He had to look on as a spectator, unable to help his party in the stirring debate over the causes and growth of schism that engrossed much of the time of this Assembly, and the crux of the battle turned on the "great evil" of patronage. But Witherspoon had to stand by and see his rival, Dr. Robertson, lead the Moderates and win the day by 99 votes to ⁽¹⁾85.

Witherspoon continued his fight against the Moderates in the Assembly of 1760. He opposed the settlement of Dr. John Chalmers, of Elie, into the parish of Kilconquhar. The case came before the November Commission (1759); the Commission sustained the call to Dr. Chalmers and appointed the Presbytery of St. Andrews to proceed with his transportation and settlement. The presbytery disobeyed, and a complaint of the patron, heritors and elders, callers of Dr. Chalmers, against the presbytery brought the case before the Assembly. Witherspoon was one of the Assembly who opposed the settlement. He argued that the Commission had exceeded its powers, but when the question was put the Assembly voted by a great majority their opinion that the Commission had not exceeded its powers. The Assembly then appointed the Presbytery of/

1. Morrens, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, p. 329.

of St. Andrews to admit Dr. Chalmers as minister of Kilconquhar.
Witherspoon voiced the dissent of himself and five others
(1)
from this sentence.

He begins with saying that he is not surprised at difference of opinion, but at the way that difference is expressed; he feels that his opponents speak in an overbearing manner, with visible displeasure at the time spent on the case, and an impatience with any who differ from them. He continues by reminding the Assembly that the Commission had no power to determine in the cause of the Kilconquhar settlement, because the question had not been remitted to them. Whether the clerk of the Assembly neglected to do so, or whether the Assembly itself forgot to send its mandate is of little consequence. The fact remains that the Commission had no legal right to determine in this cause. All will agree that the Assembly cannot proceed thus illegally.

Having proved that the action of the Commission was illegal, he pleads that the Assembly refrain from making legal the settlement of Dr. Chalmers as ordered by the Commission. He conceded that in some cases it is necessary under the law to settle minister without the consent of the people; he concedes also that no one has a right to call a minister on an establishment except those to whom the law gives the right/

right -- and the law certainly does not give the right of call to every Christian person; but "the whole office of ordination proceeds upon the supposition of a call from the people"⁽¹⁾. What good can a minister be to a congregation when he is on ill terms with them? "Now, Sir, the inference I would draw from these principles is no more than this, that decency, and our indispensable duty as a Church court, requires us to make no such settlements but with regret, and never without a real necessity; and the cause we have before us is one in which no such necessity exists". Witherspoon pleads the aversion of the people to the presentee, not as the right to demand, but as the occasion to expect that the Assembly will not settle Dr. Chalmers.

"Moderator, an argument that is made use of to persuade us to order this transportation is, that if it should be refused, it would encourage the people to resist in other cases. I am afraid, Sir, that the same submission which is fast approaching, and which many seem so ardently to desire, can never take place, till there is a total indifference about religion among all the members of the Established Church."⁽²⁾ On the contrary, nothing would give the Assembly more weight with people than a consideration of their wishes. The people have a right to dislike a minister; and, often,
for/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 250
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. viii, p. 289

for reasons for which they can bring no legal proof. This pretence that the opposition of the people is always based on prejudice is merely a sign of prejudice in men who could make such a charge.

"But, Sir, as it would be wrong to attribute opposition to a minister's settlement in all cases to groundless prejudice, I am sorry to say it, but I am obliged in justice to say it, we have very little reason to do so in the present case." Witherspoon feels that Chalmers has excelled in a bold and insolent contempt of the people, ~~and that~~ he has been guilty of odious, unclerical, open solicitation of ecclesiastical preferment. But Witherspoon says, after such expressions against Chalmers, that he does not pretend to judge him. But he says, "Everyone in this house is now called to judge, whether it would be for ~~the~~ glory of God and the good of mankind" to allow Chalmers to execute his intention of fastening himself on the people of Kilconquhar. People of the parish will be offended; not only those of lower rank, but of all stations, will suffer if this settlement is ordered. The office of ^{the} ministry shall suffer, too; we shall be moving toward that practice which leaves out consideration of people or the work of Christ's kingdom, and brings our charges to be called no more parishes, but, as in England/

(1)
England, livings.

But the Assembly was unmoved, and left standing their decision to settle Dr. Chalmers in Kilconquhar. Although in the decision of transportation cases it had been the Assembly's uniform practice to engage in prayer, the manuscript record says nothing of it on the present occasion. (2)

When Witherspoon published the Characteristics in 1753 he took the advanced position of critic and mentor of the Church and the Moderate Party. The work drew such fire from the Moderate Party that in 1756 Witherspoon defended his party and himself for their adherence to the sentiments of the Characteristics, without admitting his authorship. (3)
By 1763 Witherspoon realised that he was not able to support his position either by the results in reform or by the formation of a party zealous for reform. He expressed his disillusionment in a new pamphlet, A Serious Apology for the Ecclesiastical Characteristics. (4) He made the Serious Apology a review both of his attack made on the principles, manners and political conduct of the Moderate Party in 1753 and of his defence of the Characteristics which he made in 1756./

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. viii, p. 292.
2. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, p.201, footnote.
3. See page 149, Chap. v, of this thesis.
4. Witherspoon, Works, vol vi, p. 230

1756. He does not mention party zeal as a motive for writing the Serious Apology, although this motive was prominent in his defence before the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr in 1756. He undertakes the Serious Apology to vindicate himself and to salvage the Characteristics from calumnies so that it may achieve the good its writer intended.

The work is dedicated to the nobility and gentry of Scotland; particularly, such of them as are elders of the Church, and frequently members of the General Assembly. It occurred to the author so to dedicate his work because the lay members of the Assembly of 1762 had quashed a resolution about to be passed that would have restricted the communion privileges of two ministers who had appealed from a sentence of the Synod of Argyle. The elders were usually a stalwart part of the Moderate majority in the Assembly; perhaps Witherspoon was trying to pit the layman against the clergyman, and thus split the ranks of his opponents. He quotes William Robertson's history "which deserves to be written in letters of gold" to the effect that the reformation of a corrupted clergy can be looked for only from laymen. He compared the elders who will save the Church to Joseph of Arimathea saving the body of Christ. He reminds them of the practical fact that the interest of religion is inseparable from temporal prosperity/

prosperity. He pleads for consideration of the people's wishes in settlements, and concludes the dedication: "I humbly entreat you -- to frown on the/luxurious and aspiring, to encourage the humble and diligent clergyman." In doing both he hopes they will derive benefit from God's promise, "Them that honour me, I will honour; but they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed."⁽¹⁾

Witherspoon disclaims the necessity of proving that the clerical faults he mentions are true; he assumes them as too obvious to need proof. He does prove that it was correct for him to expose those faults and points his proof with a story "of the late Duke of Orleans, regent of France. It happened, during his regency, one of the French princes of the blood was convicted of committing robbery on the highway. Great intercession was made with the regent, to save him from the ignominy of a public execution, which it was alleged, would be an indelible stain upon the royal blood. To this the Duke replied, The royal blood is indeed deeply stained, but it is stained by the commission of the crime; the punishment will only serve to wash out the stain as far as that is now possible"⁽²⁾.

In this pamphlet Witherspoon's party zeal is tinged with self-justification/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, pp. 225-229.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, pp. 236-237.

self-justification. He not only suffers to see Moderate ascendancy in the Assembly and to observe that "infidels maintain the greatest intimacy with some clergymen", but he suffers odium which the Moderate men heap on him himself. "Almost every writer renowned for piety and worth" showed boldness and severity toward the corrupt clergy of their own times. "Yet while they lived their invectives were constantly complained of by the indolent or vicious of their contemporaries."⁽¹⁾ In fact, says Witherspoon, the Moderates attacked first; he reminds the reader of the pamphlet of Mr. Hyndman which stung him into writing his Characteristics.⁽²⁾ Witherspoon justifies this pamphlet of 1753; he justifies the ironical style from the example of scripture, the Fathers, and Pascal, and from its suitability to the spirit of the age; he justifies the content as needful in the interests of reform. If he has ridiculed any character of real worth, "let this be shown by clear and plain deductions of reason, and I am ready to repent of it, and renounce it."⁽³⁾ "It is probable I shall be told here, Why do you make these general complaints? name/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 238
2. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, p.244 (footnote)
Hyndman, when he was Moderator of the Assembly in 1761, said he was sorry for "the heat of youth, inexperience and rashness -- in some parts of my former conduct"; he admitted that he had judged ill, though he had meant well.
3. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 253

name the particular persons; produce your evidence and prove the charge: they will in that case be immediately laid aside. To this I answer, that it is a very easy thing for a man to preach erroneous doctrine in such a manner, that it shall be impossible to convict him by a legal prosecution -- ⁽¹⁾ ".

In addition to the author's repetition of his former attacks on the conduct, doctrine and discipline of the clergy, he inveighs against the laxness of the Moderate / ^{man} in the exercise of his professional duties. He paints him as one who "manifestly shows his duty to be a burden, and does no more work than is barely sufficient to screen him from censure; -- he reckons it a piece of improvement, how seldom, or how short, he can preach; and makes his boast how many omissions he has brought a patient and an injured people to endure without complaint; while at the same time he cannot speak with temper of those who are willing to do more than himself. However impossible it may be to ascertain his faults, by a libel, he justly merits the detestation ⁽²⁾ of every faithful minister, and every real Christian".

Witherspoon next deploras the indulgence given to those writers that have avowed irreligious and immoral sentiments". The Assembly had refused to censure Hume or Lord Kames. Yet/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 263.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 269.

Yet earlier, in 1756, Witherspoon had/that Hume was beneath
his notice and that answering him merely gave him notoriety.⁽¹⁾
In 1762 he said that to preserve the honour and respect due
to true religion he would treat with contempt every open
enemy to that interest.⁽²⁾ Last of all, he attacks the govern-
ment of the Church in respect to the settlement of ministers,
and the qualifications of lay representatives to the General
Assembly. "The admission of ministers into vacant congregations is indeed a matter of the highest moment, and the opposition of sentiments among us upon this subject, probably lies at the bottom of all our differences."⁽³⁾ He quotes himself here, from his speech before the Assembly of 1760 relating to the settlement of Dr. Chalmers at Kilconquhar. Dr. Robertson's argument in favour of the blanket application of the law of patronage was on this wise: a presentee to a parish must be a man licensed by a presbytery; presbyteries can insure worthy presentees by admitting to trials only worthy men; therefore, any man presented to a parish should be acceptable to the parish at large.⁽⁴⁾
Witherspoon points out a fallacy, viz., the assumption that every presbytery would be perfectly faithful and vigilant.

Witherspoon/

1. Witherspoon, Works. vol. i., p. 83, footnote.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. v, p. 124.
3. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 273.
4. Stewart, Life of Robertson, p. 190 ff.

Witherspoon anticipates the present principle of electing ministers: "A parochial election of ministers would be a better security for regularity and decency in the clergy, than all the laws that ever were framed on the subject."⁽¹⁾

In order to avoid lengthening his apology he omitted the discussion of the qualifications of lay representatives to the General Assembly.

That Witherspoon was heartily discouraged with the failure of efforts at reforming the Church and clergy there can be little doubt. He lacks the customary care in composition where he ends ~~this~~ writing before it is finished, ~~and~~ with a half-cynical comment with regard to his last point, "if men do not see it themselves, it must be owing to such invincible prejudice as it is vain to contend with"⁽²⁾.

"Willingly -- would I contribute to open the eyes of some of my brethren -- but I have the discouragement to reflect, that the force of custom, and the power of prejudice, will probably shut their ears to anything I have to offer."⁽³⁾

And the sentence contains a mixed figure! He has little hope for the church. "I cannot help lamenting, that our noble, venerable, republican constitution, seems to be so near ⁽⁴⁾ its period". "But I may not wholly yield to despondency, since/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 280
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 283.
3. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 273.
4. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 275.

since an alteration of measures is yet possible ⁽¹⁾ --".

But he is not very hopeful; "the evil hath taken so deep root, that it is somewhat uncertain whether a remedy be now possible; nay, it is still more uncertain, whether any resistance will be seriously attempted."⁽²⁾ Witherspoon can paint no fact nor event to hearten his readers, but he reminds them that nothing is impossible with God; "Let no Christian, therefore, give way to desponding thoughts. We plead the cause that shall at last prevail."⁽³⁾ Yet as the years went by the cause of the Popular Party prevailed less and less.

In the closing pages of the Serious Apology Witherspoon evinces a tinge of cynicism. He feels deserted by the Popular Party, and says that he has not the smallest reason to repent of writing the Characteristics on account of its nature, its design or its effects upon the public. "If there was any mistake, it was in point of prudence, which should have directed me to avoid bringing such a load of malice and resentment upon myself. This has afforded me one observation not very honourable to human nature, viz. That the rage of enemies is always more active and more lasting than the affection of friends. It often happens, that some who are very much pleased to find one stand forth as a champion for their political opinions, and ready to go, as it were, to the/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 276.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 281
3. Witherspoon Works, vol. vi. p. 284

the front of the battle; when their enemies, smarting from the wounds he has given them, traduce and vilify his character, these esteemed friends often, in a great measure, give it up, and discover much satisfaction with themselves, (1) that they have acted in a wiser and more cautious manner."

"We may expect to see some of the weakest, and most contemptible ministers, settled in the most conspicuous and important charges. Persons of this character are not always free from vanity and ambition, nor always destitute of interest by male or female connections." Of his distinguished contemporaries, Hugh Blair had been made minister of the High Church in Edinburgh the year after Witherspoon was transported to Paisley. (2) William Robertson was made minister of Old Greyfriars in 1761 and appointed principal of Edinburgh University (3) in 1762, holding both offices as there was no law against pluralities. (4) The Serious Apology appeared in 1763.

Witherspoon was to make one more written attack on the Moderate Party before he left Scotland for America.

In 1765 Witherspoon published, anonymously again, a piece of fiction or satirical allegory to which he gave the/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 283.
2. Bower, History of Edinburgh University, vol. iii, p.13.
3. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. iii, p. 235.
4. Campbell, Two Centuries of the Church of Scotland, p. 168.

the name, A History of a Corporation of Servants.⁽¹⁾ It is a satire on the history of the Christian Church and of the Scottish branch in particular.

The scene is laid in the interior of Brazil, whither the survivors of a ship-wrecked vessel belonging to Commodore Anson's squadron of 1739 made their way. They lived there many years as slaves of a powerful prince and at last acquired such favour that they were allowed to return to Great Britain. One of them is supposed to describe to the author the extraordinary condition of the servants in the foreign realm. The satire is readily understandable when the reader realises that the "servants" are the clergy, the "corporation" is the Church, and the "families" are parishes or congregations. The story consists of twelve chapters, with an introduction and a conclusion. The fiction is a vehicle through which Witherspoon discusses the questions of his day.

The first three chapters deal with the Church up to the time of the Reformation. The "Servants" were formed in a "corporation" that was at first of universal satisfaction; but the satisfaction did not last long. Their numbers increased; the hours of work diminished; "they began not to serve, but to live."⁽²⁾ They spake not of being hired, or getting/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi. p. 285
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 300.

(1)
getting a master, but of getting a living. Some of them would be no longer servants properly speaking, but overseers. One was made the pinnacle of the pyramid. Witherspoon speaks of Apostolic succession as follows: "It is as clear as the sun; for though all the records that contain this regulation are lost, yet I very well remember that my nurse told me before I was two years of age, that her grandmother's sister's cousin-german assured her it was a fact." (2) The head of these servants ordered even emperors to be whipped or to whip themselves. The servants increased in riches, sometimes by prevailing on the sick and dying by giving them cordials, so that many left them great legacies in their wills. But the lands lay uncultivated; the people were reduced to the greatest misery imaginable; they were sorrily clothed, and worse fed. "Nobody prospered by the servants, or rather the upper ranks of them, the noble and honourable servants, the overseers and arch-overseers". "As for the poor and lowest class of servants, who actually did any work for the families, they were as much oppressed, by this time, as their masters" (3).

With chapter four begins the history of the reformed church. The Lutheran reformation is clearly described, and/

1. See p. 180 of this thesis.
2. Witherspoon's Works, vol. vi, p. 306.
3. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 309.

and, then, the whole reformation. But the rest of the satire is to deal with one branch of the new corporation. "Particularly, in one Northern province there was at the time of the change, a most excellent method and order established with regard to the servants. -- That regulation was abolished as extremely pernicious, which permitted lords or great men to name servants to others, so that every family chose such as best pleased themselves, and such as were well qualified --"⁽¹⁾

The most important step away from this perfection "was re-establishing the law which empowered great men to nominate servants to inferior families. -- Many and fierce were the struggles, for several years, in the meetings of the corporation about introducing servants to families"⁽²⁾. Witherspoon details at length his objections to the law of patronage and to the way the Moderate Party has enforced it. In innumerable instances, servants were placed in families where no one wanted them, "as the power of determination, in all disputed cases, lay in courts composed of servants,⁽³⁾ they strenuously supported the most unreasonable appointments."

⁽⁴⁾

Witherspoon touches on the question of stipends. In spite of the failure of the Church to secure an augmentation of/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 313.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 316.
3. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 319.
4. Chapter 5, p.148, this thesis.

of stipends in 1761, the matter of the dilapidation of stipends had been brought before the Assembly in 1761, 1762 and 1763. The Popular Party associated increased stipends with patronage, believing that the one could not be obtained without submission to the other. They had little sympathy with the desire to raise the social position of the clergy, which motive prompted the Moderates in advocating both increased stipends and patronage. In this satire Witherspoon says of the servants that the wages should be increased in order to give alacrity to their work, so as to increase their numbers, and so as to render them well-dressed enough to be acceptable to the gentry.

The rest of the satire deals with the progress of the controversy over patronage, up to the year of its publication. But the argument turns less on principles than on personalities. Witherspoon reviews his own opposition to the Moderate Party, beginning with the Characteristics. "One of the servants who was a great opposer of the prevailing measures, finding his/brethren to be deaf to serious reasoning, fell upon a singular device. Being possessed of a vein of humour, and knowing a little of the art of/painting, he drew a picture of the droll or ludicrous kind, in which, by enigmatical characters, he represented the various impositions of the servants/

servants in general. He also took off the likenesses of the principal and most active leaders of the corporation, and put them in the most comical postures imaginable.⁽¹⁾ One was capering and dancing while his garden tools were rusting beside him; another carried but a stinking fish in a basket; another fat one challenged all to a race; "another hurrying away a girl into a corner, and covering her with his frock". No one could look on this picture without laughing. But the fury and resentment of the servants on the publication of this piece is not to be conceived. "The poor author, in the meantime, was obliged to be constantly upon his guard, as there was always a set of desperadoes lying in wait for him, armed with clubs, and fully determined to beat his brains out, if they could catch him in a proper place. In the mean time, they all agreed in telling lies upon him without ceasing." And ten years afterward, "Their resentment had not abated in the least degree"⁽²⁾. "Few are able to distinguish between a person and his cause nor is it indeed possible to attack the one without wounding the other."⁽³⁾

Witherspoon must have felt himself persecuted. He says with regard to the Moderates, "If any person, in a company/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, pp. 333-334.
2. Ibid., vol. vi, p. 334-335.
3. Witherspoons, Works, vol. v, p. 112.

company, did but signify that he thought this conduct inconsistent with equity or good policy, he was not thought fit to be reasoned with, but a great and loud laugh was immediately raised against him, so that he was not only put to silence, but to confusion"⁽¹⁾. The persecution of the Moderates of the conscientious "servants" appears again, "Whenever they discovered a good servant --, they would get behind the hedges and pelt him unmercifully with stones, so that he returned home, not only fatigued with his work, but severely smarting with the wounds he had received."⁽²⁾

One Moderate comes in for special satirizing. "The method he fell upon was telling wonderful stories of the heroic actions of that people's predecessors". Dr. Robertson's History of Scotland was published in 1759, the year after he became minister of Lady Yester's Church. In 1759 he was made Chaplain of Stirling Castle; in 1761 he was made one of His Majesty's Chaplains-in-ordinary for Scotland, the same year in which he was translated to Old Greyfriars Church in Edinburgh; and in 1764 he was appointed to fill the office which had been revived in his favour, that of Royal Histori^ographer for Scotland.⁽³⁾ The satire continues/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 320
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 332.
3. Bower, History of the University of Edinburgh, vol.iii, p.81

continues, "He was a fellow of uncommon ability --. He carried on his schemes; procured for himself one salary after another; and did not fail to laugh at the simplicity of those who bestowed them"⁽¹⁾. The satire casts aspersions on the Select Society, a club which had been formed in 1754 for philosophical inquiry and improvement in the art of speaking. The Society, which met in the Advocates' Library, consisted at first of only fifteen members, but it became so fashionable that in a few years it numbered 300, and included many of the nobility, gentry, lawyers, physicians, and clergymen of Edinburgh.⁽³⁾ In this work alone does Witherspoon stoop to vulgarity;⁽⁴⁾ he refers to the clergymen who mingle with the other gentlemen of Edinburgh as "pimps and panders to great men" who "sometimes attend them in their nocturnal expeditions"⁽⁵⁾.

The History ends in a minor key, with the expression of small hope that either from the clergy or the laymen will come reform: "after all, it was but very uncertain whether any material change would soon take place; -- "we have reason to rejoice", he satirizes, "that we are perfectly free from impositions of the same or any similar kind"⁽⁶⁾.

The/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 343
3. Carlyle, Autobiography, p. 311; Stewart, Life of Robertson, p. 139; Graham, Scottish Men of Letters in the Eighteenth Century, p. 111
4. see above, p. 191
5. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 342
6. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 354

The year after the publication of this attack on the Moderate party, the Moderates excluded Witherspoon from the Assembly on a technical fault in his commission. ⁽¹⁾ Excluded from this Assembly, he was excluded from taking his part in the debate on the Schism Overture, ⁽²⁾ which occupied the Assembly. The Assembly's refusal of the overture on schism was a signal defeat to the Popular Party. Witherspoon's personal influence ^{and the influence} of his party were seriously impaired by the action of this Assembly of 1766.

1. Chap. v, p.173 this thesis.
2. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, pp. 329-347.

CHAPTER VI.

The Ministry of
John Witherspoon in
Theology and Morals.

CHAPTER VI.

WITHERSPOON'S PART IN THE RELIGIOUS

LIFE OF THE CHURCH.

Witherspoon believed in the theology of the Confession of Faith. In the life of the Scottish Church he was a stout protagonist for this theological point of view. He was constantly exhorting clergy and laity to the necessity and benefits of these principles of doctrine, and, alternately, deploring defection from this pure teaching. These observations are typical: " It is certainly hinted, that there are many who have departed from the old protestant principles contained in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms. And is it possible to deny this fact? Is it not the whole complaint of the people through the whole kingdom, that from many pulpits there is little to be heard of the peculiar doctrines of the gospel? or, if mentioned at all, it is no more than an awkward and cold compliment to save appearances while something very different is chiefly insisted on. If I am not mistaken, the leading doctrines, both in the holy Scriptures, and in the confessions of all the protestant churches, are, 'The lost and fallen state of man by nature; - The absolute necessity of salvation through Jesus Christ;- The/

The pardon of sin by the riches of divine grace, through the imputed righteousness of the Saviour;- Sanctification and comfort by the Holy Ghost'. These doctrines are of so great moment, and have so extensive an influence on the whole of practical religion, that where they are firmly believed, they will not only be often brought directly in view, but the manner of speaking upon every subject will be such, as to leave no jealousy of an intended omission: yet certain it is, that many are the complaints upon this subject from every quarter; and therefore I am warranted to infer, either that the doctrine is corrupted, and something else intentionally taught, or that the persons complained of are utterly incapable of expressing themselves in such a manner as to be understood⁽¹⁾".

Nor did Witherspoon hold these doctrines in cold abstraction. He says, "These doctrines, I am persuaded, are not only true in themselves, but the great foundation of all practical religion. Wherever they are maintained and inculcated, strictness and purity of life and manners will be their natural effect. On the contrary, where they are neglected, and a pretended theory of moral virtue substituted in their room, it will immediately and certainly introduce a deluge/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 262.

deluge of profanity and immorality in practice. Of this the present state of our own church and nation, compared with that of former periods, is a strong and melancholy proof⁽¹⁾. This was written in 1763. Witherspoon held that its moral influence is the proper touchstone and trial of religious truth. But this principle was not mere pragmatism -- that a truth is worthless unless it "works" and that only those truths are valuable whose influence can be demonstrated in the man who holds ^{them} ~~it~~; he necessarily supposes the sure and infallible efficacy of real truth in promoting holiness, and the insufficiency of error and falsehood for this purpose. By this principle that a tree is known by its fruits Witherspoon judges the theology of the Moderate men, the infidelity of Hume and his philosophic associates, the extreme doctrine of the value of works preached by John Wesley, and the disorder resulting from separating societies.

The genial method of living and the humanistic vein in preaching among the Moderate men Witherspoon laid to their laxity with regard to the Confession of Faith. He begins to attack their unorthodox living and teaching on the assumption that if they adhered conscientiously to the Confession of/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, pp. 263-264.

of Faith, their conduct and theology would, as a natural consequence, be exemplary. Their neglect of the Confession of Faith he complains of as the root of their apostasy. Much of the ridicule of the Characteristics turns on what he speaks of as the absurdity of men's subscribing what they do not believe. He questions the sincerity of the Moderate clergyman's intent when, at his licensure, he signs the "formula" indicating his adherence to the Confession of Faith. "For men, at their entrance on the sacred office, solemnly to subscribe to the truth of what all their lives after they endeavour to undermine and destroy, is at once so criminal and absurd, that no reproof given to it can possibly exceed in point of ⁽¹⁾ severity." And Witherspoon says in another place, before the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, "What success can be expected from that man's ministry, who begins it with an act of so complicated guilt? How can he take upon him to reprove others for sin, or to train them up in virtue and true goodness, while himself is chargeable with direct, premeditated and perpetual perjury"? He points out that it is as bad as an accountant's making false entries ⁽²⁾ in his book-keeping. If there is any act in contradiction to their professed principles, then they are principles not really/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 264.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. iv, p. 335.

really believed, or , which is much the same thing, not habitually recollected.

Nothing does more hurt to the interest of religion than its being loaded with a number of adherents who assume the form while they are strangers to the power of it. It gives the infidels a basis of attack; it offends the common people, for no matter how poor the people may be at judging a minister's learning and ability, they are always good judges of his life.

Members of the Moderate Party not only evaded their loyalty to the Confession of Faith, but many wished to abolish the Church's requirement that each of her ministers sign it. The friends of Dr. Robertson plagued him with petulance and acrimony, according to Dugald Stewart, to get him to use his influence for abolishing the subscription to the Confession of Faith and Formula. This Dr. Robertson resisted, but the harrassment of his friends urging the abolition of this oath confirmed his resolution to retire; he felt he could hold out against the demands no longer and yet retain his leadership of the Moderate Party.⁽¹⁾

Witherspoon objected to this slighting of the Confession of Faith because it loosened the living and the theology of those/

1. Stewart, Life of Robertson, p. 195.

those who subscribed what they did not believe. But he also objected to this abuse because he felt that it weakened the force of the constitution of the Church. In his stand before the Assembly of 1757 for the legal attestation of the commissions of the members of Assembly, he pressed his point on the strength of the argument that the Assembly must uphold the Confession of Faith, and each minister had sworn to uphold it.

During Witherspoon's ministry in Scotland the thought life of the nation showed a trend away from theological and political controversy toward metaphysical speculation. Clubs were formed, such as the Select Club, for the discussion of questions which it would have been perilous to raise not many years before. Witherspoon says very little about the opinions of these free-thinkers -- drawing light variously from classic writers, Locke, Leibnitz, or Shaftesbury -- but he attacks their standards of living. He contrasts them with professed Christians: "Is, then, the character and practice of infidels in general, once to be compared with that of such Christians as believe upon personal conviction? However the natural sense of right and wrong may be obscured and perverted in some, I should think there are few/

1. Chapter v, p.164, of this thesis.

few who will not manifestly perceive to whom the preference is due. In which of the two do you find the most regular and fervent piety towards God? Here, perhaps, it will be said, This ^{is} what no man expects to find in unbelievers, it is no part of their plan, and therefore ought not to be included in the comparison. But, as the general sense of mankind does not require it, so I can never suffer that our duty to God should be erased out of the moral law. Besides, the general pretence now, is not atheism, but theism. The question is therefore altogether pertinent; and persons of this character are self-condemned, who, by their total neglect of all religious worship, are as much chargeable with impiety as infidelity..⁽¹⁾" He carries the comparison through categories of social service, moral influence, and educative value; the Christian benefits by each comparison. He concludes that no one can say that the Christian is governed by an invented fable, while the infidel alone is in possession of the truth; infidelity must be proved by its fruits. He cannot hold with the current sentiment, says Witherspoon, that it is a small matter what a man believes if his life be good; it is founded on the fallacy that a man may believe wrong and yet lead as good a life as the man who believes right. Witherspoon recognizes the argument that several/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. iv, p. 326.

several infidels have been men of unblemished morals, such men as Collins and Shaftesbury. He concedes that they may have been innocent of gross sensuality, but he damns them with citing their solemnly receiving the holy sacrament in order to qualify for holding civil office, though they believed the sacrament to be an imposture.⁽¹⁾

Witherspoon most often associates his remarks about infidelity with David Hume (1711-1776). Hume systematised and gave precision to modes of thinking which were current in Scotland in the earlier half of the eighteenth century.⁽²⁾ Hume said that all knowledge is derived through impressions and ideas. Beyond the uniform succession of sensible phenomena there is nothing proved of self, or God, or moral government; apparently nothing is provable if his inlets of knowledge are alone allowed. Hume secures a kind of provisional substitute for mental unity and identity in his succession of phenomena, where uniformity takes the place of causation; and he builds up on the sense of pleasure and the law of association a scheme of utility which comes in the place of moral order. But for God, and all that is connected with his character and attributes, Hume's theory of/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. iv, p. 327 footnote
2. Hume Brown, History of Scotland, p. 372.

of knowledge has no door of entrance, and hence, except in so far as its procedure is criticism of the theories of others, it ends in negative dogmatism.⁽¹⁾

"If infidelity were a principle properly speaking, or implied a system of real and positive opinions, all of that persuasion would reckon themselves bound as honest men to renounce their baptism, and every apparent relation to the deluded believer"⁽²⁾.

Witherspoon pretended to take Hume with no more seriousness than Hume took himself. Hume first published in 1739, the Treatise of Human Nature, but he says that the book fell deadborn from the press.⁽³⁾ Witherspoon never takes serious notice of Hume's principles; "because", he says, "I think both him and them worthy of the highest contempt"; he thinks those are wrong who seriously answer Hume's writings; he thinks his writings are impious and nonsensical. He would answer Hume by having him ^tpained from life and then adorned with hieroglyphics: on his breast the words, Health, Cleanliness and Broad Shoulders; and the following sentence in his mouth, which he adopted from a French author, "Female Infidelity when it is known is a small matter, and when it is not known, it is nothing". "It is probable", says Witherspoon, "some over delicate persons will think this is not treating him/

1. Cairns, Unbelief in the Eighteenth Century, p. 107.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 272.
3. Hume Brown, History of Scotland, p. 372.

him with sufficient decency; -- whether he does not deserve far worse treatment from any who believes the gospel, I⁽¹⁾ leave to the judgment of those who will read his writings". Throughout the whole of his ministry in Scotland Witherspoon continued to deride Hume's writings. He said in a sermon that they were far from being as hurtful as their author intended.⁽²⁾ In his last published work in Scotland he said, "A great living author, David Hume, Esq., not long ago, made health, cleanliness, and broad shoulders, capital virtues, and a running sore an unpardonable crime; yet was it but little taken notice of when first published, and is now almost wholly forgotten"⁽³⁾.

If Witherspoon tried to ignore Hume's philosophy, he did not ignore what he calls his impiety. He does not keep silent on his conviction that the things plainly founded upon the word of God can make very little impression on those who, in Witherspoon's words, "have expressly listed themselves under the banner of infidelity, and learned to be profane upon principle"⁽⁴⁾. He speaks against infidels because, though they always pretend to search impartially for truth, yet they unanimously agree in putting truth and error upon the same footing, both as to worth and influence.

Members/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. i, p. 83 footnote.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. iv, p. 242 footnote.
3. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 288.
4. Witherspoon, Works, vol. v, p. 74.

Members of the Popular Party brought before the Assembly of 1755 a charge that the writings of Hume and Lord Kames were hostile to the interests of religion and morality. The Assembly voted unanimously their abhorrence of those impious and infidel principles, subversive to natural and revealed religion. Against this vote of the Assembly Hugh Blair wrote a pamphlet in which ^{he} said -- quite contrary to Witherspoon's reasoning -- that metaphysical speculation might perplex the understanding, but could never impair the morals ⁽¹⁾ of men. The controversy was carried on through the ensuing year and through the Assembly of 1756. The matter did not come up for debate in the Assembly, but the committee of ⁽²⁾ overtures, of which Witherspoon was a member, discussed whether or not a special censure should be directed against infidel writers, especially David Hume. The debate lasted for two days with the result that the committee voted 50 to 17 not to transmit to the Assembly an overture on the subject. Witherspoon has left an ironical account of these efforts against infidel writings, and against Hume in particular, in his satire, The History of a Corporation of Servants.

⁽³⁾
"There were many strange cattle pasturing where they ought/

1. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, pp. 58-59.
2. Ms. Records of the General Assembly, 1754-1757, p. 279.
3. See Appendix 10

ought not to be; particularly, -- a large bull, with a thick neck, and dull heavy eyes, but broad shoulders, firm joints, and a lank belly, which made him fit for jumping".

The reasons which are cited for not censuring Hume are: that the man who moved the motion of censure was unworthy; that persecution helps the cause of the persecuted; that it is difficult to tell which are the strange cattle and which the master's; that Hume would like the publicity of censure; that censure can be passed on Hume only by the session of the church of which he is a member; that it is too late in the progress of infidelity to hope to arrest it by censures; and that "the beast in question was not a bull but an ox". "To sum up the matter, one or other of these various and contradictory reasons prevailed upon a great majority to come to this resolution, That it was not prudent or expedient, at this time, to agree to the proposal; and, therefore, the intruders in general should be winked at, and that beast in particular, whether he were bull or ox, should continue
(1)
where he was".

Witherspoon expresses disappointment at the Assembly's failure to censure either infidels or their writings. Many of the Moderate Party had keenly berated his publication, the Characteristics, as bringing reproach on religion. He questions/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 340

questions the sincerity of this objection, because those who made this allegation against his satire have not raised a word against the writings of infidels, which heinously attack religion. If they were zealous for the good name of religion, why attack an anonymous satire written against a party of clergymen; and not attack the bold, wholesale, signed infidel assault on religion. He quotes from Moliere, "That a man may write what he pleaseth against God Almighty, in perfect security; but if he write against the characters of the clergy in power, he is ruined forever"⁽¹⁾.

John Wesley, the father of Methodism, first visited Scotland in 1751. During the twenty-two years that Witherspoon exercised his ministry in Scotland the English revivalist made ten more preaching visits to Scotland. Yet during this period Wesley is not mentioned in the annals of the General Assembly, although his journal records that he visited the Assembly of 1764; Alexander Carlyle does not mention Wesley in all his detailed Autobiography. One or two evangelical ministers of the Established Church received him in fellowship, especially Dr. Gillies of Glasgow;⁽²⁾ but the evangelical leader, Dr. John Erskine, waged a war with him over the theology of a Calvinistic methodist's pamphlet.⁽³⁾

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 240
2. Butler, Wesley and Whitefield in Scotland, p. 125
3. Wellwood, Life of Erskine, pp. 249-264.

pamphlet. This particular Calvinistic methodist was the Rev. James Hervey, rector of Weston-Favell; his pamphlet was Theron and Aspasio. This writer and this pamphlet are the link connecting Witherspoon with Wesley, and the roots of holy living is the subject over which they differed.

James Hervey (1714-1758) was one of the very earliest Methodist writers. ~~Links connecting Methodism with literature.~~ He studied at Lincoln College, Oxford, where he joined the Methodist Society presided over by Wesley. From 1743-1758, he was the rector of his father's former parish, Weston-Favell. Hervey was preparing to publish a series of theological dialogues; he sent the first three dialogues to Wesley for his revision. Wesley took exception to one phrase, "the imputed righteousness of Christ". Wesley said the phrase was not scriptural; that it had done immense harm; that he had proof that instead of furthering man's progress in vital holiness, it had made man satisfied without any holiness at all; that it had even encouraged men to work all uncleanness with greediness. These criticisms Hervey kept to himself, and he published his intended dialogues in 1755, without making the alterations suggested by Wesley, under the title
(1)
Theron and Aspasio.

The next year Witherspoon published an essay on justification which he dedicated to Hervey in appreciation of

(1)
of Theron and Aspasio. In the dedication he says to Hervey,
"You, Sir, are one of those happy few who have been willing
to consecrate the finest natural talents to the service of
Christ in the gospel, and are not ashamed of his cross". He
comments on the reception that Theron and Aspasio has received,
and the objections raised against it. He says, further,
"And I have always found that the most specious and plausible
objection, and that most frequently made against the doctrine
of justification by imputed righteousness, has been in this
case, as indeed usually before, that it loosens the obliga-
tions to practice. This is what I have particularly applied
myself to refute, -- I have addressed it [the essay] to you,
as a testimony of my esteem tof your -- writings, as a public
declaration of my espousing the same sentiments as to the
terms of our acceptance with God" and "that thereby it may
appear to all, that no external distinctions, or smaller
differences, ought to be any hindrance to cordial esteem
and affection among the sincere servants of our common Master". (2)

Witherspoon says that any who urge that the doctrine of
justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ loosens
moral responsibility are using the argument hypocritically,
as a self-justification for their own loose living: whether
their opposition be the calumnies of enemies, or the weakness or
treachery of/

1. Tyerman, *The Oxford Methodists*, p. 299.
2. Witherspoon, *Works*, vol. i, pp. 38-39.

of friends of the doctrine. The essay was formed by adding two sermons together, and including current references not suitable to the pulpit. The proof of his contention he marshalled under six principles arguments.

1. He who expects justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ hath the clearest and strongest conviction of the obligation of the holy law of God upon every rational creature.

Our basic relation to God is that of creature to Creator.. On that rests our conviction of the obligation of every rational creature to obey God's law, and that God's law is pure.

On that rests our sense of shortcoming and sin.

On that rests our fear of the merited wrath of God.

On that rests our need of refuge in justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ.

Because our relation to God of creature to Creator is unchangeable, therefore the states resulting from and depending on this basic relationship are unchangeable.

Mercy of one human to another often leads to a renewal of sin on the part of the man forgiven; but God's mercy and forgiveness are only available where there has been a change of heart ready to receive the forgiveness and not to abuse it.

2. He who expects justification through the imputed righteousness/

righteousness of Christ must have the deepest and strongest sense of the evil of sin in itself. He hates sin as God hates it -- so much that he sent his Son to make atonement for it, by dint of great suffering.

3. He who expects justification through the imputed righteousness of Christ has the most awful views of the danger of sin. A believer's security is from (a) the dominion of sin and (b) the wrath of God. If a believer goes back under the dominion of sin, he also goes back under the wrath of God. Therefore it is a self-contradictory supposition that a man can sin without restraint, and still be free from the wrath of God.

"Some have expressly affirmed that the future sins of the elect are forgiven, as well as their past, at their conversion; nay, some, that they are justified from all eternity, that God did not see sin in a believer --. I look upon these expressions -- as unguarded and anti-scriptural. -- However strongly any man may assert that a believer's salvation is secure, he will not scruple at the same time to acknowledge, that if such believer should sin wilfully and habitually, and continue to do so, he would be damned; but he will deny that any such case ever did, or ever can possibly happen!"⁽¹⁾

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. i, pp. 63-64.

4. "Those who expect justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, have the highest sense of the purity and holiness of the divine nature; and therefore must be under an habitual conviction of the necessity of purity in order to fit them for his presence and enjoyment." "As is the God, so are his worshippers, if they serve him in earnest".

5. Those who expect justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ must be induced to obedience by the motive of gratitude and thankfulness to God.

6. Those who expect justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ must be possessed of a supreme love to God, which is the source and principle of holiness. The love of God must be the commanding, governing principle. When it is, no inferior object or passion can elicit our devotion or affect our actions. Sin is the pursuit of inferior objects on their own account, and giving them that place in our affections which is due to God.

The Conclusion of his essay finds Witherspoon encouraging people to rise from despair to belief. This doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ finds its divine origin in that it is contrary to the spirit of this world, that/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. i, p. 66

~~2. See Chapter vi p. of this thesis.~~

that it lies out of human contrivance, and that none can receive it who have not some acquaintance with vital, experimental religion. He concedes that many who make a nominal profession of believing this doctrine lead evil lives; but those who really believe are conscientious.

(1)
In this connection, as with the infidels, Witherspoon punctures the fallacy of the argument that it is a small matter what a man believes as long as his life be good; he re-asserts that a man cannot live right who does not believe right. He does not expect right living from the Socinians and Pelagians, for he does not consider them Christians at all. "But it will be thought hard", he says, "to say the same thing of the Arminians. - I am persuaded that there have been, and are many good men among them, which may be accounted for in this manner, that their hearts are better than their understandings."⁽²⁾

There was no personal clashing between Wesley and Witherspoon. They both expressed their views of Theron and Aspasio⁽³⁾ in 1756, but Wesley did not publish his views until 1758. So it is reasonably sure that Witherspoon had not specifically in mind Wesley's objections to the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness. However, Witherspoon, in/

1. Chapter vi. p.201 of this thesis.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. i, pp. 98-99 footnote.
3. Tyerman, Life and Times of John Wesley, vol. ii, p. 5-6.

in levelling his Calvinistic fire against the Arminian view⁽¹⁾ of the value of works, strikes at the position that Wesley held.

Witherspoon did not leave the Established Church, although he had much in common with those who did secede. On the contrary, he implies that the seceders -- whether original seceders, presbytery of relief or Glasites -- were cowardly and lacking a true sense of responsibility. In his farewell sermon he says, "It is very easy, indeed, where there is a hard conflict between health and corruption, in the body of Christ, that is to say, his visible church, for one, or a few members, to pour out complaints against those who govern it; to lay to the charge of ministers those abuses which are the grief of their hearts; and all at once, to set about making a new model according to their own fancy. But I apprehend it is a much better, though more difficult duty, to obey the Redeemer's counsel, to 'be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die.' Alas! how often do the new disorders that break out in separating societies betray the naughty materials of which they are composed. They are much in the same way as the fool who ran away from his own shadow, but run where he would it was there as soon as he. They run away from the corruption of human nature, and they shall never be quit of it, because they carry/

1. Tyerman, Life and Times of John Wesley, vol. ii, p. 540.

carry it with them." (1) Secession itself did not make for holiness of life. Within the ranks of the seceders themselves Antiburghers would not co-operate with Burghers, even as far away as the colony of New York. (2)

In spite of his opposition to the Moderate Party in the Established Church, and in spite of the rebuffs he received, Witherspoon seems to have had no thought of seceding himself from the Church. He knew of the small but steady stream of people and ministers leaving the Establishment; by 1766 it was estimated that there were 120 meeting houses with adherents numbering nearly 100,000. (3) His own colleague in Paisley left the Establishment in 1766 and became minister of a Relief congregation in Edinburgh. (4) The whole of his ministry in Scotland was exercised against a background of rebuffs and defeats at the hands of the Moderates. He had drawn their antagonism upon himself by his publication early in his ministry of the Characteristics; he had continued to deserve their opposition by his contention against their plans and principles. The Moderate men of the Presbytery of Paisley opposed his transportation to the Laigh Church in Paisley/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. iix, pp. 281-282.
2. Struthers, History of the Relief Church, p. 171
3. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, p. 306
4. Struthers, History of Relief Church, pp. 201

Paisley; though they did not succeed in this, they were able the next year to frustrate Witherspoon's plans for erecting a second session for Paisley. The Assembly had refused to censure Hume in 1755; the committee on overtures in 1756 had refused Witherspoon's plan to present to the Assembly an overture censuring Hume and all infidel writers. The settlement of Dr. Chalmers at Kilconquhar in 1760, over Witherspoon's protest, is an example of the numbers of settlements the Assembly made contrary to his views. His momentary victory in 1766 for the careful attestation of the commissions of members of Assembly was reversed against him to exclude him from the Assembly because of a technical flaw in his own commission; his exclusion from this Assembly was especially baffling, as it prevented his taking his due part in the debate on the "schism overture". The only project which he succeeded in getting approved by the Assembly was the uniting the offices of schoolmaster and session-clerk in Paisley; the Assembly agreed to it because "they cannot disapprove".

Witherspoon suffered from this opposition, which was not always kindly; he describes his own feelings: "But when a deep sense of the evil of departing from the faith -- and the danger of corrupt doctrine infecting the whole lump, induces any to stand up in defence of the truth, to oppose the introduction/

introduction of erroneous teachers, or to attempt the expulsion of those who have crept in unawares; let them be called unreasonable, if you please, and let their mistake be pointed out, but I beg that they may not be abused and vilified as uncharitable⁽¹⁾". There is an autobiographical element in these words from his farewell sermon: "Those, if I may speak so, who keep their garments clean, as to the sins, are scarcely able to bear up under the trials of the times. When they see one attempt after another, for the revival of truth and righteousness, defeated by the strength of corruption they are in danger of impatience and fretfulness against providence, and sometimes are even tempted to call in question the reality of religion altogether; as if it did not meet with the support and countenance, from the great Ruler, which they think is its due⁽²⁾". And he goes on to say that there is danger for such persons lest they fall into the temptation to neglect their duty because it has not hitherto had the effect they desire.

There is a close parallel between Witherspoon in his attitude toward the Church and that of old Thomas Boston on the occasion of Boston's dissent from the sentence passed on Professor Simson. He alone in the Assembly dissented. He says in his memoirs, "hereupon the Moderator spoke to me/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. iv, p. 300
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. iii, p. 282.

me very pathetically, and I stood hearing all gravely, without answering until he said, 'Will you tear out the bowels of your mother?' Whereunto, I being sensibly touched, replied that if I had the conviction of that being the tendency thereof, I would rather take the paper I read, and tear it in a thousand pieces". In the end Boston did not insist that his dissent should be entered in the records, because it might have "dangerous consequences to the peace of this Church, which I think myself to be obliged in conscience to be very tender of". He adds, "Which said, I immediately sat down; and the Assembly seemed to be well satisfied"⁽¹⁾.

Witherspoon was as loyal to the constitution of the Church as he was to its Calvinistic theology. The source of both the government and the theology was the Confession of Faith. This instrument was as important to him for the system of government it erected as it was for the system of theology it embodied. Referring to the Confession of Faith he says, "No one can indeed deny it to be just, that every one should endeavour to support even the minutest part of it, which appear to him to be founded upon the word of God"⁽²⁾. One of his chief quarrels with the Moderated was over their laxness/

1. Watson, The Scot of the Eighteenth Century, pp. 242-243
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. 11, p. 315

(1)
laxness in living up to the Confession. He was ~~as~~ quick
to take exception to the fact that Gillespie, who was de-
posed by the Moderates, had signed the Confession of Faith
at his admission to Carnock with a reservation. (2) His
primary loyalty was to the Confession of Faith, above any
party loyalty; adhering scrupulously to this loyalty he
found himself sometimes favouring the Moderates and some-
times the seceders. This non-partisan attitude deepened
as the Popular Party waned under the ascendancy of the
Moderates.

The Moderates found Witherspoon at one with them when
they stood for the careful observation of the law. Even
when he was vainly objecting to the Assembly's interpretations
of the law of patronage, he was not quarrelling with the law
itself. Even if the law of patronage could have been
repealed he still did not hold the principle that ministers
should be called by popular election. (3) His contentions
for the application of the law of the Church in the attest-
ing of elders to the General Assembly were ultimately em-
bodied in an act by the Moderates' majority in the Assembly
of 1766. He objected to the deposition of Gillespie, but
he recognized the Church's right to depose and excommunicate.
It/

1. Chapter, vi. p. 197, this thesis
2. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. i, p. 276.
3. Chapter v, p. 175, this thesis

It is likely he would have deposed some of the Moderates, if he could have mustered a majority sufficient to do so. He says, "What can be the meaning of those professing Christians who desire to retain in their communion the enemies of the gospel? Can they, or will they do us any service? Is it possible that they can bring us any honour? Can it be of any benefit to themselves? None of all these"⁽¹⁾. In another instance Witherspoon hopes/may, as he says, "by breaking their attachment to the most corrupt members, recover the merit and dignity of the general body."⁽²⁾ Witherspoon, with the Moderates, felt the Established Church/^{to be} the best bulwark against Roman Catholicism and non-Presbyterian protestant sects.

Secession from the Church of Scotland did not seem to Witherspoon to be a worthy weapon -- or a weapon at all -- against the abuses of the Establishment. He knew about the original secession; he must have heard it discussed in his manse home when he was a boy of nine. Soon after he had been graduated from the university the seceding ministers were deposed by the General Assembly. To this original secession there were **some** additions during Witherspoon's ministry in Scotland; **others** who **≡** left the Establishment formed/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 272.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 254.

formed another fellowship. All these separating societies Witherspoon considered as inimical to piety. He pleads, "When shall the time come, when the sincere lovers of Christ, of every denomination, shall join together in opposition to his open enemies and treacherous friends"⁽¹⁾? Witherspoon could not follow the Seceders where their theology was touched with an extreme doctrine of grace that he called antinomian.

No extreme view of theology turned Witherspoon from his orthodoxy according to the Confession of Faith. If any one depreciated the divinity of Christ; if anyone disparaged the duty of obedience to the moral law, both came equally under his rebuke. He said that all that Christ has done for sinners magnifies the law and makes it honourable. Witherspoon declared over and over that he was neither antinomian nor socinian, but that he was evangelical in the historical and ethical sense of the Catholic faith. But he was not only moved by the love of the truth of God; he was moved by the love of God. For all his contention in the life of the Church, his main purpose was not controversy, but peace. He says, "I am fully convinced that many of very different parties and denominations are building upon the one 'foundation laid in Sion' for a sinner's hope, and that their distance and alienation from one another in affection is very much to/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. iv, p. 339.

to be regretted. Many will not meet together on earth for
the worship of God, who shall have one temple above ⁽¹⁾ --"

"Innumerable little parties and factions into which Christians,
I mean real Christians, are divided, - very much hinder their
own profit, and grieve the hearts of those who are one with
them in Christ. Therefore let it be your care to apply the
truths of the gospel for your own sanctification and comfort.
After you have believed them, be still more careful to live
upon them, than even to defend ⁽²⁾ them".

In his Treatise on Regeneration, ⁽³⁾ published in 1764 as
a resumé of his theology, he regards the substance of religion
without any entanglement with controversy. He especially
avoids the questions as to the difference between special
and common grace, as to the amount of the co-operation of a
sinner in his own salvation, and as to the priority of faith
or repentance in the experience of accepting salvation.
The settlement of the first two questions is beyond the scope
of the finite mind; as to the last question, he says that
neither faith nor repentance has the priority in a saving
experience, but that they are simultaneous. For all prac-
tical purposes he urges that special and common grace be
considered as one; that the sinner may ignore estimating the
the part he plays in accepting salvation as long as he
accepts/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. i; pp. 244-245
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. iii, p. 309
3. Witherspoon. Works, vol. i, p. 107.

accepts it; and that, though faith and repentance can be treated separately, they cannot exist separately.

Witherspoon felt that the theology behind such revivals as those that took place at Cambuslang under the preaching of Whitefield in 1742 was un-orthodox. He calls the converts "evangelical hypocrites" because they rest on "a false confidence in their own state" and not on a true knowledge of God. "Their notions of God's love to them contain more of a partial indulgence to them as they are, than of his infinite compassion in forgiving what they have been. The effects of such religion are just what might be expected from its nature, violent and passionate for a season, and commonly ostentatious, but temporary and changeable. Self-love lies at the root, and therefore, while they are pleased and gratified, they will continue their profession of attachment; but when self-denial or bearing the cross is required, they reject the terms, they lose their transporting views, and return to their sins. -- I hope this - may be of use to account for some appearances in a time of the revival of religion".

Witherspoon extends Christian charity to the clergy of the Church of England. As has been pointed out, he announced/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. i, p. 256.

announced himself in fellowship with Mr. Hervey, a clergyman
of the English church. (1) He quoted the commendation of three
Bishops of the English Church of his work, the Characteris-
tics. (2) He says that in so far as they are Arminians, their
theology is wrong and they are in danger of the wrath of
God; but he says many of them will survive their heterodoxy
because their hearts are better than their understandings.
In defending the Characteristics he makes use of the admis-
sions of the English Bishops of the evils in the English
Church; he quotes the Bishop of London, the Bishop of Oxford,
and Dr. Warburton, the Bishop of Gloucester; all are in the
same strain as the quotation from Dr. Warburton: "A fine
piece of raillery against a party to which we are no strangers
here!" (3) Witherspoon cites these evils merely to justify
his pointing out corresponding evils in the Church of Scotland.
But there are two abuses in the Church of England which he
points to as unique to that communion: the clergy subscribe
articles of religion which they do not believe, and they are
hardened in the sin; (4) and the people and the work are not
considered in the settlement of the clergy in their charges,
so that they are not called parishes, but livings. (5) Both
of the charges he assumes without proof.

Both/

1. Chapter vi. p.209, this thesis
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, pp. 259-260.
3. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, 260.
4. Witherspoon, Works, vol. iv, p. 335.
5. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, p. 207.

Both the Church of Scotland and the Secession church had yet to awake to their foreign missionary responsibilities; but the ^{beginnings} ~~roots~~ of the missionary enterprise that swept the Church in the nineteenth century were discernible in the Church in the days of Witherspoon's ministry. In the first Assembly in which Witherspoon sat, a collection was authorized for the Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge. ⁽¹⁾ This society was incorporated in Scotland in 1709 to provide religious instruction for the children of the Highlands and Islands who had no schools. The work of the society was farther extended to provide missionaries to the red Indians; in 1758 the society voted: "Among these savages, the society cheerfully resolved to maintain two missionaries." ⁽²⁾ Every few years the Church would grant this society a collection ⁽³⁾ at the doors of all the churches.

One Assembly authorized a collection to build and endow a protestant church in Breslau; ⁽⁴⁾ other Assemblies authorized additional collections to maintain missions in North America, especially in Pennsylvania in connection with the Dutch Church; ⁽⁵⁾ to help endow the newly founded College of New Jersey, to which Witherspoon was to go as president; and to ⁽⁶⁾ assist/

1. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, p. 207
2. Witherspoon, A sermon, etc., to which is subjoined A Short Account of the Present State of the Society, Edinburgh, 1758; p. 77
3. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, p. 290
4. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. i, p. 168.
5. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. i, p. 280
6. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, p. 51 footnote.

assist the protestant congregation at/Saarbrucken. The
collection for the Pennsylvania missionaries had amounted to
nearly£1,200 sterling in 1752; a subsequent appeal for the
same cause brought in a like amount. The College of New
Jersey was not only approved as an object worthy of a col-
lection, but was recommended by the Assembly to the generosity
of the nobility and gentry.

Witherspoon was in the van of this original interest in
missions. He had said that the supreme desire and care
of every Christian was the progress of his sanctification,
but he evidently believed that a part of every Christian's
sanctification was an interest in converting non-Christians,
whether at home or abroad. In his sermon preached in
Edinburgh in 1758 for the Society for the Propagation of
Christian Knowledge he urges the cause of missions. He
thinks that Britain is being punished by the reverses of
the Seven Years' War, in America and Minorca, for having
neglected to propagate the gospel among the red Indians.
The very instruments of God's reprisal are the Indians who
are standing in need of evangelization. "With a contempt
equally impolitic and unchristian, we suffer [the Indians]
to continue in ignorance of the only living and true God,
and/

1. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, p. 243.
2. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, p. 52.
3. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, p. 288.
4. Morren, Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, p. 51, footnote.

and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." ⁽¹⁾ The politic reasons for missions he points out as follows: the colonies, founded by religious refugees, have already been a source of wealth and power to Britain; her only competitor for the prize is the French; they are successful because they have converted the Indians to their Romish superstition, but the Indians like the British better and would join them if once they were brought to a true Christian faith. The spiritual reasons for missions he urges are: value of each immortal soul; danger of each soul of God's vengeance without Christ; love of the Redeemer; / ^{competition with the} zeal of sinners who spread corruption; need of the earth for the bringing in of Christ's universal kingdom; and the hope that all mankind may be gathered together in heaven.

In a later sermon to his own congregation in Paisley, and in his Treatise of Regeneration he adds to these missionary motives -- that missions are politic and that they are good for the ones ministered to -- the principle that missionary activity is the inevitable outgrowth of a truly Christian individual or church. He says that love toward God must issue in love to our fellowmen, and a love for their souls.

In his words; "It is impossible but this love, if it be real/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. iv, p. 274.

real, must, in every believer, evidence itself in a deep concern for, and conscientious endeavour after, the salvation of others. Whomsoever we love, we naturally express this love, by endeavouring to avert from them those ills we most fear, and to procure for them those advantages which to ourselves appear most valuable⁽¹⁾".

Witherspoon points out that only those who have heard of Christ and have accepted him as their Saviour will be saved from the just wrath and vengeance of God. Those who have never heard of him cannot be saved, as he is the only Redeemer for mankind; they are without hope or excuse. They may have the hope of yearning or aspiration, but they cannot have the hope of expectation; they are without excuse because they have the general revelations of God in his works of creation and providence. But their guilt is in proportion to their knowledge. That they are in danger of damnation is all Christians need to know to fire their missionary zeal. What God will do with those who have not the knowledge of Christ, it does not behoove Christians to know; Witherspoon says, "on such a question, no doubt, modesty and caution is highly commendable; and perhaps it were^{wise} in some respects to suspend the determination altogether."⁽²⁾

In/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. ii, p. 340
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. iv, p. 261

In connection with this appeal for missions Witherspoon speaks of the giving of money for the maintenance of missionaries. He says that the non-Christian use of money feeds pride, increases wants, and inflames appetites. This not only gives to those who thus misuse their money, a narrow turn of mind, but often wastes their substance, and obstructs their liberality, by taking away both the inclination and the ability to bestow. If giving does not minister to both body and soul, it is worthless, and unworthy the name of charity; it is mere selfishness masquerading as charity. Christians must give their money toward the two-fold missionary end: fitting the heathen for heaven by suitable instruction, and rescuing them from want and idleness in this world by teaching them lawful industry.

Hugh Blair, Witherspoon's acquaintance since youth, was the fashionable minister of one of the charges of the High Church in Edinburgh. His sermons were popular, even with Samuel Johnson; the King had granted him an annual pension⁽¹⁾ because he liked his sermons.⁽¹⁾ Blair was one of the inner circle of the Moderate Party, an intimate of Robertson. He comes into clear contrast with Witherspoon in the comparison of the sermons that each preached before the Society in Scotland for the Propagating of Christian Knowledge.

They/

(1) Bower, History of the University of Edinburgh, vol.iii,
p. 17

They both held the same theology; at least, Blair professed to orthodoxy. But their difference lies in their interpretation of their theology, and in the points to which they gave emphasis. The title of Blair's sermon is, On the Importance of Religious Knowledge to Mankind; ⁽¹⁾ Witherspoon gives his sermon the title, The Absolute Necessity of Salvation through Christ. ⁽²⁾

Blair emphasized man's side of salvation; Witherspoon emphasized God's part in salvation. Blair speaks of cooperating with God after we are sanctified, while Witherspoon would admit of no such phrase lest it feed the presuming pride of man that his own efforts are a compound of his salvation. One needs a newspaper vocabulary to describe Witherspoon's flaying of those pretended advocates of true theology who offer any escape from the utter abasement of the pride of man. Blair's idea of a sanctified world is much pleasanter than that of Witherspoon. "Truth and righteousness shall at length prevail"; by "the assurance of proportionable improvements" we shall at length arrive through "various degrees" at the real Christian faith and the setting up of the Kingdom of God on earth. This is Blair's language. But Witherspoon had no use for relative language. He saw life in terms of absolute categories; things were either right or wrong; /

1. Blair, Sermons, vol. ii, Sermon XV.
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. iv, Sermon XV.

wrong; either a man was regenerate and therefore living a sanctified life, or he was unregenerate and still liable to the wrath of God. ⁽¹⁾ He was trying to suit lost sinners to a salvation of one pattern; he was not trying, as was Blair, to suit the gospel to man. Implied in Blair's preaching is a view that God will save the world by various ways, but especially by the gospel of Christ. Witherspoon preached that the world is thoroughly bad, that few are to be saved, and that doom is impending, yet stayed moment by moment by the hand of a merciful God to allow a few more to escape by Christ's salvation from the holocaust of judgment. Blair's future is in this world, and lies in the hope of the unhurried arrival of God's reign on earth; Witherspoon's reward is in heaven, and is bestowed on the elect few at the time of death, an event always likely to happen.

In the closing paragraphs of their respective sermons they both compliment the Society on its work and wish it well. Blair stops with the exhortation, "With such good designs, it becomes all to co-operate, who are lovers of mankind" in order that the "blessings of those who are now ready to perish through lack of knowledge, descend upon their heads." ⁽²⁾ Witherspoon closes his missionary appeal/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. i, p. 215
2 Blair, Sermons, vol. ii, p. 425.

appeal with an evangelistic appeal to his audience, that while they are thinking of the needs of the unconverted they are not to take for granted their own salvation. He associates the working out of their own salvation, with helping others to work out their salvation; into these two particular channels he turns the enthusiasm and resolution his sermon has aroused.

Witherspoon's writings were an important part of his career in the Scottish Church. All that he wrote were published with particular occasions in mind; they grew out of his participation in the life of his day. Their subject matter without exception is religious. Literature, secular politics and science have no place in his works except where they touch religion. He refers to the Spectator, Pope and Swift; but by far the greatest number of his secular allusions refer to religious authors such as Baxter, Burnet, Doddridge, Warburton and Tillotson. Beyond the classics and French writers of a day earlier than his own, Witherspoon knew very little of the writings of men outside Scotland and England. The influence of the great eighteenth century minds that challenged Christianity had not touched Scottish shores; Witherspoon may have heard of Kant, Rousseau or Voltaire, but he says nothing of them. How little he was conversant with the protestant religions of the continent is/

is illustrated by a timid reference that he made to the Moravians, which he qualified with saying, "I confess myself to have so little acquaintance with these Hernhutters, as they are called, either as to their principles or practices, that I cannot very fully handle the subject".⁽¹⁾

In this part of the century Scottish writings were widely outside Scotland. read ~~on the continent~~ The works of Lord Kames, Blair,⁽²⁾ and Robertson made the tour of the continent. Witherspoon's works translated into Dutch are the Ecclesiastical Characteristics, Essay on Justification, Serious Inquiry into Nature and Effects of Stage, and the Treatise on Regeneration.

The Bible was Witherspoon's pre-eminent source of illustration and argument. In his Essay on Justification he quotes from the Bible thirty-nine times in 60 pages, besides making numerous other scriptural allusions; yet in the same essay he makes only four secular literary references and takes one illustration from contemporary life. In his Treatise on Regeneration, which he published a few years before the close of his Scottish ministry, he quotes from the Bible on an average of more than once to every page -- a decided increase in the practice over his earlier essay on justification - yet his references to sources other than scripture/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. i, p.95 footnote.
2. Hume Brown, History of Scotland, p. 375.

scripture are only four.

The style in which Witherspoon wrote remains the same through all his published works. He learned the craftsmanship of writing under Professor Stevenson when he was a student at the university; to this he added his individual manner of expressing himself. He early developed a fixed style. As did most writers of the period, he expressed himself in long sentences of complex structure; he often uses two adjectives^s where one would have done. Witherspoon is devious and thorough but he has the thoroughness of a good hound covering a field for a scent; the reader does not mind following his tergiversations because in the end he leads him to a convincing conclusion. There is no pattern to his sentences; he scarcely ever uses a balanced sentence. However, he uses certain literary devices; a few may be said to be typical of his style, such as; the rhetorical question, argument by analogy, and repetition and recapitulation. Several of his writings are notable for his use of satire. He occasionally turns an epigram; for example, "Past mercies are forgotten at the approach of future trials". Most of his metaphors are taken from daily life, from household occupations, or agriculture, or weaving, or seafaring. He often omits the relative pronoun "that" in introducing a relative clause; but he has this peculiarity in common with Principal Robertson who/

who was criticised for it by David Hume. Only rarely does he omit a preposition as he does in this sentence: "This expression implies a confidence and reliance on God -- ." (1) (2)

His language is singularly free from any colloquialism or phraseology peculiar to his day. He writes in order to convince, not merely to enlighten, nor to amuse; he writes to create an effect upon the reader that will issue in action. His style is as strong as his beliefs.

In a paragraph in which he justifies his use of irony and satire, Witherspoon gives his opinion of the literature of his day. He said that readers were too slothful to apply their minds long to any subject. "This disposition has been wonderfully gratified, and wonderfully increased by the generality of writers among us for some time past. The authors of periodical publications, such as reviews, magazines, and even common newspapers, for their own interest, have long vied with one another in the variety and liveliness of the pieces which make up their several publications. From perusing these, it is so easy to get a little superficial knowledge of every subject, that few look any further for the means of forming their opinions in religion, government, or learning. Another species of composition, proceeding on the same principles, is novel-writing. What an inundation of/

1. Stewart, Life of Robertson, p. 53
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. iii, p. 194

of these we have had these twenty years past in Great Britain, is sufficiently known. It would be an entertainment to enumerate them by their titles, and see what proportion they make of the whole new books in any given period of time. -- This made it necessary for me to fall upon a method of composition which might have some chance to procure the attention of the public; and I could think of none more proper than irony; which, when well executed, is almost universally (1) pleasing".

On November 19, 1766 the trustees of the College of New Jersey met to select a new president for the college. The name of the Reverend Dr. John Witherspoon was put before the meeting; it is not known who made the suggestion. Witherspoon was elected to the vacant presidency. "In all the extant letters relating to the election the emphasis is placed on Witherspoon's ecclesiastical rather than his educational value to the colonies." (2) A copy of the minute of the election, together with a letter urging his acceptance, was sent to Witherspoon in the care of Mr. Richard Stockton, a lawyer of Princeton and a graduate and trustee of the College of New Jersey, who happened to be in London. With the letter was sent, also a copy of the official account of the/

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, pp. 248-249.
2. Collins, President Witherspoon, vol. i. p . 72.

the College published in 1764. These documents were sent in duplicate to a London agent of the Province of New Jersey, for his use in case Mr. Stockton were not in the city. Mr. Stockton was urged by the trustees to go to Paisley and press their election upon Dr. Witherspoon.

Before Mr. Stockton reached Paisley the following February, Witherspoon had received a letter from partisans in the American Presbyterian church discouraging his acceptance of the pro^fferred election. Mr. Stockton was able to overcome the effects of this letter, and to put the offer in such a light that Witherspoon was willing to accept it. The importance of the college, the nature of the place geographically, and the amount of salary were all made clear. The opposition of Witherspoon's friends was overcome. But Mrs. Witherspoon held out against the offer; owing to her resistance, Witherspoon was compelled to write to Mr. Stockton, now returned to London and on the eve of sailing for America, that he must
(1)
refuse the election.

Witherspoon considered his refusal so final that he set about trying to find a man to accept the election in his place. He suggested Mr. Charles Nisbet, minister of Montrose, to Mr. Stockton. But the suggestion seems never to/

1. Collins, President Witherspoon, vol. i, pp. 73-83

to have been taken seriously either by the Trustees of the College or by Mr. Nisbet. Nearly twenty years later, however, Mr. Nisbet did go to America to become president of a college in Pennsylvania.⁽¹⁾

Having gained her point in May, Mrs. Witherspoon straightway weakened. During the summer an American medical student, Benjamin Rush, had been able to resolve Mrs. Witherspoon's fears about America. When it became known that there was the probability of successfully bringing Witherspoon to Princeton, re-election was quickly voted.⁽²⁾ Witherspoon accepted the offer. The President-elect and his wife received many heartening letters from persons in America. An American travelling in Scotland visited Paisley, met Dr. and Mrs. Witherspoon and wrote back that he had been agreeably disappointed in Mrs. Witherspoon; instead of the "poor, peevish, reserved discontented" lady he had expected to find, he met a "well-looking, genteel, open, friendly woman -- which perhaps you will be surprised at".⁽³⁾

The suit initiated against Witherspoon in 1764 by John Snodgrass charging Witherspoon with criminal libel was not settled until eight years after Witherspoon had left Scotland. Among/

1. Low, Memorials of the Parish Church of Montrose, pp. 68-69.
2. Ms. Records of the Presbytery of Paisley. April 12, 1768.
3. Collins, President Witherspoon, vol. i, p.86.

Among his other preparations for leaving his native land in 1768, Witherspoon had to provide for the payment of damages in case the suit should be decided against him. Accordingly, on the fifth of February, 1768, he fixed with three friends in Paisley that they would pay any expenses necessary and that he would reimburse them. A bailie, a manufacturer, and the town clerk signed a legal instrument binding themselves as "cautioners and sureties" that Witherspoon would make "due and thankful payment" of whatever the Court of Session should please to award to the six pursuers against Dr. Witherspoon. Witherspoon, on his part, bound himself to re-imburse "said cautioners" for all premiums, damages and expenses consequent on the decision of the court. The decision was made by the court on the ninth of March, 1776; Witherspoon's "cautioners" came forward and registered their bond of surety May 1, 1776. Such was their loyalty and their trust that their former minister would keep to his
(1) (2)
bond.

After this matter of personal business was arranged, Witherspoon set out for London to secure books for the college library and to observe the latest methods of education. He was anxious to learn as much as possible about secondary/

1. Register of Deeds, Mackenzie Office, vol. 219, folio 853, May 1, 1776.
2. Appendix 12.

secondary education, as he planned to revive the school that had formerly been conducted in connection with the College. From London he went to Holland for a fortnight's stay to form the acquaintance of the leading men of the Dutch Church. He hoped that the Dutch Church might send a professor to Princeton under whom Dutch divinity students in America might pursue their studies for the ministry.⁽¹⁾

On his return to Paisley in April he set about making final preparations for his departure for America. The session of the Laigh Church, the magistrates and town-council of Paisley,⁽²⁾ and the Presbytery of Paisley⁽³⁾ all concurred in his request for the dissolution of the pastoral relation. The kirk-session and the town-council explained that their reluctance to let Witherspoon go was only overcome by his own request that they make no opposition. While the presbytery were more formal in the wording of their concurrence with his request, they showed their good will by obliging him in a final request. Witherspoon asked the presbytery to make his demission from the Paisley charge official only when they were sure he had sailed for America. He asked this lest any unforeseen circumstance should arise at the last moment to prevent his going to America. He did not wish to fall between/

1. Collins, President Witherspoon, vol. i, pp. 90-91.
2. Ms. Records Paisley Town-council, May 19, 1768.
3. Ms. Records Presbytery of Paisley, May 10, 1768.

(1)
between the Princeton presidency and the Paisley pastorate.

But events moved according to plan. He preached his last sermon on May 15; remained in Paisley long enough on the following day to see to the last details of publishing his sermons, the introduction to which is dated May 16; and then set out from Paisley with his family for Greenock. In the minutes of the Presbytery of Paisley is introduced the letter that Witherspoon wrote on May 18, 1768, after he had embarked in the brigantine, Peggy, asking them to proceed to declare the Laigh Church vacant, as he was on his way to America. This letter was entered in the minutes of the June meeting, together with a request from the patrons of the charge asking the presbytery to declare the church vacant. This was done. With this action ended John Witherspoon's official connection with the Church of Scotland.

(2)
Why Witherspoon left Scotland for America he never said directly. In his letter to ^{the} presbytery intimating his acceptance of the call to New Jersey he said, "The reasons inducing me to this is unnecessary to trouble the Presbytery with: it is sufficient to say that no dissatisfaction either with the Church of Scotland or my present Charge has in/

1. Ms. Records of the Presbytery of Paisley, May 10, 1768
2. Ms. Records of Presbytery of Paisley, June 22, 1768.

in the least contributed to it. On the contrary I part with all my connections in Scotland with the greatest Reluctance and shall ever retain a grateful sense of the obligations I ly under to my Brethren in the Ministry in this Presbytry-and elsewhere as well as to a very affectionate Congregation the care of which I am now to surrender. I do therefore hereby demit my charge in this place hoping the Presbytry will receive it and Conceive their Sentence in such terms as it may plainly appear to be of the nature of a Translation and that I depart in full Communion with the Church of Scotland.⁽¹⁾ In his farewell sermon at Paisley he asks the congregation to "attend with composure" for he does not intend to justify his own conduct; "least of all do I intend to satisfy you of the motives which have induced me to accept of a call to a distant part of the world, and, in some degree, a different employment in the Church of Christ".⁽²⁾

In lieu of a statement of his reasons for going to America, his friends had to be content with his declaration that he was leaving Scotland with regret. There is no ground for the oft-repeated rumour that he left Scotland a persecuted and disappointed man.⁽³⁾ It is true that he was discouraged with the scope and prospects of his ministry in Scotland.

Witherspoon/

1. Ms. Records of the Presbytery of Paisley, May 10, 1768
2. Witherspoon, Works, vol. iii, p. 259
3. Appendix ll
4. see above, p. 184; p. 193, this thesis

Witherspoon would never have left Scotland because of discouragement with his lot, nor would he have gone to America primarily to better himself professionally. This is indicated, together with the deciding motive, in his own words, "One act of silent submission, or a quiet application to those duties that are immediately necessary, though neither easy nor honourable, is of much more value than a long tract of activity and zeal in a public and visible sphere of action, sweetened by reputation and applause. --In this way is your obedience given to God, and in this way will you find it pleasant and profitable to yourselves. -- But if you allow any other motives to have place, if you take upon you to judge of what is most proper or expedient, or even practicable, you will pollute every part of your duty, and find yourselves often involved in impenetrable darkness. If what is your duty be the inquiry, and interest set aside, if duty be the object of your attention, and events left to God, you will find unspeakable consolation in the meantime, as well as the success more effectually secured than it could ~~be~~ possibly have been by any anxiety of your own"⁽¹⁾.

1. Witherspoon, Works, vol. ii, pp. 321-322.

CONCLUSION.

The local parish was Witherspoon's unit of work. He influenced the moral outlook of his day, but only in a limited way. Through his party leadership he swayed the life of the Church, but he did not dominate it. But he completely leavened his own parishes. He visited the people in their homes; he catechised them; he brought them under the discipline of the kirk-session; he preached to them and administered to them the sacraments. In the true tradition of the Scottish ministry he took responsibility for their civil life as well as for their Christian nurture; he worked to provide them with education, to free them from oppression, and to make them do their duty as members of the state and of society.

In various ways Witherspoon exercised a wide moral influence. His writings ran ^{through} ~~through~~ several editions; some of his works were translated into Dutch and French. His missionary motives and outlook were wide and deep. Toward the increasing prosperity of his day Witherspoon helped his fellow Scotsmen to develop a Christian attitude. He interpreted the ecclesiastical unrest as determined not only by spiritual causes, but by economic and political pressure.

One/

One wishes he had turned his energies toward trying to free the colliers from the serfdom that bound them and their families to the mines.

Witherspoon was less distinguished in the life of the Church as a moral leader than as a controversialist. He was more interested in the Church than in the rest of society; through controversy he hoped to edify the Church. No selfish objectives of advancement or popularity motivated his contentions; he felt he was fighting for progress, and that his opponents were obstructionists. He never made controversy an end in itself. He was unquestionably the leader of the Popular Party. His character and his constructive churchmanship excelled; his expressions were the voice of the party, whether upon the question of the morality of the stage or the expediency of a settlement.

Too intelligent to be a simple-minded partisan, Witherspoon was also too honest to feign a calculated conformity. Consequently he never fell into evil partisan ways. He knew that recriminations lead nowhere; that the will to be in the right is always bad; and that negatives are not sceptres. On the contrary, he coupled toleration with conviction; he used his penetrating knowledge of human nature and his familiarity/

familiarity with the letter and spirit of the Bible, to heal rather than to aggravate. In church controversies he had learned to combine loyalty to principle with tact and stratagem. It was because of his ecclesiastical rather than his educational leadership that the colonies wanted him. It was because he considered the call to America a challenge to these qualities, a greater challenge than he saw in the Scottish ministry, that he decided to leave his native land and his life-long associations.

Witherspoon cast over a devoted parish upon which he exerted an ever-widening influence, and he deserted ecclesiastical circles where he had won an enviable reputation. American Presbyterianism seemed to be in no small danger of disintegration; the very existence of the College of New Jersey was threatened. There was no egotism in Witherspoon's animating conviction that he was the man to save the institution and probably the Church from being shattered by faction. History has confirmed the rightness and the unselfishness of his decision.

APPENDIX.

1. "In Scotland and the Union, p. 237, I stated on the authority of Professor Hutcheson that the Crown had the right of presenting to 550 out of 950 livings, and Carlyle in his ironical attack on the Tragedy of Douglas, p. 20, exceeds this statement, estimating the Crown patronages as more than two-thirds of the whole. That both these writers were greatly in error is evident from the following table compiled from a most judicious pamphlet, Thoughts of a Layman concerning Patronage and Presentation, 1769, p. 35:

Benefices in hands of Crown	334
" " " " Nobles	309
" " " " Gentry	233
" " " " Royal Burghs	45
" " " " Colleges and Universities	18
" " " " Burghs of Barony	2
" sold under the Act of 1690	<u>3</u>
Total	944 "

Mathieson, The Awakening of Scotland, p. 145 footnote.

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2. The birth register of Yester parish for the years that would contain the record of John Witherspoon's birth are lost. But in His Majesty's Register House in Edinburgh is preserved the baptismal record of the Parish. This baptismal record shows that John Witherspoon was baptised/

baptised on February 10th, 1723. The rule of custom was that babies should be christened as soon after birth as possible; in later years Witherspoon himself speaks of this custom (vol. iii, p. 292) It is certain that he was born in 1723. As to the day of his birth, February 5th, is the date given in all the accounts of his life, without exception; those who give 1722 as the year of his birth, by fixing that date, would make the minister of Yester appear to delay for over a year the christening of his first-born son.

"The Rev. John Thomson, author of the article on the parish of Yester in the New Statistical Account of Scotland by the Ministers of the Respective Parishes, (Edinburgh, 1845), was the first to call attention to the error in the traditional date. Corroboration is found curiously in an American diary. One evening in October, 1770, Dr. Ezra Stiles of Yale was President Witherspoon's host at New Haven, Conn., and drew from his guest a brief resumé of his life, recording the information in his diary. The dates of Dr. Witherspoon's matriculation at Edinburgh, of his ordination, and of his receiving an honorary degree from St. Andrews, are accurately given. The date of his birth is recorded as 1723. There seems to be no reason for assuming that this date/

date is wrong". Collins, President Witherspoon, vol. i, p. 11, footnote.

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3. The facts on which the claim of Witherspoon's descent from Knox is based are summarized by Collins, President Witherspoon, vol. i, p. 5, footnote 9: "John Knox was twice married. He left no children by his first wife. By his second wife, Margaret Stuart, - he had among other children a daughter Elizabeth born about 1570 who married in 1594 the Rev. John Welsh of Ayr. She died in 1625 three years after her husband. They had three sons and two daughters, of whom only the second son, Josias, and his younger sister Louise, are concerned in the present matter.

"Josias Welsh was the father of the once celebrated John Welsh, the deprived minister of Irongray, Dumfries. A Reverend John Blackader in his manuscript memoirs (Wodrow MSS., Advocates Library, Edinburgh) mentions the fact that he was acquainted with a young woman in Fife who was "a cousin of John Welsh of Irongray". This was approximately in 1674 when this John Welsh was making a preaching tour of Fifeshire.

"Louise Welsh, the second daughter of Elizabeth Knox and John Welsh, the elder, was born at Jonsac in France in May 1613/

1613; but after 1625, when she appears as a witness to her mother's will, all trace of her is lost. She is supposed to have returned to Scotland, to have married, to have settled in Fifeshire, and to have become the mother of the unidentified "young woman" of the Blackader manuscript. Moreover, this "young woman" is supposed to have married one of two brothers, David or James Walker, farmers at Leslie in Fifeshire, and thus to have become the mother of the Rev. David Walker, minister of Temple Parish. The Leslie birth and marriage records afford no light, as they do not antedate 1673 and 1729 respectively.

"It is scarcely necessary to point out that genealogical claims based on suppositions like the above cannot be accepted seriously.

"With David Walker the descent gets back to firm ground again. He married Margaret Paterson and was the father of Thomas and Anne (Anna) Walker, the latter of whom married the Reverend James Witherspoon and became the mother of President Witherspoon. Her brother Thomas, in his day a well-known Scottish ecclesiastical writer, is the earliest of the alleged Knox descendants to claim the ancestry in print. This he does in his Vindication of the Discipline and Constitution of/

of the Church of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1774, p. 379).

Assuming that he derived his information from his father, the Rev. David Walker of Temple, the Knox kinship is carried back close enough to the time of John Welsh of Irongray and the unknown cousin to acquire at least an air of possibility; but here again the evidence is lacking.

"Dr. David Laing (Knox's Works, edited for the Bannatyne Club, Edinburgh, 1865, vol. vi, p. lxxiii) considered it extremely doubtful that any descendants of Knox were existing. Dr. Charles Rogers (Genealogical Memoirs of John Knox and Family of Knox, edited for the Grampian Club, London, 1879, p. 147) makes no reference to descendants although admitting that "it is not improbable" Louise Welsh may have been the mother of the young woman described as the cousin of John Welsh of Irongray. William Crawford, (Knox Genealogy, Edinburgh, 1896, p.5) thinks it is doubtful if any lineal descendants of the Reformer exist. Dr. D. Hay Fleming of St. Andrews, the historian and modern authority on Knox, in a letter to the author of these lines, admitted that the claim could not lightly be set aside, but had no fresh evidence in its support; while the authorities of H. M. Register House at Edinburgh frankly expressed to the writer their disbelief in the claim.

"Finally/

"Finally it may be added that President Witherspoon himself does not appear to have ever claimed descent from the Reformer.

"The most generous conclusion that can be reached, after examination of all available sources, manuscript and printed, is the Scottish one of 'not proven'".

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4. There was no presbyterial opposition to the settlement of Witherspoon at Beith, as Collins indicates (President Witherspoon, vol. i, p. 21): "But before he could be ordained, a protest was lodged against him on the score of unorthodoxy. It was decided to proceed with his trials and in March they were heard at Irvine, when he defended once more the principles of his precocious thesis which seems to have been the casus belli. Meeting approval, and no further objection being raised to his 'Doctrine, Life, or Conversation', the date of his ordination was set for April, 11, 1745."

Mr. Collins' assertions that a protest was lodged against Witherspoon on the score of unorthodoxy, and that there was opposition to him on account of his University graduation thesis, are unfounded, as far as I am able to judge from the records of the Presbytery of Irvine.

These carefully kept, manuscript records show that on

January 25, 1745 the presbytery unanimously concurred with Witherspoon's call to Beith, ordered him to enter immediately upon his trials for ordination, and appointed him to supply the Beith Church meanwhile. At the next meeting of the presbytery, February 19, 1745, he was heard in the parts of trial appointed at the January meeting, and approved. He was ordered to be ready at the next meeting of ^{the} presbytery with further parts of trial, among which he was ordered to be ready to defend his graduation thesis. He gave copies of the thesis to those members of ^{the} presbytery appointed to ^{the} impugn it. At the March meeting of ^{the} presbytery, March 12, 1745, he was approved in the assigned parts of trial, which ^{the} included his defence of his thesis. At this meeting ^{the} presbytery set the day for his ordination.

The interval between Witherspoon's call and his ordination was merely the length of time necessary for him acceptably to pass the trials set by the presbytery as a condition upon his ordination. This was the normal procedure when a probationer sought ordination; the length of time was not out of the ordinary.- Defending his graduation thesis was merely a part of the testing he had to undergo in the ordinary course of ^{ial} presbyter/ procedure.

Mr./

Mr. Collins implies that Witherspoon passed unexceptionably the test of his "Doctrine, life and conversation" before the day for his ordination was set. As a matter of fact, this test as to his doctrine, life and conversation was part of the ordination service itself. At a point in the service the presbytery always waited in silence to see if any from outside the presbytery would bring any charges against the man about to be ordained.

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5. "Following the lead of Dobie, the annotator of Timothy Bont, later historians of Beith have always stated that the town is of modern growth, there being only five feued houses at the period of the Revolution Settlement, 1688.

"This is an obvious mistake, as in 1752 Dr. Webster found seven hundred inhabitants in Beith. It is not believable that in 64 years, in that -- stagnant period, there could be such a remarkable increase of population. Dobie has been misled by a reference in some of the church documents to which he had access to the Kirktoun of Beith consisting of 'five feued houses' besides the kirk and minister's manse./

Manse. Obviously this reference was to the buildings on the glebe lands and not to the whole town." The Book of Beith, p. 36.

6. Cochrane Correspondence, p. 120 (Maitland Club Publications), Glasgow, 1836. The following letter and the receipt which it enclosed are further proof of Witherspoon's active leadership in raising the militia in his own parish.

" Beith, 12th February 1836

Dear Sir,- I send you a document which is illustrative of the transactions to be detailed in the Cochrane Correspondence now under your editorial charge. It is a subscription paper by the feuars and tenants in the Barony of Broadstone, in this parish, to defray the expense of a party of Beith militia, which was raised by the Reverend John Witherspoon, then minister here, and at the head of which he marched to Glasgow to join the King's army against the Pretender. The preamble is in the handwriting of Mr. Witherspoon, and so is the indorsed receipt. At Glasgow the Beith party received orders to return, but the reverend commander went forward, was at the battle of Falkirk, where the rebels were victorious, and where/

where he was taken prisoner. He was carried to Doune
Castle, and kept for some time. Along with him was the Rever-^{end}-/
Andrew M'Vey, afterwards minister of Dreghorn, who got out
of the state prison in the disguise of a female carrying a
tea kettle.

"Several parishes in this district sent out parties of
volunteers in aid of the government, and to this they were
encouraged by a resolution of the Presbytery of Irvine,
7th January, 1746.

I am, My Dear Sir,

Your's very truly,

JAMES DOBIE."

The subscription list is headed with a pact, which
reads, in part, "Wee the subscribers, fewers and tennents
within the Barroney of Broadstone in the parish of Beith,
doe hereby bind ourselves, each of us for ourselves effeiring
to our respective valuations, to furnish seven men to join
the other Militia from the said parish". These seven men
"shall be supported accordingly, at the rate of twopence
halfpenny sterling upon every pund Scots of valuation".
There follows a list of twenty farms and the names of eighteen
men; the valuation totals over £700, and the subscription
totals/

totals £88:15:0 -- both amounts in Scots pounds.

The enclosed receipt reads as follows: "Received from George Kerr in Dokry (spelled Duckray in the list of farms), fourteen pounds Scots, being the fourth part of the sum he collected to the contributors.

(signed) Jno. Witherspoon".

George Kerr was evidently the collector for the project; before he could collect the full £88:15:0 that was promised, the men had been ordered home and the money that had not been spent was returned to the contributors.

The Encyclopedia Britannica, Cambridge, 1911, vol. XXII, page 221, says, "The pound Scots was at one time of the same value as the English pound, but through gradual debasement of the coinage was reduced at the accession of James^I to about one-twelfth of the value of the English pound, and was divided into twenty shillings, each about the value of an English penny".

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7. The mark (merk) Scots was a silver coin of the value of $1\frac{3}{4}$ pence English, issued first in 1570 and afterwards in 1663. Encyclopedia Britannica, Cambridge, 1911, vol. XVII, page 728.

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8. Collins is proved wrong in his statement in President Witherspoon Volume I, page 61: "The case dragged on until February, 1776, when it was settled by compromise". The manuscript Register of Descreets (Mackenzie Office) vol. 663, March 9, 1776, page 298, states that the court handed down a decree on March 9, 1776. Collins may have meant that the court considered the decree a compromise between the claims of the two parties, for the court's decision awarded Snodgrass and his associates far less than they asked. These manuscript records are in His Majesty's Register House, Edinburgh.

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9. Collins, President Witherspoon, Volume 1, page 41, says, "The Ecclesiastical Characteristics was not Mr. Witherspoon's first anonymous appearance in print. The Scots Magazine for April, 1753, contains an essay by him on Lord Kaims which while not of surpassing merit, is nevertheless interesting as his earliest published defence of the philosophy of common sense and was claimed by him in later years to have antedated the work of Reid. John Erskine of Edinburgh had lent Witherspoon a copy of a book by Dr. Joseph Bellamy of New England 'with which he was much pleased', and to keep Mr. Bellamy/

Bellamy informed on the development of this 'valuable young minister', Mr. Erskine forwarded to his American correspondent the anonymous essay of his younger friend".

After reading the article above referred to I have doubts that it is from the pen of Witherspoon. It is very unlike Witherspoon's style in his other writings. Its subject matter is philosophical; Witherspoon has not only not written anything else on philosophy, but he has actually said that he considered infidelity to be no principle, properly speaking, and that infidelity/^{was}no system of real and positive opinions. (Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 272). The ideas of his two earliest published works, the essay on justification and the Characteristics, reappear over and over again in his later works; it is likely that if he had written an essay on Lord Kames' philosophy that he would have showed the fact in his later writings, either by repeating the ideas or by directly mentioning this essay. Of course, Witherspoon may have written this essay, and been so disappointed with it, that he resolved to forget it and to forego philosophical subjects.

Collins claims this essay as Witherspoon's work on three points:

- 1.. It is signed with the initials J. W.
2. It "was claimed by him".
3. New Jersey Historical Society Preceedings, vol.VI, p.170.

Of the first, it is plain that J. W. might be the initials
of/

of any of scores of men. As to the second point, Collins gives no authority to support this statement that Witherspoon claimed the authorship of this essay in later years. If Witherspoon did claim it, it is very singular that the essay has never been included in any of Witherspoon's collected works. As to the third point, I have been unable to investigate the proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society; but the whole of the substance of what is proved by this reference might easily result from Erskine's assuming that Witherspoon was the author of the article in the Scots Magazine.

In his Life of Erskine, Wellwood lists the names of Erskine's chief American correspondents, but Bellamy's name is not among the list. (p. 161) Wellwood also discusses at length Lord Kames' essays On the Principles of Morality and Religion as this work entered into Erskine's correspondence with America (pp. 207-218); but he does not mention either Mr. Bellamy or his book, or Mr. Witherspoon or his essay on Lord Kames. This is an argument from silence, but it is an argument of some force because Wellwood discusses fully Erskine's other correspondence with America.

Witherspoon certainly considered Lord Kames' writings as un-orthodox. Lord Kames held, with Hume, that both ^{the} moral and/

and physical worlds are ruled by invariable laws, and that man acts from motives he cannot resist. This doctrine of "necessity" is the object of Witherspoon's satirical attack in the Characteristics where he says, in the Athenian Creed; "I believe that the universe is a huge machine, wound up from everlasting by necessity". (Witherspoon, Works, vol. vi, p. 185)

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10 Collins, President Witherspoon, vol. i, pp. 67-68 referring to the History of the Corporation of Servants, says, "A whole chapter is devoted to an account of a debate in the corporation on the propriety of driving out all the 'strange cattle' (the schism of 1763), and mending the fences, etc."

The date, 1763, must be a typographical error, as Collins refers on page 65 to the "report of the Assembly's special committee on schism" being debated in the Assembly of 1766. This debate on schism in 1766 must be the "schism" to which he refers on p. 68. But Witherspoon could not have been referring to the schism debate of 1766, as the History of a Corporation of Servants was published in 1765.

In the passage from which Collins quotes the phrase "strange cattle", Witherspoon says that one of these cattle in/

in particular has "broad shoulders, firm joints, and a lank belly". These are phrases which Witherspoon associates with Hume in his essay on justification, volume i, page 83, footnote; and in the introduction to the History of the Corporation of Servants, volume vi, page 288. Witherspoon's satirical account of the debate on driving out the strange cattle closely parallels the debate described in Morren's Annals of the Assembly, vol. ii, pages 86-92, relative to censuring Hume's writings.

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11. The Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae, vol. iii, p. 174 says that Witherspoon, on leaving Scotland, was "sour and embittered"; Paterson, History of the County of Ayr, p. 262, says, "Mr. Witherspoon's political opinions were not in unison with one of his parishoners; and Paisley became so hot for him that he subsequently emigrated to America, where he made a considerable figure". Various accounts of Witherspoon's life repeat this idea of his being persecuted out of Scotland. All such rumours probably rise from the calumnies circulated against him, which repeatedly appear in the records of the Snodgrass case in the manuscript record of that case in His Majesty's Register House in Edinburgh (Register of Descreets, Mackenzie Office, vol. 663, pp. 1-298, March 9, 1776).

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12. The/

12. The exact extent of Witherspoon's financial resources is only a matter of conjecture. The Statistical Account of Scotland, vol. viii, p. 316, Edinburgh, 1793, gives the amount of his stipend at Beith as 79 bolls of meal, £17:12:6 in money, and a manse and glebe. The manuscript records of the Paisley town-council, November 9, 1757, show that his stipend while he was minister of the Laigh Church was £100 per annum until 1766, when the records of the Paisley town-council show that his annual stipend was augmented by £12; nothing is said of a manse in the town-council records, but Brown's History of Paisley, vol. ii, p. 30 says that Mr. Baine's stipend, which was the same as Witherspoon's, was £100, "including allowance for manse and glebe".

The fact that he owned a house in Beith, which the Book of Beith, page 43, says he sold on leaving Beith for Paisley; the fact that he loaned the Paisley town-council £100, as stated in the records of the Paisley town-council, March 24, 1758; the fact that he bought property in Townhead, Paisley, as recorded in the Paisley Chartulary, 1751-1767, p. 144, all show that he had money beyond his living expenses. From the fact that Snodgrass and his five associates sued Witherspoon for £100 each and £100 costs, as recorded in the Register of Descreets, Mackenzie Office, vol. 663, March/

March 9, 1776; and from the fact that three of the leading men of Paisley went surety for Witherspoon's payment of whatever damages and costs the court might adjudge, although the amount might run into hundreds of pounds (Register of Deeds, Mackenzie Office, vol. 219, folio 853, May 1, 1776), it is possible that Witherspoon was considered a man of some substance.

In the records of the Snodgrass case, referred to in the preceding paragraph, there is described a plea by Witherspoon, written from America, that he is too poor to pay any damages or costs. This plea of poverty is branded by the advocate representing Snodgrass as "an affected pretense"; he argues farther: "Even during his incumbency at Paisley he was in an opulent situation", with a stipend of £170, a bond of annuity for £30, and a landed estate." If the rest of this estimate is as exaggerated as the amount of his stipend, then it is excessive indeed.

It is not likely that he inherited any fortune from his father. The extract from his father's will, in the Edinburgh Register of Testaments, December 23, 1759, mentions only a paltry few weeks salary as King's Chaplain as his only outstanding financial asset. This extract, however, is not conclusive/

conclusive evidence of James Witherspoon's financial status, as it is only an extract, and not a full copy of the will. The Register House in Edinburgh says there is no complete copy of the will. It is not likely that John Witherspoon's wife had any fortune, because her older brother, Robert, inherited the family property, Craighouse, according to Paterson, in the History of the County of Ayr, vol, i. p. 290; Ayr, 1874. Therefore, one may reasonably assume that what private fortune Witherspoon had, he had built himself out of what he saved from his stipends.

Whatever fortune he may have had was dissipated by the time the American War of Independence was over, as witnessed by his poverty which he regretfully relates in a letter from America to a Mr. Alexander Gardner in 1791 regarding a debt he has long owed him. In the letter Witherspoon said that he could not find ~~£~~19 due to ~~Mr.~~ Gardner, although he acknowledged the debt and hoped ultimately to pay it. This letter is recorded in a copy in the Register House, Edinburgh, in the Register of Deeds, Dalrymple office, vol. 251, folio 439, February 9, 1891.

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