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displayed by Johnson, and the lack of understanding, tolerance, or appreciation evinced by Johnson toward any arguments contrary to his beliefs.
INTRODUCTION

Johnson's fundamental political bias as a conservative is well known. The subject taken up in this study is the extent and degree of his conservatism, together with its applications and its ramifications in theory.

Probably the two major popular political issues in Johnson's day were the American colonies, and the Wilkes affair. Because of the multiplicity of Johnson's comments on these matters, both conversationally and in pamphleteering, it has been possible to form a fairly full picture of his attitudes in general on these questions. Likewise, because of this multiplicity of comments directly or indirectly illustrating his views, it has been worthwhile to attempt to show with what degree of consistency Johnson regarded the questions. Some inconsistencies are pointed out.

Since the two subjects mentioned have some degree of relation with nearly all the phases of Johnson's political theories, this paper has been organized in a form to show the applications of the political theories on these particular matters, rather than in a purely descriptive form. The two political issues are discussed separately; a third chapter is devoted to the snuggling up of miscellaneous sides of Johnson's political position.

It might be noted here that—if the writer has conveyed his findings and impressions adequately—the reader should easily discover the frequent reactionary tendencies
JOHNSON AND AMERICA

The matter of subordination is the theoretical basis of Johnson's views on America. A colony was essentially a dependent institution, subject to such treatment and such laws as the mother country might choose to give.

'A colony is to the mother-country as a member to the body, deriving its action and its strength from the general principle of vitality; receiving from the body, and communicating to it, all the benefits and evils of health and disease; liable in dangerous maladies to sharp applications, of which the body however must take the pain; and exposed, if incurably tainted, to amputation, by which the body likewise will be mutilated.\(^1\)

'An English colony is a number of persons, to whom the king grants a charter permitting them to settle in some distant country, and enabling them to constitute a corporation, enjoying such powers as the charter grants, to be administered in such forms as the charter prescribes. As a corporation they make laws for themselves, but as a corporation subsisting by a grant from higher authority, to the control of the authority they continue subject.\(^2\)

When he says "incurably tainted" Johnson refers primarily to any rebellious state of affairs. But by "amputation" he does not imply that the mother country would peaceably give up her colonial rights; rather, he means that the tainted member should be flayed and castigated into a proper state of subordination. Only once does he advance the "Wild Proposal," as he terms it, of withdrawing jurisdiction over the colonies. Such action, he feels, would teach the colonists a lesson.

'Let us restore to the French what we have taken from them. We shall see our colonists at our feet, when they have an enemy so near them. Let us give the Indians

\(^1\) "Taxation No Tyranny" Works. vol. 8, p. 170
\(^2\) ibid. p. 171
arms, and teach them discipline, and encourage them now and then to plunder a plantation.\textsuperscript{1}

In contrast, however, to this theoretical basis was the emotional basis which prejudiced his attitude toward America. Try as he might to be strictly rational in his analysis of the state of affairs across the Atlantic, he was unavoidably influenced by a deep conviction of the despicableness of the Americans. In outbursts of vituperation and invective he gave his views, when reason failed his arguments. This hatred of America did not enhance his conversation. One of the least pleasant recordings in the \textit{Life} describes his anger and unfairness following Boswell's promotion of the American cause.

'Johnson attacked the Americans with intemperate vehemence of abuse. I said something in their favour; and added, that I was always sorry when he talked on that subject. This, it seems, exasperated him; though he said nothing at the time. The cloud was charged with sulphureous vapour, which was afterwards to burst in thunder.—'We talked of a gentleman who was running out his fortune in London; and I said, 'We must get him out of it. All his friends must quarrel with him, and that will soon drive him away.' JOHNSON. 'Nay, Sir; we'll send you to him. If your company does not drive a man out of his house, nothing will.' This was a horrible shock, for which there was no visible cause. I afterwards asked him why he had said so harsh a thing. JOHNSON. 'Because, Sir, you made me angry about the Americans.' BOSWELL. 'But why did you not take your revenge directly?' JOHNSON. (smiling) 'Because, Sir, I had nothing ready. A man cannot strike till he has his weapons.'\textsuperscript{2}

On a similar occasion he met with an especially irritating rejoinder which must have penetrated through his wrath.

\textsuperscript{1} \textit{Works.} vol. 8, p. 211
\textsuperscript{2} \textit{Life.} vol. 111, p. 315-316
"From this pleasing subject, he, I know not how or why, made a sudden transition to one upon which he was a violent aggressor; for he said, "I am willing to love all mankind, except an American:" and his inflammable corruption bursting into horrid fire, he "breathed out threatenings and slaughter;" calling them, "Rascals-Robbers-Pirates;" and exclaiming, he'd "burn and destroy them." Miss Seward, looking to him with mild but steady astonishment, said, "Sir, this is an instance that we are always most violent against those whom we have injured." He was irritated still more by this delicate and keen reproach; and roared out another tremendous volley, which one might fancy could be heard across the Atlantick."

This unreasoning hatred of America had its humorous side. In writing of Christopher Columbus, Johnson saw fit to add several comments.

"...he was under the necessity of travelling from court to court, scorned and repulsed as a wild projector, an idle promise of kingdoms in the clouds: nor has any part of the world yet had reason to rejoice that he found at last reception and employment.

In the same year, in a year hitherto disastrous to mankind..."

Numerous examples of pure invective are not wanting. Boswell has recorded from the notes of Dr. John Campbell several of these.

"Sir, they are a race of convicts, and ought to be thankful for anything we allow them short of hanging."

'Johnson said the first thing he would do would be to quarter the army on the cities, and if any refused free quarters, he would pull down that house, if it was joined to other houses; but would burn it if it stood alone."

"Had we treated the Americans as we ought, and as they deserved, we should have at once razed all their towns and let them enjoy their forests."

In Taxation No Tyranny Johnson makes reference to the "congress of anarchy...impudently held."

Several sections

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1 Life. vol. III, p. 290
2 Works. vol. 8, p. 157
3 Life. vol. II, p. 312
4 ibid. vol. II, p. 315
5 loc. cit.
6 Works. vol. 8, p. 179
of that pamphlet were struck out by the ministry but were obtained by Boswell from the first draft. Among them was the following attempt at satire, an answer to a hypothetical question of the future of an independent America.

'If a new monarchy is erected, they will want a King. He who first takes into his hand the sceptre of America, should have a name of good omen. William has been known both as conqueror and deliverer; and perhaps England, however esteemed, might yet supply them with another William. Whigs, indeed, are not willing to be governed; and it is possible that King William may be strongly inclined to guide their measures: but Whigs have been cheated like other mortals, and suffered their leader to become their tyrant, under the name of their Protector. What more they will receive from England, no man can tell. In their rudiments of empire they may want a Chancellor."

Slavery. The emotional bias spoken of above was made up of several things. First and foremost, Johnson hated slavery, and the Americans were slave-owners. That others shared the guilt in no way lessened its heinousness. The Americans must be subjugated, forced into obedience to the home government, not because they were Americans but because they were slave drivers or tolerated slavery. As we see, had the situation arisen, he would have been just as severe on the English of the West Indies as on those of the mainland, or any others who profited by slavery of any kind. "Here's to the next insurrection of the negroes in the West Indies," was his toast at a dinner when he was visiting in Oxford.

A large part of this hatred of slavery was occasioned by Johnson's religious principles.

"...To omit for a year, or for a day, the most efficacious method of advancing Christianity, in compliance

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1 Life, vol. II, p. 314
2 Ibid. vol. III, p. 200
with any purposes that terminate on this side of the grave, is a crime of which I know not that the world has yet had an example, except in the practice of the planters of America, a race of mortals whom, I suppose, no other man wishes to resemble.\(^1\)

The fact, as he understood it, that the planters made no attempt to promulgate Christianity among the heathen blacks was a terrible sin. Moreover, the fate of a slave was much worse than that of a criminal. "An individual may, indeed, forfeit his liberty by a crime; but he cannot by that crime forfeit the liberty of his children.\(^2\)" The poor slave, on the other hand, was himself doomed to perpetual servitude and his children after him. The criminal might, as retribution for sin committed, have his life spared but lose his liberty; however, by no set of ethics could his children be justly deprived of liberty because of the father's sin. Yet the slave's progeny were automatically enslaved. Johnson's wrath boiled at this and overflowed with the vehement query: "How is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?\(^3\)"

\textbf{Liberty.} The popular talk about liberty was another point which irritated Johnson, and contributed to his prejudice against America. He had a lexicographer's conception of the true meaning of the work and for him the connotation had the implication of no restriction whatsoever. A man must be perfectly free and have complete choice in his every action if he possessed liberty. Of course, that is not the common

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Life.} vol. II, p. 27
\item \textit{Ibid.} vol. III, p. 202
\item \textit{Ibid.} vol. III, p. 200-201
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
understanding of the word in its political sense, and Johnson was only pointing out an obvious fact when he said that any man born under any government, being subject to some restriction, could not be said to have liberty.

'Liberty is the birthright of man, and where obedience is compelled, there is no liberty. The answer is equally simple. Government is necessary to man, and where obedience is not compelled, there is no government.

'If the subject refuses to obey, it is the duty of authority to use compulsion. Society cannot subsist by the power alone of making laws without the power of enforcing them.1

The whole question should, rationally, focus on the point of political necessity. The answer would then be obvious. To talk of government and authority while discussing liberty was absurd; political necessity demanded subservience.

'Here we must again recur, not to positive institutions, but to the unwritten law of social nature, to the great and pregnant principle of political necessity. All government supposes subjects, all authority implies obedience. To suppose in one the right to command what another has the right to refuse, is absurd and contradictory. A state so constituted must rest for ever in motionless equipoise, with equal attractions of contrary tendency, with equal weights of power balancing each other.2

In any case, Johnson felt, the important thing was personal liberty: freedom to conduct one's private affairs unhindered. This he distinguished from popular liberty, which carried the implication of universal political suffrage, and was too intangible a condition to amount to anything.

'He talked in his usual style with a rough contempt of popular liberty. 'They make a rout about universal liberty, without considering that all that is to be valued, or indeed can be enjoyed by individuals, is private liberty. Political liberty is good only so far as it

1 Works, vol. 8, p. 197
2 ibid. vol. 8, p. 74
produces private liberty. Now, Sir, there is the liberty of the press, which you know is a constant topic. Suppose you and 200 men were restrained from printing our thoughts: what then? What proportion would that restraint upon us bear to the private happiness of the nation?"" 

Private liberty is always available. Monarchy and democracy alike do not hinder personal conduct. Johnson says that for himself he does not care what form of government regulates his nation.

"....I would not give half a guinea to live under one form of government rather than another. It is of no moment to the happiness of an individual. Sir, the danger of the abuse of power is nothing to a private man. What Frenchman is prevented from passing his life as he pleases?"

Such liberty as is to be desired is not lacking to all men.

'....where is the government to be found that superintends individuals with so much vigilance, as not to leave their private conduct without restraint? Can it enter into a reasonable mind to imagine, that their own time or houses with men of every other nation are not equally at liberty with ourselves to be parsimonious or profuse, frolick or sullen, abstinent or luxurious? Liberty is certainly necessary to the full play of predominant humours; but such liberty is to be found alike under the government of the many or the few, in monarchies or in commonwealths.'

There are, of course, certain restraints which must be imposed and maintained.

'I introduced the subject of toleration. JOHNSON. "Every society has a right to preserve publick peace and order, and therefore has a good right to prohibit the propagation of opinions which have a dangerous tendency. To say the Magistrate has this right, is using an inadequate word; it is the society for which the magistrate is agent. He may be morally or theologically wrong in restraining the propagation of opinions which he thinks dangerous, but he is politically right. MAYO. "I am of the opinion, Sir, that every man is

1 Life. vol. II, p. 60 2 Life. vol. II, p. 170
3 "Adventurer," No. 84. Works. vol. 3, p. 192
entitled to liberty of conscience in religion; and that
the magistrate cannot restrain that right." JOHNISON.
"Sir, I agree with you. Every man has a right to lib-
erty of conscience, and with that the magistrate cannot
interfere. People confound liberty of thinking with
liberty of talking; nay, with liberty of preaching.
Every man has a physical right to think as he pleases;
for it cannot be discovered how he thinks. He has not
a moral right, for he ought to inform himself, and think
justly. But, Sir, no member of a society has a right to
 teach any doctrine contrary to what the society holds
to be true. The magistrate, I say, may be wrong in
what he thinks; but while he thinks himself right, he
may and ought to enforce what he thinks."

'Talking on the subject of toleration, one day when
some friends were with him in his study, he made his
usual remark, that the State has the right to regulate
the religion of the people, who are the children of the
State...."But, Sir, you must go round to other States
than our own. You do not know what a Brahmin has to say
for himself. In short, 'Sir, I have got no further than
this: Every man has a right to utter what he thinks
truth, and every other man has a right to knock him
down for it. Martyrdom is the test."

He is satirical in speaking of those who wish for lib-
erty to govern themselves. To Johnson, that desire is only
a juvenile impulse.

"...all boys love liberty, till experience convinces
them they are not so fit to govern themselves as they
imagined. We are all agreed as to our own liberty;
we would have as much of it as we can get; but we are
not agreed as to the liberty of others: for in propor-
tion as we take, others must lose. I believe we hard-
ly wish that the mob should have liberty to govern us."

The Bostonians are told to carry out their bluff, if
they wish, and seek liberty in the wilds of nature. There
they can see of what little benefit their liberty is.

'(We are told) The heroes of Boston, if the stamp
act had not been repealed, would have left their town,
their port, and their trade...to disperse themselves
over the country, where they would till the ground, and

1 Life. vol. II, p. 249
2 ibid. vol. IV, p. 12
3 ibid. vol. III, p. 383
fish in the rivers, and range the mountains, AND BE FREE.

'These surely are brave words....

'Yet before they quit the comforts of a warm home for the sounding something which they think better, he cannot be thought their enemy who advises them to consider well whether they shall find it. By turning fishermen or hunters, woodmen or shepherds, they may become wild, but it is not so easy to conceive them free; for who can be more a slave than he that is driven by force from the comforts of life, is compelled to leave his house to a casual corner, and whatever he does, or wherever he wanders, finds every moment some new testimony of his own subjection? If choice of evil be freedom, the felon in the gallowies has his option of labour or of stripes. The Bostonian may quit his house to starve in the fields; his dog may refuse to set, and smart under the lash, and they may then congratulate each other upon the smiles of liberty, "Profuse of bliss, and pregnant with delight."

Again Johnson showed no great reasoning powers, when he spoke of the liberty of thinking. He has said above that the magistrate is politically right in curbing seditious talking. In continuing that thesis he says that a man may have all his actions and speeches dictated to him, but no one can control his thinking. There the man has true liberty: he thinks as he wishes. Care must always be taken, however, that he does not preach what he thinks, if the State judges it false.

"This is the graduation of thinking, preaching, and acting: if a man thinks erroneously, he may keep his thoughts to himself, and nobody will trouble him; if he preaches erroneous doctrine, society may expel him; if he acts in consequence of it, the law takes place, and he is hanged."

"Consider, Sir; if you have children whom you wish to educate in the principles of the Church of England, and there comes a Quaker who tries to pervert them to his principles, you would drive away the Quaker.... Now the vulgar are the children of the State. If anyone attempts to teach them doctrines contrary to what the State approves, the magistrate may and ought to restrain him."

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1 Works, vol. 8, p. 160
2 Life, vol. II, p. 252
3 Ibid, vol. IV, p. 216
Hatred of war. The third force which increased his prejudice toward America was Johnson's hatred of war. Deeply and firmly he despised war, but he felt that the colonies were driving the mother country to it. There was no choice for England, it seemed, but to take up arms against America.

"When subordinate communities oppose the decrees of the general legislature with defiance thus audacious, and malignity thus acrimonious, nothing remains but to conquer or to yield; to allow their claim of independence, or to reduce them by force to submission and allegiance."  

It had become a question of submitting or forcing submission. "They leave us no choice but of yielding or conquering, of resigning our dominion, or maintaining it by force." And England might as well fight. For Johnson there existed no possibility of a simple striking of the shackles which bound America to England. The colonies might win a war, but at least it was necessary to try to prevent them.

"Those who find that the Americans cannot be shown in any form that may raise love or pity, dress them in habiliments of terror, and try to make us think them formidable. The Bostonians can call in to the field ninety thousand men....new enemies will rise up....If we subdue them for the present, they will universally revolt in the next war...."

"To all this it may be answered, that between losing America and resigning it there is no great difference; that it is not very reasonable to jump into the sea, because the ship is leaky. All those evils may befall us, but we need not hasten them."

Yet the man who said this abhorred war. War is the final resource, and only when all other means of settling an issue have been exhausted, should war ever come about.

1 Works. vol. 8, p. 193
2 ibid. vol. 8, p. 199
3 ibid. vol. 8, p. 200
'As war is the last of remedies, cuncta prius tentanda, all lawful expedients must be used to avoid it. As war is the extremity of evil, it is surely the duty of those whose station intrusts them with the care of nations, to avert it from their charge. There are diseases of animal nature which nothing but amputation can remove; so there may, by the depravation of human passions, be sometimes a gangrene in collective life for which fire and the sword are the necessary remedies; but in what can skill or caution be better shown than preventing such dreadful operations, while there is yet room for gentler methods?'

War is the greatest of calamities.

'As war is one of the heaviest of national evils, a calamity in which every species of misery is involved; as it sets the general safety to hazard, suspends commerce, and desolates the country; as it exposes great numbers to hardships, dangers, captivity, and death; no man, who desires the publick prosperity, will inflame general resentment by aggravation of minute injuries, or enforcing disputable rights of little importance.'

These Americans, then, who are forcing the war on England must be severely punished. Johnson has no use for leniency in such cases.

'Since the Americans have made it necessary to subdue them, may they be subdued with the least injury possible to their persons and their possessions! When they are reduced to obedience, may that obedience be secured by stricter laws and stronger obligations! Nothing can be more noxious to society than that erroneous clemency, which, when a rebellion is suppressed, exacts no forfeiture and establishes no securities, but leaves the rebels in their former state. Who would not try the experiment which promises advantage without expense? If rebels once obtain a victory, their wishes are accomplished; if they are defeated, they suffer little, perhaps less than their conquerors: however often they play the game, the chance is always in their favour.'

That there might be solid, upstanding Tories in the colonies who would suffer innocently by a rebellion was an unfortunate circumstance. The guilt for their suffering

1 Works. vol. 8, p. 121
2 Ibid. vol. 8, p. 149
3 Ibid. vol. 8, p. 203
would lie on the heads of their fellow colonists who insti-
gated the rebellion. "To bring misery on those who have not
deserved it, is part of the aggregated guilt of rebellion."!
"The violence of war admits no distinction; the lance that
is lifted at guilt and power, will sometimes fall on inno-
cence and gentleness."

'But there are some who lament the state of the poor Bostonians, because they cannot all be supposed
to have committed acts of rebellion, yet all are in-
volved in the penalty imposed. This, they say, is to
violate the first rule of justice, by condemning the
innocent to suffer with the guilty.

'This deserves some notice, as it seems dictated
by equity and humanity, however it may raise contempt,
by the ignorance which it betrays of the state of man,
and the system of things. That the innocent should
be confounded with the guilty, is undoubtedly an evil;
but it is an evil which no care or caution can pre-
vent. National crimes require national punishments,
of which many must necessarily have their part, who
have not incurred them by personal guilt. If rebels
should fortify a town, the cannon of lawful authority
will endanger equally the harmless burghers and the
criminal garrison....

'This infliction of promiscuous evil may there-
fore be lamented, but cannot be blamed. The power
of lawful government must be maintained; and the mis-
eries which rebellion produces can be charged only on
the rebels."

Johnson's great hatred of war was evidenced in his
"Thoughts on the late Transactions respecting Falkland's
Islands." He points out a few of the horrors of conflict,
as it affects the soldiers themselves.

'The life of a modern soldier is ill represented
by heroic fiction. War has means of destruction more
formidable than the cannon and the sword. Of the thou-
sands and ten thousands, that perished in our late con-
tests with France and Spain, a very small part ever
felt the stroke of an emeny; the rest languished in

1 Works. vol. 8, p. 189
2 Works. vol. 3, p. 404
3 ibid. vol. 8, p. 151
tents and ships, amidst damp and putrefaction; pale, torpid, spiritless, and helpless; gasping and groaning, unpitied among men made obdurate by long continuance of hopeless misery; and were, at last, whelmed in pits, or heaved into the ocean, without notice and without remembrance. By incommmodious encampments and unwholesome stations, where courage is useless, and enterprise impracticable, fleets are silently dispeopled, and armies sluggishly melted away.¹

Boswell comments on this pamphlet:

'In 1771 he published another political pamphlet, ... in which, upon materials furnished to him by ministry, and upon general topicks expanded in his richest style, he successfully endeavoured to persuade the nation that it was wise and laudable to suffer the question of right to remain undecided, rather than involve our country in another war. It has been suggested by some, with what truth I shall not take upon me to decide, that he rated the consequence of those islands to Britain too low. But however this may be, every humane mind must surely applaud the earnestness with which he averted the calamity of war; a calamity so dreadful, that it is astonishing how civilised, nay, Christian nations, can deliberately continue to renew it. His description of its miseries in this pamphlet, is one of the finest pieces of eloquence in the English language.²'

In the same pamphlet, Johnson aligns himself with the "big navy" men who desire armaments for preserving peace.

'It is considered as an injury to the publick by those sanquinary statesmen, that though the fleet has been refitted and manned, yet no hostilities have followed; and they who sat wishing for misery and slaughter are disappointed of their pleasure. But as peace is the end of war, it is the end likewise of preparations for war; and he may be justly hunted down as the enemy of mankind, that can choose to snatch by violence and bloodshed what gentler means can equally obtain.³'

There is a very modern touch in his invective against profiteers. These are the only men who profit by war, has been the rally-cry of pacifists in many ages.

¹ Works. vol. 6, p. 199
² Life. vol. II, p. 134
³ Works. vol. 8, p. 127
'But at the conclusion of a ten years' war, how are we recompensed for the death of multitudes and the expense of millions, but by contemplating the sudden glories of paymasters and agents, contractors and commissaries, whose equipages shine like meteors, and whose palaces rise like exhalations?

'These are the men who, without virtue, labour, or hazard, are growing rich as their country is impoverished; they rejoice when obstinacy or ambition adds another year to slaughter and devastation; and laugh from their desks at bravery and science, while they are adding figure to figure, and cipher to cipher, hoping for a new contract from a new armament, and computing the profits of a siege or tempest.\(^1\)

Representation. Another source of irritation to Johnson was the colonists' demand, "No taxation without representation."

He attempted to approach this question in a reasoning spirit. We must be careful and judicious about this, he said; it is a matter of great importance, and he proceeded to set down the problem in analytical form.

'That the Americans are able to bear taxation is indubitable; that their refusal may be over-ruled is highly probable; but power is no sufficient evidence of truth. Let us examine our own claim and the objections of the recursants, with caution proportioned to the event of the decision, which must convict one part of robbery, or the other of rebellion.\(^2\)

Because of the subordinate nature of the colonies, Johnson found England's claim to be quite valid.

'To secure a conquest, it was always necessary to plant a colony, and territories thus occupied and settled were rightly considered as mere extensions or processes of empire; as ramifications which, by the circulation of one publick interest, communicated with the original source of dominion, and which were kept flourishing and spreading by the radical vigour of the mother-country.

'From the colonies of England differ no otherwise from those of other nations, than as the English constitution differs from theirs. All government is ultimately and essentially absolute, but subordinate societies may have

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\(^1\) Works. vol. 8, p. 122

\(^2\) Ibid. vol. 8, p. 162
more immunities, or individuals greater liberty, as the operations of government are differently conducted. An Englishman in the common course of life and action feels no restraint. An English colony has very liberal powers of regulating its own manners and adjusting its own affairs. But an English individual may by the supreme authority be deprived of liberty, and a colony divested of its powers, for reasons of which that authority is the only judge.¹

In "Taxation No Tyranny" Johnson presents his complete argument, but he uses some assumptions with which the colonists would not have held. The chief one such was that the colonists should be taxed to pay for their own defence.

Present-day England, has, it is well known, forsaken this practice if not this theory. The colonists claimed they were contributing their portion in man power and supplies, and, inasmuch as she benefitted by the colonies, England should share expenses. Johnson did not have this viewpoint.

'To him that considers the nature, the original, the progress, and the constitution of the colonies, who remembers that the first discoverers had commissions from the crown, that the first settlers owe to a charter their civil forms and regular magistracy; and that all personal immunities and legal securities by which the condition of the subject has been from time to time improved have been extended to the colonists, it will not be doubted but the parliament of England has right to bind them by statutes and to bind them in all cases whatsoever, and has therefore a natural and constitutional power of laying upon them any tax or impost, whether external or internal, upon the product of land, or the manufactures of industry, in the exigencies of war, or in the time of profound peace, for the defence of America, for the purpose of raising a revenue, or for any other end beneficial to the empire.²

Johnson neatly disposed of the argument that the colonists should not be taxed, not having been taxed formerly.

¹ Works. vol. 8, p. 168
² ibid. vol. 8, p. 171
His argument was:

'That the Colonists could with no solidity argue from their not having been taxed while in their infancy, that they should not now be taxed. We do not put a calf into the plow; we wait till he is an ox.1'

England would be robbed of her rights if the colonies were to be released. She founded the colonies and thereby possessed authority over them.

'He that wishes to see his country robbed of its rights cannot be a patriot.

'That man therefore is no patriot, who justifies the ridiculous claims of American usurpation; who endeavors to deprive the nation of its natural and lawful authority over its own colonies; those colonies, which were settled under English protection; were constituted by an English charter; and have been defended by English arms.

'To suppose, that by sending out a colony, the nation established an independent power: that when, by indulgence and favour, emigrants are become rich, they should not contribute to their own defence, but at their own pleasure; and that they shall not be included, like millions of their fellow-subjects, in the general system of representation; involves such an accumulation of absurdity, as nothing but the show of patriotism could palliate.

'He that accepts protection, stipulates obedience.2'

The representation for which the colonies clamored was unwarranted. Johnson was definite and logical on this. He showed that by their act of emigrating the colonists had voluntarily forsaken such privileges of suffrage that they might have possessed in England.

'That they who form a settlement by a lawful charter having committed no crime forfeit no privileges, will be readily confessed: but what they do not forfeit by any judicial sentence, they may lose by natural effects. As man can be but in one place at one, he cannot have the advantages of multiplied residence. He that will enjoy the brightness of sunshine, must quit

1 Works vol. 8, p. 160
2 Ibid. vol. 8, p. 151
the coolness of the shade. He who goes voluntarily to America, cannot complain of losing what he leaves in Europe. He perhaps had a right to vote for a knight or burgess: by crossing the Atlantick he has not nullified his right; but he has made its exertion no longer possible. By his own choice he has left a country where he had a vote and little property, for another where he has great property but no vote. But as this preference was deliberate and unconstrained, he is still concerned in the government of himself; he has reduced himself from a voter to one of the innumerable multitude that have no vote. He has truly ceded his right, but he still is governed by his own consent; because he has consented to throw his atom of interest into the general mass of the community. Of the consequences of his own act he has no cause to complain; he has chosen, or intended to choose, the greater good; he is represented, as himself desired, in the general representation. 1

'The americans have voluntarily resigned the power of voting, to live in distant and separate governments, and what they have voluntarily quitted, they have no right to claim. 2

The colonists should not claim the hereditary right of voting.

'Their reason for this claim is, "That the foundation of English liberty, and of all government, is a right in the people to participate in their legislative council."

'They inherit, they say, "from their ancestors, the right which their ancestors possessed, of enjoying all the privileges of Englishmen." That they inherit the right of their ancestors is allowed; but they can inherit no more. Their ancestors left a country where the representatives of the people were elected by men particularly qualified, and where those who wanted qualifications, or who did not use them, were bound by the decisions of men whom they had not deputed.

'The colonists are the descendants of men who either had no vote in elections, or who voluntarily resigned them for something, in their opinion, of more estimation; they have, therefore, exactly what their ancestors left them, not a vote in making laws of in constituting legislators, but the happiness of being protected by law, and the duty of obeying it. 3'

1 Works. vol. 8, p. 176
2 ibid. vol. 8, p. 183
3 ibid. vol. 8, p. 177
In the main, Johnson felt, modern governments were too large to permit valid representation of any minority group. This, however, he did not think was an unfortunate circumstance inasmuch as Parliament would not have functioned any differently under any other arrangement. He believed the present system achieved the desired effect. His remarks indicate his customary depreciatory attitude toward those who did not see eye to eye with him.

'The necessary connexion of representatives with taxes, seems to have sunk deep into many of those minds that admit sounds without their meaning.

'Our nation is represented in parliament by an assemble as numerous as can well consist with order and despatch, chosen by persons so differently qualified in different places, that the mode of choice seems to be, for the most part, formed by chance, and set by custom. Of individuals far the greater part have no vote, and of the voters few have any personal knowledge of him to whom they intrust their liberty and fortune. Yet this representation has the whole effect expected or desired; that of spreading so wide the care of general interest, and the participation of publick counsels, that the advantage or corruption of particular men can seldom operate with much injury to the publick.

'For this reason many populous and opulent towns neither enjoy nor desire particular representatives; they are included in the general scheme of publick administration, and cannot suffer but with the rest of the empire.

'It is urged that the Americans have not the same security, and that a British legislator may wanton with their property; yet if it be true, that their wealth is our wealth, and that their ruin will be our ruin, the parliament has the same interest in attending to them, as to any other part of the nation. The reason why we place any confidence in our representatives is, that they must share in the good or evil which their counsels shall produce. Their share is, indeed, commonly consequential and remote; but it is not often possible that any immediate advantage can be extended to such numbers as may prevail against it. We are, therefore, as secure against intentional depravations of government as human wisdom can make us, and upon this security the
Americans may venture to repose.\textsuperscript{1}

Of the same general tenor and reasoning is the following:

'That a free man is governed by himself, or by laws to which he has consented, is a position of mighty sound: but every man that utters it, with whatever confidence, and every man that hears it, with whatever acquiescence, if consent be supposed to imply the power of refusal, feels it to be false. We virtually and implicitly allow the institutions of any government of which we enjoy the benefit, and solicit the protection. In wide-extended dominions, though power has been diffused with the most even hand, yet a very small part of the people are either primarily or secondarily consulted in legislation. The business of the publick must be done by delegation. The choice of delegates is made by a select number, and those who are not electors stand idle and helpless spectators of the commonweal, wholly unconcerned in the government of themselves.

'Of electors the hap is but little better. They are often far from unanimity in their choice, and where the numbers approach to equality, almost half must be governed not only without, but against their choice.

'How any man can have consented to institutions established in distant ages, it will be difficult to explain....is all are born the subjects of some state or other, we may be said to have been all born consenting to some system of government. Other consent than this, the condition of civil life does not allow. It is the unmeaning clamour of the pedants of policy, the delirious dream of republican fanaticism.\textsuperscript{2}'

Johnson has said, in effect, that it is ridiculous for any man to say he is governed by his own consent; having been born under some form of government, that man surely had no choice but acquiescence to the regulations of the government until such a time as he became of voting age. The topic of representation seemed for some reason always to irk Johnson; he regarded it as petty bickering, "republican fanaticism."

'Whither will this necessity of representation drive us? Is every petty settlement to be out of the

\textsuperscript{1} Works. vol. 8, p. 180
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid. vol. 8, p. 173
reach of government, till it has sent a senator to par-\nliament; or may two of them or a greater number be forced\nto unite in a single deputation? What at last is the dif-
ference between him that is taxed by compulsion without\nrepresentation, and him that is represented by compul-
sion in order to be taxed?\n
Johnson's position. Johnson's attitude was by no means based\non mercenary matters involved. He was not so very greatly\nconcerned with England's economic rights in the colonies, al-
though he does make mention of it, and suggests that it should\nbe preserved.

'That our commerce with America is profitable, how-
ever less than ostentatious or deceitful estimates have\nmade it, and that it is our interest to preserve it, has\never been denied; but surely it will most effectually
be preserved, by being kept always in our own power.
Concessions may promote it for a moment, but superiority
only can ensure its continuance.'

However, in the main, he is little troubled about matters
of commerce. Indeed, he casually makes a very fallacious
statement in saying there is no increase in capital produced
by commerce.

'Talking of trade, he observed, "It is a mistaken
notion that a vast deal of money is brought into a na-
tion by trade. It is not so. Commodities come from
commodities; but trade produces no capital accession
of wealth. However, though there should be little pro-
fit in money, there is a considerable profit in pleasure,
as it gives to one nation the productions of another;
as we have wines and fruits, and many other foreign
articles, brought to us."...."There is, indeed, this
in trade:-it gives men an opportunity of improving
their situation. If there were no trade, many who are
poor would always remain poor. But no man loves labour
for itself.'\n
As a matter of fact, he feels, commerce is of very little

\n1 Works. vol. 8, p. 184
2 ibid. vol. 8, p. 159
3 Life. vol. II, p. 98-99
importance to England. "...our commerce is in a very good state; and suppose we had no commerce at all, we could live very well on the produce of our own country." ¹

Johnson had his usual amount of contempt for Whigs and others who opposed his views, in discussing the colonial situation. Only the rabble and the less intelligent did not agree with him.

'Sir Philip defended the Opposition to the American War ably and with temper, and I joined him. He said the majority of the nation was against the ministry. JOHNSON. "I, Sir, am against the ministry; but it is for having too little of that, of which Opposition thinks they have too much. Were I a minister, if any man wagged his finger against me, he should be turned out; for that which it is in the power of government to give at pleasure to one or to another, should be given to the supporters of the government. If you will not oppose at the expense of losing your place, your opposition will not be honest, you will feel no serious grievance; and the present opposition is only a contest to get what others have. Sir Robert Walpole acted as I would do. As to the American war, the sense of the nation is with the ministry. The majority of those who can understand it is with it; the majority of those who can only hear, is against it; and as those who can only hear are more numerous than those who can understand, and Opposition is always loudest, a majority of the rabble will be for Opposition." ²

His own position as a pamphleteer was due to his strong feelings about the matter, he implies. He makes a pious hope for amicable settlement, and suggests compromises. This "man of the pen" is not the "fire-eater who storms against "those zealots of anarchy" ³ in private conversation.

¹ Life. vol. II, p. 357
² ibid. vol. IV, p. 81
³ Works. vol. 8, p. 156
only the power, but the hope of resistance, and by con-
quering without a battle, save many from the sword.

'If their obstinacy continues without actual hos-
tilities, it may perhaps be mollified by turning out the
soldiers to free quarters, forbidding any personal
cruelty or hurt. It has been proposed that the slaves
should be set free, an act which surely the lovers of
liberty cannot but commend. If they are furnished with
fire-arms for defence, and utensils for husbandry, and
settled in some simple form of government within...the
country, they may be more grateful and honest than their
masters.1"

The future of the colonies does not look bright to John-
son. With a touch of irony he refers to Benjamin Franklin's
rule of progression of American population: "We are told that
the continent of North America contains three millions, not
of men merely, but of Whigs, of Whigs fierce for liberty...2"
"They multiply with the fecundity of their own rattlesmakes.3"

'Their numbers are, at present, not quite sufficient
for the greatness which, in some form of government or
other, is to rival the ancient monarchies; but by Dr.
Franklin's rule of progression, they will, in a century
and a quarter, be more than equal the inhabitants of
Europe. When the Whigs of America are thus multiplied,
let the Princes of the earth tremble in their palaces.
If they should continue to double and to double, their
own hemisphere would not contain them. But let not our
boldest oppugners of authority look forward with delight
to this future of Whiggism.4"

Getting two birds with one stone, Johnson shows his dis-
gust with America and with Rousseau by saying what he thinks
is the worst punishment for a man.

"Rousseau, Sir, is a very bad man. I would sooner
sign a sentence for his transportation, than that of any
felon who has gone from the Old Bailey these many years.
Yes, I should like to have him work in the plantations.5"

1 Works. vol. 8, p. 201
2 ibid. vol. 8, 178
3 ibid. vol. 8, p. 177
4 Life. vol. II, p. 314-315
5 ibid. vol. II, p. 12
JOHNSON AND THE WILKES AFFAIR

One of the important political matters of Johnson's time was the Wilkes Affair. On this subject Johnson made frequent comments and wrote "The False Alarm." Popular feeling was roused by a bitter controversy. John Wilkes was a member of Parliament, a virulent opposition pamphleteer, and a man "of the most dissolute habits and mind." In 1763 he made a particularly vehement attack on the government in his paper, the North Briton. The ministry regarded it as a personal affront to the King, and Grenville took action against the writer and even the printers. The charge was "seditious libel," and because of the anonymity of the writer a "general warrant" was made out. A general warrant did not specify by name the individuals who were to be seized---in this respect they were similar to the "lettres de cachet" of pre-revolutionary France. Wilkes' identity was easily discovered, and he, along with some fifty other individuals, was arrested. Although he quickly secured his freedom he was expelled from Parliament. A tremendous turmoil resulted. A large gathering of Wilkes' constituents who had marched to St. George's Field were dispersed by the foot-guards with some loss of life.

In the election of 1768---one of the worst in England's history, when seats were advertised in the newspapers and freely sold to the highest bidders---Wilkes was returned for Middlesex. After being repudiated by Parliament, the election was repeated three more times and each time Wilkes was top man, only to be turned down. Not until some years later did
he win a place again in Parliament. "Franklin, who was in London at the time, declared that Wilkes would have been preferred to the King had the agitator possessed moral qualities."

On this subject Johnson wrote "The False Alarm." According to the Dictionary of National Biography, "Wiles found a doughty champion in Junius [an anonymous pamphleteer]; the government a dull apologist in Johnson..."

Authority and its legality. However, the subject afforded Johnson opportunity to apply several of his principles of subordination and authority. The general warrant was not only a political expedient but also a political necessity. Besides, the general warrant was not important enough to warrant the concern of the people.

"He would not admit the importance of the question concerning the legality of general warrants. "Such a power (he observed) must be invested in every government, to answer particular cases of necessity; and there can be no just complaint but when it is abused, for which those who administer government must be answerable. It is a matter of such indifference, a matter about which people care so little, that were a man to sent over Britain to offer them an exemption from it at a halfpenny a piece, very few would purchase it."

.................................................................

"The habeas corpus is the single advantage which our government has over that of other countries."

The habeas corpus device had been exercised by Wilkes to obtain his release after the arrest by general warrant.

Authority and its legality were discussed by Johnson.

2 DNB (1900 ed.) vol. LXI, p. 243, col. 2
3 Life, vol. II, p. 72-73
The application of his view to the subject of general warrants is obvious. He has said again that political necessity is a sufficient "raison d'être" of exercise of authority.

'The first laws had no law to enforce them, the first authority was constituted by itself. The power exercised by the House of Commons is of this kind, a power rooted in the principles of government, and branched out by occasional practice; a power which necessity made just, and precedents have made legal.

'It will occur that authority thus uncontrollable may, in times of heat and contest, be oppressively and unjuriously exerted, and that he who suffers injustice is without redress, however innocent, however miserable.

'The position is true, but the argument is useless. The Commons must be controlled, or be exempt from control. If they are exempt, they may do injury which cannot be redressed; if they are controlled, they are no longer legislative.

'If the possibility of abuse be an argument against authority, no authority ever can be established; if the actual abuse destroys its legality, there is no legal government now in the world."

Weakly, the "dull apologists" says that political institutions are not perfect justice-dealing mechanisms, and in a government "formed by chance" some deviation perfectibility must be expected.

'The perpetual subject of political disquisition is not absolute, but comparative good. Of two systems of government, or two laws relating to the same subject, neither will ever be such as theoretical nicety would desire, and therefore neither can easily force its way against prejudice and obstinacy; each will have its excellencies and defects, and every man, with a little help from pride, may think his own the best.

'Governments formed by chance, and gradually improved by such expedients as the successive discovery of their defects happened to suggest, are never to be tried by a regular theory. They are fabrics of dissimilar materials, raised by different architects, upon different plans. We must be content with them as

1 Works. vol. 8, p. 70
2 Ibid. vol. 8, p. 76
as they are; should we attempt to mend their dispro-
portions, we might easily demolish, and difficultly
rebuild them.

'Laws are now made, and customs are established;
these are our rules, and by them we must be guided.'

On a related, but slightly different, subject Johnson
has Imlac explain to Rasselas that some errors in govern-
ment are inevitable.

"Oppression is, in the Abissinian dominions,
neither frequent nor tolerated; but no form of govern-
ment has been yet discovered, by which cruelty can
be wholly prevented. Subordination supposes power
on one part, and subjection on the other; and if
power be in the hands of men, it will sometimes be
abused. The vigilance of the supreme magistrate may
do much, but much will still remain undone. He can
never know all the crimes that are committed, and
can seldom punish all that he knows.""

One of Johnson's familiar statements regards toleration
of the government and misuse of power. In essence he says
that the people have a final safeguard against oppression
with the weapon of rebellion.

"Political institutions are formed upon the con-
sideration of what will most frequently tend to the
good of the whole, although now and then exceptions
may occur. Thus is it better in general that a nation
should have a supreme legislative power, although it
may at times be abused. And then, Sir, there is this
consideration, that if the abuse be enormous, Nature
will rise up, and claiming her original rights, over-
turn a corrupt political system."

Ordinarily, such legal insubordination will occur very
rarely. In the Rambler he claimed that respect for the
ruling power will tolerate all but extreme misuse of power.

'The general story of mankind will evince, that
lawful and settled authority is very seldom resisted
when it is well employed....Men are easily kept obed-
ient to those who have temporal dominion in their

1Works. vol. 8, p. 77
2 ibid. vol. 3, p. 321
3 Life. vol. 1, p. 424
hands, till their veneration is dissipated by such wickedness and folly as can neither be defended nor concealed.1'

In general Johnson felt that absolute monarchs, with supreme authority, were to be preferred, in spite of the fact that the monarch might in some instances be oppressive.

'JOHNSON: "Why, Sir, absolute princes seldom do any harm. But they who are governed by them are governed by chance. There is no security for good government." CAMBRIDGE: "There have been many sad victims to absolute government." JOHNSON: "So, Sir, have there been to popular factions." BOSWELL: "The question is, which is the worst, one wild beast or many?"2'

The Wilkes affair had caused many petitions to be circulated for his reinstatement in Parliament. Johnson desisted from such attempts to interfere with the government, and denounced the petitions as worthless, both in purpose and in representation.

"This petitioning is a new mode of distressing government, and a mighty easy one. I will undertake to get petitions either against quarter-guineas or half-guineas, with the help of a little hot wine. There must be no yielding to encourage this. The object is not important enough. We are not to blow up half a dozen palaces, because one cottage is burning.3"

'You are appealing from the parliament to the rabble, and inviting those who scarcely, in the most common affairs, distinguish right from wrong, to judge of a question complicated with law written and unwritten, with the general principles of government, and the particular customs of the House of Commons; you are showing them a grievance, so distant that they cannot see it, and so light that they cannot feel it; for how, but by unnecessary intelligence and artificial provocation, should the farmers and shopkeepers of Yorkshire and Cumberland know or care how Middlesex is represented? Instead of wandering Thus round the county to exasperate the rage of the party, and darken the

1 Life, vol. I, p. 424, n. 2
2 ibid. vol. II, p. 370
3 ibid. vol. II, p. 90
the suspicions of ignorance, it is the duty of men... to lead back the people to their honest labour; to tell them, that submission is the duty of the ignorant, and content the virtue of the poor; that they have no skill in the art of government, nor any interest in the dissensions of the great; and when you meet with any, as some there are, whose understandings are capable of conviction, it will become you to ally this foaming ebullition, by showing them that they have as much happiness as the condition of life will easily receive, and that government, of which an erroneous or unjust representation of Middlesex is the greatest crime that interest can discover, or malice can upbraid, is a government approaching nearer to perfection, than any that experience has known, or history related.1

Satire and its inadequacy. On the subject of petitions Johnson could grow very satirical. He has an excellent piece on the progress of a petition, which typifies his attitude.

1 The progress of a petition is well known. An ejected placeman goes down to his county or his borough, tells his friends of his inability to serve them, and his constituents of the corruption of the government. His friends readily understand that he who can get nothing, will have nothing to give. They agree to proclaim a meeting; meat and drink are plentifully provided; a crowd is easily brought together, and those who think that they know the reason of their meeting, undertake to tell those who know it not.... A speech is then made by the Cicero of the day; he says much and suppresses more.... The petition is read and universally approved. Those who are sober enough to write, add their names, and the rest would sign it if they could.

2 Every man goes home and tells his neighbour of the glories of the day; how he was consulted, and what he advised.... Of the petition nothing is remembered by the narrator, but that it spoke much of fears and apprehensions, and something very alarming, and that he is sure it is against the government...

The petition is then handed from town to town. ... Names are easily collected. One man signs because he hates the papist; another because he has vowed destruction to the turnpikes; one because it will vex the parson; another because he owes his landlord nothing; one because he is rich; another because he is poor; one to show that he is not afraid, and another to show that he can write.2

1 Works. vol. 8, p. 89
2 Ibid. vol. 8, p. 87
Johnson was intolerant, as usual, of the other side of the issue. Boswell relates the following illustrative incident.

"The London Chronicle," which was the only newspaper he constantly took in, being brought, the office of reading it aloud was assigned to me. I was diverted by his impatience. He made me pass over so many parts of it, that my task was very easy. He would not suffer one of the petitions to the King about the Middlesex election to be read."

Johnson had proved himself a dull apologist, indeed, as even loyal Boswell admitted. The latter saw that the pamphlet fell short of adequacy, and he felt that Johnson was wrong in his attempt "to infuse a narcotick indifference as to publick concerns." The biographer gives a good general criticism of the paper.

"In 1770 he published a political pamphlet, entitles "The False Alarm," intended to justify the conduct of ministry and their majority in the House of Commons, for having virtually assumed it as an axiom, that the expulsion of a Member of Parliament was equivalent to exclusion, and thus having declared Colonel Lutterel to be duly elected for the county of Middlesex, notwithstanding Mr. Wilkes had a great majority of votes. This being justly considered as a gross violation of the right of election, an alarm for the constitution extended itself all over the kingdom. To prove this alarm to be false, was the purpose of Johnson's pamphlet; but even his vast powers were inadequate to cope with constitutional truth and reason, and his argument failed of effect;....That the House of Commons might have expelled Mr. Wilkes repeatedly, and as often as he should be re-chosen, was not denied; but incapacitation cannot be but by an act of the whole legislature. It was wonderful to see how a prejudice in favour of government in general, and an aversion to popular clamour, could blind and contract such an understanding as Johnson's, in this particular case; yet the wit, the sarcasm, the eloquent vivacity which this pamphlet displayed, made it be read with great avidity at the time, and it will ever be read with pleasure, for the sake of its composition. That it endeavoured to infuse

1 Life. vol. II, p. 103
a narcotic indifference, as to publick concerns, into the minds of the people, and that it broke out sometimes into an extreme coarseness of contemptuous abuse, is but too evident.¹

Actually, Johnson's chief theme, as expostulated in "The False Alarm," was the relative unimportance of the controversy.

'One part of the nation has never before contended with the other, but for some weighty and apparent interest. If the means were violent, the end was great. The civil war was fought for what each army called and believed the best religion, and the best government. The struggle in the reign of Anne, was to exclude or restore an exile king. We are now disputing, with almost equal animosity, whether Middlesex shall be represented or not by a criminal from a jail.

'The only comfort left in such degeneracy is that a lower state can be no longer possible.²'

Representation. Just as he regarded the American's plea for representation, in the same manner he answered Wilkes' constituents, and attempted to minimize any one vote, representative, or minority group, as capable of exerting any influence in government. He speaks of the fallaciousness of the idea that the people are truly represented in Parliament.

'Many of the representatives of the people can hardly be said to have been chosen at all. Some by inheriting a borough inherit a seat; and some sit by the favour of others,......some by their alliances.³'

'Whoever is governed will sometimes be governed ill, even when he is most concerned in his own government.⁴'

The elections have no respect from Johnson. They interfere with the standing order of Nature, giving the subordinates an exaggerated idea of importance. The candidates curry

¹ Life. vol. II, p. 111-112
² Works. vol. 8, p. 94
³ ibid. vol. 8, p. 78
⁴ ibid. vol. 8, p. 189
favor with wiles of "equality."

'The year of election is a year of jollity; and what is still more delightful, a year of equality. The glutton now eats the delicacies for which he longed when he could not purchase them, and the drunkard has the pleasure of wine without the cost. The drone lives a while without work, and the shopkeeper, in the flow of money, raises his price. The mechanic, that trembled at the presence of Sir Joseph, now bids him come again for an answer; and the poacher whose gun has been seized, now finds an opportunity to reclaim it. Even the honest man is not displeased to see himself important, and willing resumes...that power which he had resigned for seven years.1'

'At the end of every seven years comes the Saturnalian season, when the freemen of Great Britain may please themselves with the choice of their representatives.2'

One of Johnson's chief political characteristics was his arrogance and his disassociating of himself from the mass of the people. His whole attitude toward elections and representatives is expressed in one violent statement: "If I were a man of a great estate, I would drive all the rascals whom I did not like out of the county at an election.3"

Many answers were made to the pamphlet on the Wilkes Affair. Johnson did not see fit to make a formal response to any of them. However, one question asked was well answered by him in private conversation.

'In the answerer's pamphlet it had been said with solemnity: "Do you consider, Sir, that a House of Commons is to the people as a Creature to its Creator?" To this question, said Dr. Johnson, I could have replied, that---in the first place---the idea of a Creator must be such as that he has a power to unmake or annihilate his creature.

'Then it cannot be conceived that a creature can make laws for its Creator.4'

1 Works. vol. 8, p. 91
2 Ibid. vol. 8, p. 142
3 Life. vol. II, p. 167
4 Ibid. vol. IV, p. 30-31
The rabble. The fuss and fury created over Wilkes was not only uncalled-for, Johnson felt, but was also detrimental to the public welfare. The onus of the disturbance rested on a few "patriots"—"Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel"—who were inciting the unthinking rabble. Government is better left to those in charge, not to the populace.

'To instigate the populace with rage beyond the provocation, is to suspend publick happiness, if not to destroy it. He is no lover of his country, that unnecessarily disturbs its peace. Few errors, and few faults of government, can justify an appeal to the rabble; who ought not to judge of what they cannot understand, and whose opinions are not propagated by reason, but caught by contagion."

Those men who claim to be "patriots" are usually rabble-rousers. If, as did Wilkes, they had their greatest support from the unthinking majority, they were certain to be forces aligned against the well-being of the state.

'The people is a very heterogeneous and confused mass of the wealthy and the poor, the wise and the foolish, the good and the bad. Before we confer on a man, who caresses the people, the title of patriot, we must examine to what part of the people he directs his notice.'

According to Johnson's definition, the attributes of a true patriot are rather vague.

'A patriot is he whose publick conduct is regulated by one single motive, the love of his country; who as an agent in parliament, has for himself neither hope nor fear, neither kindness nor resentment, but refers every thing to the common interest.'

"Order cannot be had but by subordination." Unless the gentlemen inculcate and maintain in the rabble a respect

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1 Life. vol. II, p. 348
2 Works. vol. 8, p. 144
3 ibid. vol. 8, p. 147
4 ibid. vol. 8, p. 143
5 Life. vol. III, p. 383
for their authority, the efficacy of government disappears.

"What is it but opinion, by which we have a respect for authority, that prevents us, who are the rabble, from rising up and pulling down you who are gentlemen from your places, and saying 'We will be gentleman in our turn'? Now, Sir, that respect for authority is much more easily granted to a man whose father has had it, than to an upstart, and so Society is more easily supported." BOSWELL. "Perhaps, Sir, it might be done by the respect belonging to office, as among the Romans, where the dress, the toga, inspired reverence." JOHNSON. "Why, Sir, it is much easier to respect a man who has always had respect, than to respect a man who we know was last year no better than ourselves, and will be no better next year. In republics there is not a respect for authority, but a fear of power."

The rabble is the charge of the State. The State must instruct to the paths of righteousness; "the vulgar are the children of the State, and must be taught like children."

The condition of the poor in England did not appear to be exceedingly lamentable. Although they have not the mental advantages of gentlemen, and lack a true perspective of the standing order of Nature, needing to be instructed, they are reasonably well off. Therefore, since the condition of the poor is an index to the state of civilization, England is displayed to advantage.

"He said, 'The poor in England were better provided for, than in any other country of the same extent: he did not mean little Cantons, or petty Republicks. Where a great proportion of the people (said he,) are suffered to languish in helpless misery, that country must be ill policed, and wretchedly governed: a decent provision for the poor, is the true test of civilization. -- Gentlemen of education, he observed, were pretty much the same in all countries; the condition of the lower orders, the poor especially, was the true mark of national discrimination."

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1 Life. vol. II, p. 153-154
2 ibid. vol. II, p. 14
3 ibid. vol. II, p. 130
Undoubtedly some of the people suffer; they are at the bottom of the ranks of subordination. But how much better it is than a state of equality, wherein all would be reduced to the lowest condition.

'I said to him I supposed there was no civilized country in the world, where the misery of want in the lowest classes of the people was prevented. JOHNSON. "I believe, Sir, there is not; but it is better that some should be unhappy, than that none should be happy, which would be the case in a general state of equality."'

Security. All in all, Johnson believes, the condition of England is secure. The rabble may rave, the patriots may propagandize, but England will surely muddle through.

'As a man inebriated only by vapours soon recovers in the open air; a nation discontented to madness, without any adequate cause, will return to its wits and its allegiance when a little pause has cooled it to reflection."

'To fancy that our government can be subverted by the rabble, whom its lenity has pampered into impudence, is to fear that a city may be drowned by the overflowing of its kennels. The distemper which cowardice or malice thought either decay of the vitals, or resolution of the nerves, appears at last to have been nothing more than a political phthisis, a disease too loathsome for a plainer name; but the effect of negligence rather than of weakness, and of which the shame is greater than the danger."

The pleasantries of the quotation immediately above are typical of Johnson driving home a point.

More pleasantly typical of Johnson are his epigrams. Perhaps this present state of security may, he says, account for all the disturbance. "Security and leisure are

1 Life. vol. III, p. 26
2 Works. vol. 8, p. 95
3 ibid. vol. 8, p. 140
the parents of sedition.¹" Johnson has done little more in "The False Alarm" than to amplify and expound on the quotation from Milton with which he preface "The Patriot:"

They bawl for freedom in their senseless mood,  
Yet still revolt when truth would set them free;  
Licence they mean, when they cry liberty,  
For who loves that must first be wise and good.

¹ Works. vol. 8, p. 201
THEORY AND PRACTICE

Subordination. The quintessence of Dr. Johnson's political thinking is contained in two words: "subordination" and "authority," with the connotation of the latter devolving from the former. For him there was a natural gradation of rank and ability of all men. "So far it is from being true that all men are naturally equal, that no two people can be half an hour together, but one shall acquire an evident superiority over the other." Nor was this situation an unfortunate circumstance of our being. Boswell relates Johnson's belief that this is a happy arrangement:

'I told him that Mrs. Macaulay said, she wondered how he could reconcile his political principles with his moral; his notions of inequality and subordination with wishing well to the happiness of all mankind, who might live so agreeably, had they all their portions of land, and none to domineer over another. JOHNSON. "Why, Sir, I reconcile my principles very well, because mankind are happier in a state of inequality and subordination. Were they to be in this pretty state of equality, they would soon degenerate into brutes;--they would become Monboddo's nation;--their tails would grow. Sir, all would be losers were all to work for all;--they would have no intellectual improvement. All intellectual improvement arises from leisure; all leisure arises from one working for another."'

Moreover:

"Sir, I am a friend to subordination, as most conducive to the happiness of society. There is a reciprocal pleasure in governing and being governed."

Not only is it fortunate that this gradation of rank exists, but it is one of the duties of mankind to maintain this subordination. Johnson was once talking to Mrs. Thrale

1 Life. vol. II, p. 13
2 ibid. vol. II, p. 219
3 ibid. vol. I, p. 408
about a daughter of an aristocratic family who had married beneath herself:

"Were I a man of rank, I would not let a daughter starve who had made a mean marriage; but having voluntarily degraded herself from the station which she was originally entitled to hold, I would support her only in that which she herself had chosen; and would not put her on a level with my other daughters. You are to consider, Madam, that it is our duty to maintain the subordination of civilized society; and when there is a gross and shameful deviation from rank, it should be punished so as to deter others from the same perversion. 1"

"He again insisted on the duty of maintaining subordination of rank. "Sir, I would no more deprive a nobleman of his respect, than of his money. I consider myself as acting a part in the great system of society, and I do to others as I would have them to do to me. I would behave to a nobleman as I should expect he would behave to me, were I a nobleman and he Sam. Johnson. 2"

For those who had different ideas on the social scheme he had little use. He was especially pleased with his success in stopping Mrs. Macaulay's arguments with the suggestion that she invite her servant to dine with them. Perhaps he was not far wrong when he said, "Sir, your levellers wish to level down as far as themselves; but they cannot bear levelling up to themselves. 3"

The rabble. In this hierarchy of man Johnson knew his place was neither at the top nor at the bottom. He had a great deal of respect for high birth and was always contemptuous of the rabble, particularly as concerned their intellectual ability. "Few errors, and few faults of government, can justify an appeal to the rabble; who ought not

1 Life, vol. II, p. 328
2 ibid. vol. I, p. 443
3 loc. cit.
to judge of what they cannot understand, and whose opinions are not propagated by reason, but caught by contagion.1" It was not only the duty of the superior to care for and instruct the inferior but it was also necessary in order to keep them out of trouble. In "The Patriot," as in "The False Alarm," he insisted that the common-folk were supporting the return of Wilkes not because of their allegiance to any intelligent doctrine but because they, as unthinking and irresponsible rabble, had been aroused by deceitful rascals. But Johnson did not have much sympathy for the rabble; they were not innocent. "There is a scoundrelism about a low man.2"

High birth. Boswell of course did not know Johnson when the Adventurer papers were being written. This fact is mentioned because of the difference in attitude exhibited in those papers and in Boswell's reports. In 1753 we sense that Johnson was doubtful as to the really great value of an aristocratic name and background; his attitude was more romantic: the common man could forge ahead by rugged individualism and be proud in his "self-madness." There, in personal achievement, was true glory.

"Reason, indeed, will soon inform us, that our estimation of birth is arbitrary and capricious, and that dead ancestors can have no influence but upon imagination: let it then be examined, whether one dream may not operate in the place of another; whether he that owes nothing to forefathers, may not receive equal pleasure from the consciousness of owing all to himself; whether he may not, with a little meditation, find it more honourable to found than to continue a family, and to gain dignity than transmit it; whether, if he receives

1 Works. vol. 8, 144
2 Tour. p. 76
no dignity from the virtues of his family, he does not likewise escape the danger of being disgraced by their crimes; and whether he that brings a new name into the world, has not the convenience of playing the game of life without a stake, and opportunity of winning much though he has nothing to lose."

A decade later—when biographer Boswell has appeared—we feel that there has been a growth in respect for, and appreciation of, the aristocracy. Johnson's remarks in private conversation show a belief in the greater efficacy of power and responsibility belonging to noble families.

"He spoke well...in favour of entails to preserve lives of men whom mankind are accustomed to reverence. He'd have as much land entailed as that they should never fall into contempt, and as much free as to give them all the advantages of property in case of any emergency. He said if the nobility were suffered to fall into indigence, they of course become corrupted; they are ready to do whatever the King chooses; therefore it is fit they should be kept from becoming poor, unless 'tis fixed that when they fall below such a standard of wealth, they shall lose their peerages. He said the House of Peers had made noble stands when the House of Commons durst not. The last two years of a session they dare not contradict the populace."

Here he seems convinced of an essential nobility in the classes of aristocracy. "Do I contradict myself? Very well, I contradict myself," said Walt Whitman. But Johnson—the nadir of Whitman's zenith—causes us to wonder how he would have attempted to reconcile the above remarks with the Adventurer No. 111. He has said that we must keep the aristocracy from indigence, for they are wise and noble and are needed to govern us; but he had written years before the following diatribe against what is presumably the same class:

1 *Works*. vol. 3, p. 246
2 *Tour*. p. 73
When we observe the lives of those whom an ample inheritance has let loose to their own direction, what do we discover that can excite our envy? Their time seems not to pass with much applause from others, or satisfaction to themselves: many squander their exuberance of fortune in luxury and debauchery, and have no other use of money than to inflame their passions, and riot in a wide range of licentiousness; others, less criminal indeed, but, surely, not much to be praised, lie down to sleep, and rise up to trifle, are employed every morning in finding expedients to rid themselves of the day, chase pleasure through all the places of public resort, fly from London to Bath, and from Bath to London, without any other reason for changing place, but that they go in quest of company as idle and as vagrant as themselves; always endeavouring to raise some new desire, that they may have something to pursue, to rekindle some hope which they know will be disappointed, changing one amusement for another which a few months will make equally insipid, or sinking into languor and disease for want of something to actuate their bodies or exhilarate their minds.  

In his conversation he invariably evidenced great respect for aristocracy. Boswell seems to think it a fine thing that Johnson had this respect and that it was untouched by servility. He observed him once in conversation with Lord Erroll:

'...while he showed that respect to his lordship which he always does from principle to high rank, yet, when they came to argument, maintained that manliness which becomes the force and vigor of his understanding.'

Johnson became quite sure of the necessity of this respect to the orderliness of society. Moreover, he took care to point out that he deserved credit because he himself was disinterested in such veneration.

'...we had talked of old families, and the respect due to them. J ohnson. 'Sir, you have a right to that kind of respect, and are arguing for yourself. I am for supporting the principle, and am disinterested in doing it,'

1 Works. vol. 3, p. 248
2 Tour. p. 74
as I have no right. BOSWELL: "Why, Sir, it is one more incitement to a man to do well." JOHNSON. "Yes, Sir, and it is a matter of opinion, very necessary to keep society together."

Boswell thought that the position of aristocracy had declined, and that riches were more important. Johnson assured him that the nobility not only should but still could command more respect.

'I regretted the decay of respect for men of family, and that a Nabob would carry an election from them. Said Mr. Johnson: "The Nabob will carry it by means of his wealth in a country where money is highly valued, because can be had without it; but if it comes to a personal preference, the man of family will always carry it."'

It is difficult to show a man to be entirely consistent, whereas it is easy, usually, to find inconsistencies. Just so with Johnson's political views; we feel that he invariably takes the conservative side of any issue. On that score all we find supports this fundamental characteristic. On the other hand, the inconsistency about to be pointed out can scarcely be said to be so "foolish" as to be a "hobgoblin" only to "little minds." Johnson has said that a man of family is much to be preferred over a man who has wealth alone. However, in other conversations he shows a considerable respect for property alone.

'... suppose that you teach the community of goods; for which there are as many plausible arguments as for most erroneous doctrines...Here, Sir, you sap a great principle in society,--Property.'

In another incident he makes a direct contradiction of

1 "I have great merit in being zealous for subordination and the honours of birth; for I can hardly tell who was my grand-father." Life. vol. II, p. 261
2 Life. vol. II, p. 153
3 Tour. p. 76
4 Life. vol. II, p. 251
his praise of the nobility as the best ruling agent. He says that the responsible men, the men of business, should have a voice in governing.

"JOHNSON. "There must always be certain number of men of business in Parliament." BOSWELL. "But consider, Sir, what is the House of Commons? Is not a great part of it chosen by peers? Do you think, Sir, they ought to have such an influence?" JOHNSON. "Yes, Sir, influence must ever be in proportion to property, and it is right it should" BOSWELL. "But is there no reason to fear that the common people may be oppressed?" JOHNSON. "No, Sir. Our great fear is from want of power in government. Such a storm of vulgar force has broken in."

Monarchy. Correlative with Johnson's idea of subordination was his concept of monarchy. The picture of the gradation of ranks implied a topmost figure, omnipotent theoretically but not practically. The extent and range of society could not permit complete allocation of authority to one individual. Nevertheless, there was a natural progression of authority with higher ranks, and ultimately the monarch held sway. The king was the ruler.

"The history of mankind informs us that a single power is very seldom broken by a confederacy. States of different interests, and aspects malevolent to each other, may be united for a time by common distress; and in the ardour of self-preservation fall unanimously upon an enemy, by whom they are all equally endangered. But if their first attack can be withstood, time will never fail to dissolve their union: success and miscarriage will be equally destructive: after the conquest of a province, they will quarrel in the division; after the loss of a battle, all will be endeavouring to secure themselves by abandoning the rest.

"From the impossibility of confining numbers to the constant and uniform prosecution of a common interest, arises the difficulty of securing subjects against the encroachment of governors. Power is always gradually stealing away from the many to the few, because the few are more vigilant and consistent; it

1 Tour. p. 37
still contracts to a smaller number, till in time it centers in a single person.

'Thus all the forms of government instituted among mankind, perpetually tend towards monarchy; and power, however diffused through the whole community, is by negligence or corruption, commotion or distress, reposed at last in the chief magistrate.'

Johnson has not indicated in the above quotation whether or not he completely commends this tendency of centralization of power. In his position as a conservative and a Tory, he would seek some control over the monarch, though not necessarily by the people's representatives. If a literal interpretation of Rasselas can be permitted we may read into it a satire on the insatiable greed of monarchs.

'The prince desired a little kingdom, in which he might administer justice in his own person, and see all the parts of government with his own eyes; but he could never fix the limits of his dominion, and was always adding to the number of his subjects.'

Johnson did not support the well-known maxim of the British constitution, "the King can do no wrong," in its customary meaning as most of us understand it, which is, that the King, either as a near-divine, or else as a superbly arrogant individual, can commit no immoral deed or act of malfeasance. Johnson's interpretation was that the King, as the mere cause of any act, or commander, cannot be held responsible for the act itself. Only the immediate agent is the guilty party involved in a governmental misdeed. Redress for wrongs cannot be obtained from the King, for there is no power higher which can judge him.

'JOHNSON. 'Sir, you are to consider, that in our consti-
tution, according to its true principles, the King is the head; he is supreme; he is above everything, and there is no power by which he can be tried. Therefore it is, Sir, that we hold the King can do no wrong; that whatever may happen to be wrong in government may not be above our reach, by being ascribed to Majesty. Redress is always to be had against oppression, by punishing the immediate agents. The King, though he should command, cannot force a Judge to condemn a man unjustly; therefore it is the Judge whom we prosecute and punish."

Boswell obtained some notes on Johnson's political character from Reverend Dr. Maxwell, who was an assistant preacher at the Temple and a friend of Johnson. From Dr. Maxwell we learn Johnson's views on the influence of Parliament members by the crown. George III was at this time attempting to restore some of the influence of the crown that had been lost under George II. An obvious means to this end was the granting of patronage and favors to the members of Parliament. Johnson seems to have approved this practice, with qualifications.

"He detested the idea of governing by parliamentary corruption, and asserted most strenuously, that a prince steadily and conscientiously pursuing the interests of his people, could not fail of parliamentary concurrence. A prince of ability, he contended, might and should be the directing soul and spirit of his own administration; in short, his own minister, and not the mere head of a party: and then, and not till then, would the royal dignity be sincerely respected.

'Johnson seemed to think, that a certain degree of crown influence over the Houses of Parliament, (not meaning a corrupt and shameful dependence,) was very salutary, nay, even necessary, in our mixed government. "For, (said he,) if the members were under no crown influence, and disqualified from receiving any gratification from Court,...the wheels of government would be totally obstructed."

The power of the crown was necessary to good government.

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1 Life. vol.I, p. 423-424
2 Ibid. vol. II, p. 117-118
Boswell related to Johnson the history of the deposition of the Scottish chiefs. This, said Johnson, was unfortunate in that it left the country without authority. Laws alone are not sufficient; there will always be unprecedented questions which cannot be answered by established law and must be settled by arbitrary authority.

'Mr. Johnson said that a country was in a bad state which was governed only by laws; because a thousand things occur for which laws cannot provide and where authority ought to interpose. Now, destroying the authority of the chiefs threw the people loose. It did not pretend to bring any positive good, but only to cure some evil...'

Any protest against the power of the crown met with irascible rebuttal. "I would not have the people think... that the right of a King depends on the will of man." Johnson's policy was to let matters alone, unless they became too oppressive, when, by a sort of spontaneous combustion process, the "people" would then rise up and overturn the oppressor. Whether or not Johnson would ever have recognised such a condition in fact is questionable.

'SIR ADAM FERGUSSON. "But, Sir, in the British constitution it is surely of importance to keep up a spirit in the people, so as to preserve a balance against the crown." JOHNSON. "Sir, I perceive you are a vile Whig. Why all this childish jealousy of the power of the crown? The crown has not power enough. When I say that all governments are alike, I consider that in no government power can be abused long. Mankind will not bear it. If a sovereign oppresses his people to a great degree, they will rise and cut off his head. There is a remedy in human nature against tyranny, that will keep us safe under every form of government.'

Of the *jus divinum* of the Hanoverian kings Johnson was

1 Tour. p. 151
2 Life vol. II, p. 152
3 ibid. vol. II, p. 170
not perfectly sure. He was inclined to favor their right because of the length of their tenure of the throne. The Stuarts had been unfortunate and yet he did not thing he would have "raised a hand" to secure their winning back the throne. Nevertheless, on the tour of Scotland he evinced a great interest in the circumstances and event of the Pretender's sojourn there. Boswell goes to some length to state specifically his and Johnson's notions on the subject.¹

Johnson's respect for a crown, even the Scottish crown, was ever present. There was inevitably associated in his mind a great respect with any legally constituted authority. He berated Boswell for Scotland's indifference to the treatment of Mary, Queen of Scots, by Queen Elizabeth.

"Sir, never talk about your independency, who could let your queen remain twenty years in captivity and then be put to death without even a pretense of justice, without your ever attempting to rescue her; and such a Queen, too.²"

¹ see Tour, p. 161
² Tour, p. 24
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