A COMPARISON OF THE COMMON SENSE IDEALS OF
DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON AND DR. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

A Thesis Presented for the
Degree of Master of Arts

BY

Damaris Blosser, A. B.

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

1947

Approved by:
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

PART ONE--JOHNSON AND FRANKLIN CONTRASTED

Chapter 1. The Ethics and Religion of Johnson and Franklin

Chapter II. The Political Opinions of Johnson and Franklin

PART TWO--THE COMMON SENSE OF JOHNSON AND FRANKLIN

Chapter III. Johnson and Franklin on Education

Chapter IV. Johnson and Franklin on the Pursuit of Happiness

1. Getting on in the World
2. Marriage and Women
3. Social Life
4. Health

Conclusions

Sources
Introduction

Two of the most fascinating personalities in the eighteenth century were Dr. Samuel Johnson, the English man of letters, and Dr. Benjamin Franklin, the American philosopher and scientist.

Johnson, the "true-born Englishman", the unrivalled talker, the writer and lexicographer, comes to life in the pages of his incomparable biographer, Boswell, and his supreme capacity for human relationship still makes friends for him more than a century after his death. Franklin, the genial American, the statesman, the inventor, the writer, and founder of the American success pattern, still speaks good sense to his readers from the pages of his Autobiography, his "Poor Richard's Almanack", and other writings.

These men were famous in their own day for their sound common sense, for their simplicity of manner, and their capacity for friendship. Johnson was the advocate of English Toryism and Franklin the philosopher of the American Revolution, and although they presented direct contrast in the concepts of politics and also of religion, they agreed or supplemented each other in the great realm of common sense and how to live in the world.

Johnson and Franklin were contemporaries. Although Franklin lived many years in London during Johnson's residence there, they
never met. They had at least one famous acquaintance in common--James Boswell, that irrepressible celebrity hunter and recorder, who missed the prize opportunity to bring Franklin and Johnson together. Boswell met Franklin in London in May, 1768, and found him jolly and congenial.

By failing to bring Johnson and Franklin together, the man who made Johnson his life-time hero missed hearing two of the great men of his time exchange views, talk and argue. Boswell probably never guessed what his failure cost Franklin and Johnson admirers. Perhaps Boswell, knowing Johnson's strong dislike of Americans, feared to introduce Franklin to the staunch Tory and high churchman, but Boswell did not hesitate to introduce Johnson to ardent Whigs such as the rascally John Wilkes.

This thesis aims to bring Franklin and Johnson together on paper and to show in their own words how they clashed and how they agreed, and to show in some measure what these men believed and what they lived by.

The lives of Franklin and Johnson were parallel in certain superficial ways. Franklin was born in Boston in 1706, and Johnson in Lichfield, England, in 1709.

Both were born into lower middle-class families. Franklin was the son of a tallow-chandler, and Johnson was the son of a bookseller. Both were largely self-educated, and both received honorary degrees from Oxford University. Johnson spent about 14
months at Pembroke college, Oxford, while Franklin had no college education.

Both men were self-made. Both started their careers in journalism. Franklin was a contributor to the Boston Courant, owned by his brother, James, and Johnson was a writer for Cave's Gentleman's Magazine. Both men rose from humble social origins and poverty to social eminence and financial security.

The parallel may be carried yet further. Johnson and Franklin would have found no common ground in formal religion or in politics, but both Johnson and Franklin insisted on the rights and dignity of the individual man. Both men held that man's first duty is to serve society, and then look to the salvation of his own soul. Both men held liberal and progressive views regarding the democratization of education and the need of making education and news accessible to all the people. Both men entertained modern ideas concerning the education of women, the partnership of marriage, and the promotion of a sound, middle-class morality. Both men were rugged individualists and argued for the advantages of thrift, industry, and the rights of property accumulated by thrift and industry. Both men lived to benefit and improve the world. And both men were eminently social with a genius for friendship.

Finally, both men embodied common sense. "Clear your mind of cant," cried Dr. Johnson, and "good sense is a thing all need", 
commented Franklin's "Poor Richard." Common sense was the common meeting ground of the great Englishman and the great American.
Chapter 1

The Religion and Ethics of Johnson and Franklin

"All Christians, whether Papists or Protestants, agree in the essential articles," Dr. Samuel Johnson once remarked to James Boswell.¹

Johnson however disagreed violently with many Christians in matters of doctrine. The Great Bear of English letters represented the Church of England, while his famous American contemporary, Dr. Benjamin Franklin, represented the more modern, deistic religion. They presented as vivid a contrast in their religious beliefs as they did in their personalities.

Franklin was buoyant of temperament, physically sound, well-adjusted emotionally, and a perfect example of the "healthy mind" which the psychologist, William James, described in The Varieties of Religious Experience. Johnson, on the other hand, was somber, beset by physical ills and deformities, and tortured by the religious melancholy which James associated with the "sick soul."²

James discussed Tolstoy as one example of the sick soul. He wrote:

Religious melancholy...presents two characters. First it is a well-marked case of anhedonia, of passive loss of appetite for all life's values; and second, it shows how the altered and estranged aspect which the world assumed in consequence of this stimulated Tolstoy's intellect to a gnawing, carking questioning and effort for philosophic relief.³

³ Ibid., p. 149.
In Johnson's case, religious melancholy did not result in a loss of appetite for all life's values; instead he sought relief in the world of men, in fellowship, good talk, in reading and in religion, finding pleasure the keener for its rarity.

Johnson clung to life tenaciously, and retained a fundamental robustness of mind which enabled him to conquer many of the sick fancies which threatened his sanity.

Joseph Wood Krutch described Johnson as "a pessimist with an enormous zest for living." If ever a man had reason to be a pessimist, it was Johnson. He was the son of a respectable but unsuccessful tradesman. As a boy Johnson was set apart from his fellows by his ungainly, overgrown figure, scrofula and odd, jerky movements which suggested St. Vitus dance. His eyesight was so weak he could not join other boys in their games, and his chief amusement in winter was being drawn about on the ice by another lad. His unusual mental brilliance in school set him apart from other boys as a prodigy.

When Johnson attended Pembroke college at Oxford university, he was so poor that his toes stuck out of his shoes. Poverty finally forced him to quit Oxford after about 14 months residence. Johnson's father left his son nothing but debts. At 23, Johnson, after failing as a schoolmaster, and with the responsibility of a wife to support, went to London with his tragedy, Irene, in his pocket. He hoped for a literary career, but for many years he

---

could earn a living only as a journalist, a Grub street hack.

During his early years in London, Johnson described himself as so poor that he more than once walked the streets all night because he had no money for a lodging. He wrote Rasselas in about a week, rushing to finish it to pay for his mother's doctor bills, and she died before the book was finished. Little wonder that he wrote in Rasselas that "Human life is everywhere a state, in which much is to be endured, and little to be enjoyed."^5

In addition to the physical deformities, the ugly face and body, the weak sight and defective hearing with which nature had burdened Johnson, he was tormented by an inherent melancholy which he believed he had inherited from his father. While at Oxford, Johnson became so mentally depressed he thought he was going mad, and consulted a physician for relief. Sir John Hawkins, Johnson's friend and biographer, wrote this statement on the subject:

His own conjecture was, that he derived it from his father...Under this persuasion, he at the age of about 20, drew up a state of his case for the opinion of an eminent physician in Staffordshire, and from him received an answer, "That from the symptoms therein described, he could think of nothing better of his disorder, than that it had a tendency to insanity; and without great care might possibly terminate in the deprivation of his natural faculties."^6

---

Johnson, like a good Christian, turned to the solace of religion. Krutch, one of Johnson's latest biographers, suggested that even religion might not have yielded all the solace which Johnson required. Krutch said that the anti-romantic quality of Johnson's mind made him something of a skeptic, which, coupled with his early religious conditioning, resulted in conflict as Johnson clung tenaciously to religion and prayer. Krutch commented that Johnson was "too much a believer not to fear divine punishment and too invincibly a skeptic to count his faith sufficient to save him."

Certainly, Johnson's early conditioning marked him for a believer. He was born in the cathedral town of Lichfield. Boswell described Johnson's father, Michael Johnson, as a zealous high churchman and royalist. Johnson's mother was extremely pious and early taught her son to fear God's wrath and hell-fire. In his "Annals" Johnson related how his mother introduced him to religious experience.

I remember, that being in bed with my mother one morning, I was told by her of the two places to which the inhabitants of this world were received after death; one a fine place filled with happiness, called Heaven; the other a sad place called Hell...When I was risen, my mother bade me repeat what she had told me to Thomas Jackson. When I told this afterwards to my mother, she seemed to wonder that she should begin such talk so late as that the first time could be remembered.

---

7 Krutch, op. cit., p. 2.
The effect of this early religious conditioning may be evaluated in terms of morbidness by setting beside it the words of James regarding the healthy-mindedness of religion. James wrote:

The advance of liberalism, so-called, in Christianity, during the past fifty years, may be fairly called a victory of healthy-mindedness within the church over the morbidness with which the old hell-fire theology was more harmoniously related.  

Oxford university was the seat of high church learning in Johnson's era. He related that it was while at college that he became seriously concerned with religion. It was also at the same time that he became concerned about his melancholy. Johnson attributed his newly aroused interest in religion to a reading of Law's Serious Call to a Holy Life. He admitted he took up the book expecting it to be dull and "perhaps to laugh at it. But I found Law quite an overmatch for me, and this was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest of religion, after I became capable of rational inquiry."  

Throughout his life Johnson was tormented by two fears--madness and death. It would seem from his physician's diagnosis that madness was certainly something for Johnson to fear. His fear of death, however, verges on the neurotic. Perhaps it was rooted in his mother's early teaching concerning the "sad place" called Hell.

---

9 James, op. cit., p. 91.
10 Boswell, op. cit., p. 79-80.
The chief cause of Johnson's terror of death may have been rooted in the skepticism suggested by Krutch. It is almost heresy to suggest that Johnson, the upholder of orthodoxy and the established church, should have had the shadow of a doubt concerning any article of his faith. Yet, there is one significant statement of Johnson's recorded by Boswell which revealed a note of skepticism. Johnson said:

Every man who attacks my belief, diminishes in some degree my confidence in it, and therefore makes me uneasy and I am angry with him who makes me uneasy.  

Here is the secret behind Johnson's frequent outbursts against those who chose another religious sect instead of the established church in which they were reared. Johnson condemned those who sought to change their religion to something more in keeping with their personal convictions.

Boswell related two examples of Johnson's intolerance on the subject of changing one's religion.

A physician being mentioned who had lost his practice, because his whimsically changing his religion had made people distrustful of him, I maintained that this was unreasonable, as religion is unconnected with medical skill. JOHNSON. "Sir, it is not unreasonable; for when people see a man absurd in what they understand, they may conclude the same of him in what they do not understand. If a physician were to take to eating of horse-flesh, nobody would employ him: though one may eat horse-flesh and be a very skillful physician. If a man were educated in an absurd religion, his continuing to profess it would not hurt him, though his changing it would."  

12 Boswell, op. cit., 2, p. 466.
This argument of Johnson's seems absurd, yet Johnson explained his conviction more reasonably during a discussion with Mrs. Knowles concerning Quakerism. Johnson held that a man is likely to err when he chooses a religion and a moral way of life for himself.

Mrs. Knowles mentioned, as a proselyte to Quakerism, Miss----, a young lady well known to Dr. Johnson, for whom he had shown much affection; while she ever had, and still retained, a great respect for him. Mrs. Knowles at the same time took an opportunity of letting him know 'that the amiable young creature was Sorry at finding that he was offended at her leaving the Church of England and embracing a simpler faith'; and, in the gentlest and most persuasive manner, solicited his kind indulgence for what was sincerely a matter of conscience.

JOHNSON. (frowning very angrily) 'Madam, she is an odious wenches. She could not have any proper conviction that it was her duty to change her religion, which is the most important of all subjects, and should be studied with all care, and with all the helps we can get. She knew no more of the Church which she left, and that which she embraced, than she did of the difference between the Copernican and Ptolemaick systems.'

MRS. KNOWLES. 'She had the New Testament before her.' JOHNSON. 'Madam, she could not understand the New Testament, the most difficult book in the world, for which the study of a life is required.'

MRS. KNOWLES. 'It is clear as to essentials.' JOHNSON. 'But not as to controversial points. The heathens were easily converted, because they had nothing to give up; but we ought not, without very strong convictions indeed, to desert the religion in which we have been educated. That is the religion given you, the religion in which it may be said Providence has placed you. If you live conscientiously in that religion, you may be safe. But error is dangerous indeed, if you err when you choose a religion for yourself.' MRS. KNOWLES. 'Must we then go by implicit faith?' JOHNSON. 'Why, Madam, the greatest part of our knowledge is implicit faith; and as to religion,
have we heard all that a disciple of Confucius,
all that a Mahometan, can say for himself?\textsuperscript{13}

Johnson did not attempt to rationalize all the doctrines of
the church. He took them as they stood. He believed that
God had ordained them, and there was an end to it.

This is not entirely unreasonable. Johnson was by nature
a conservative in religion, in politics, and in general attitude
toward life. He could see defects enough in the world, but he
was opposed to fanatics who wished to turn the church and state
upside-down to remedy them. He had no wish to be hurried into
evils he knew not of. Some doubts might stir in his subconscious,
but he kept them in a separate compartment of his mind.

Johnson liked always to identify himself with the established
viewpoint in religion and in politics. He knew that nature had
short-changed him, that he was something of a freak. Hogarth upon
first meeting him had taken him for an "inspired idiot." Johnson's
espousal of the side of authority in religion and politics was just
as much a part of his desire to be treated as equal or even superior
to other men.

The established religion of Johnson's era relied upon hell-fire
as one of its chief weapons, and the iron had sunk deep into
Johnson's soul. His melancholy temperament decreed that he
think much upon death so that he disliked even the mention of his
birthdays which brought him nearer to death, the king of terrors.

\textsuperscript{13} Boswell, op. cit., 3, p. 334.
He was convinced, as he once told Boswell, that "The better a man is, the more afraid he is of death, having a clearer view of infinite purity."\textsuperscript{14}

Johnson's sick soul groaned and writhed over his sins, real and imaginary. Although the amount of literary and journalistic work which he produced may be called enormous by modern standards, he tormented himself by his conception of his idleness. God who had given him great talents would surely punish him for his neglect of them.

Johnson's \textit{Prayers and Meditations} present a soul abasing himself before his Creator. In 1771, he wrote:

\begin{quote}
When I survey my past life, I discover nothing but a barren waste of time, with some disorders of body, and disturbances of mind, very near to madness, which I hope He that made me will suffer to extermate many faults, and excuse many deficiencies.\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

Nothing which Boswell reported of Johnson's religious convictions expressed his fear of death better than the following. Boswell remarked to Johnson, "The world is a mere show, and it is unreasonable for a man to wish to continue in the showroom, after he has seen it."

\begin{quote}
JOHNSON. Yes, Sir, if he is sure he is to be well, after he goes out of it. But if he is to grow blind after he goes out of the show-room, and never to see any thing again; or if he does not know whither he is to go next, a man will not go cheerfully out of a show-room. No wise man will be contented to die, if he thinks he is to fall into annihilation: for however unhappy any man's existence may be, he yet would rather have it, than not exist at all. No, there is no rational
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{14} Boswell, op. cit., 3, p. 174.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 3, p. 112-113.
principle by which a man can die contented, but a
trust in the mercy of GOD, through the merits of
Jesus Christ.16

When Boswell questioned Johnson about the punishment
determined out in the next world, Johnson answered:

Sir, you are to consider the intention of punish-
ment in a future state. We have no reason to be
sure that we shall then be no longer liable to offend
against God. We do not know that even the angels are
cute in a state of security; nay, we know that some
of them have fallen. It may, therefore, perhaps be
necessary, in order to preserve both men and angels
in a state of rectitude, that they should have
continually before them the punishment of those who
have deviated from it; but we may hope that by some
other means a fall from rectitude may be prevented.17

Johnson, unmoved by reports that David Hume, an eighteenth
century atheist, had gone to his death an atheist still, commented
with characteristic bluntness: "It was not to be expected that the
prospect of death would alter his (Hume's) way of thinking, unless
GOD should send an angel to set him right."18

As a moralist, Johnson held that martyrdom is the test of a
man's faith. Boswell reported:

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 a right to regulate
the religion of the people, who are the children of
the State. A clergyman who readily acquiesced in
this, Johnson, who loved discussion, observed, '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

16 James Boswell, Tour to the Hebrides, (Oxford University
18 Ibid., 3, p. 173.
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.\textsuperscript{19}

Something of Johnson's conflict between belief and logic was evident in his attitude toward ghosts.

Talking of ghosts, he said, 'It is wonderful that five thousand years have now elapsed since the creation of the world, and still it is undecided whether or not there has ever been an instance of the spirit of any person appearing after death. All argument is against it; but all belief is for it.'\textsuperscript{20}

It was typical of Johnson's sick mind and soul that he did not feel joy in his religion despite his willingness to believe. "There are many good men," he said, "whose great fear of GOD predominates over their love."\textsuperscript{21}

As a moralist, Johnson laid down strict conduct for everyone, especially for the clergy who had in their hands the care of others' souls. He remarked: "I do not envy a clergyman's life as an easy life, nor do I envy the clergyman who makes it an easy life."\textsuperscript{22}

He had no regard for the "sporting parsons" who assumed the lax jollity of men of the world.

In a century notorious for license, Johnson's concepts of morality were as rigid as his religious convictions. His ethical beliefs were based upon the Ten Commandments and the doctrines of the church, and expressed in terms of his own worldly observations and experience.

\textsuperscript{19} Boswell, op. cit., 4, p. 14.  
\textsuperscript{20} Boswell, op cit., 3, p. 261.  
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 3, p. 385.  
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 3, p. 345.
He shrewdly remarked in *Rasselas*: "Whether perfect happiness would be procured by perfect goodness, this world will never afford an opportunity of deciding."\(^\text{23}\)

In general, Johnson held that "Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, and knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful."\(^\text{24}\)

Although Johnson believed that "It is better to live rich than to die rich,"\(^\text{25}\) he had the worldly insight to know that the pure in heart do not often inherit this world, although they may see God. He wrote in *Rasselas*:

It has been the boast of some swelling moralists that every man's fortune was in his own power, that prudence supplied the place of other divinities, and that happiness is the unfailing consequence of virtue. But surely the quiver of Omnipo
tence is stored with arrows against which the shield of human virtue, however adamantine it has been its boast, is held up in vain; we do not always suffer by our crimes; we are not always protected by our innocence.\(^\text{26}\)

Only a man who had been buffeted by the world could have written these words. Johnson's ethics were not the namby-pamby mouthings of the conventional teacher of morality. His common sense pierced the flimsy veil with which men try to cloak the motives of their actions.

He said:

---

24 Ibid., p. 135.
26 Johnson, *Rasselas*, p. 187
The morality of an action depends on the motive from which we act. If I fling half a crown to a beggar with intention to break his head, and he picks it up and buys victuals with it, the physical effect is good; but with respect to me, the action is very wrong. So, religious exercises, if not performed with an intention to please God, avail us nothing.²⁷

Johnson believed that "Ethics, or morality is one of the studies which ought to begin with the first glimpse of reason and end only with life itself."²⁸ However, he never promised worldly compensation to the virtuous. He warned that "All that virtue can afford is quietness of conscience and a steady prospect of a happier state; this may enable us to endure calamity with patience; but remember that patience must always presuppose pain."²⁹

Unlike some modern psychologists who attempt to rationalize virtue and vice, Johnson was impatient with those who confused them. When Boswell told him of a man who maintained there was no distinction between virtue and vice, Johnson exclaimed:

"Why, Sir, if the fellow does not think as he speaks, he is lying; and I can see not what honor he can propose to himself from having the character of a liar. But if he does really think that there is no distinction between virtue and vice, why, Sir, when he leaves our houses, let us count our spoons."³⁰

Inherent in Johnson's ethics was a love of order. He did not offer one standard of morality for men and another for women. Although he lived in a lax age, and admitted to David Garrick that

²⁷ Boswell, op. cit., 1, p. 460.
³⁰ Boswell, op. cit., 1, p. 500.
pretty actresses excited his amorous sensibilities, he laid down chastity as a rule for men as well as women.

So strict was Johnson in his regard for virtue that in his Preface to Shakespeare he criticised Shakespeare for letting vice go unreproved:

He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral system. From his writing, indeed, a system of morality may be selected; for he that thinks reasonably must think morally; but his precepts and axioms drop casually from him; he makes no just distribution of good and evil, nor is always careful to show in the virtuous a disapprobation of the wicked; he carries his persons indifferently through right and wrong, and, at the close, dismisses them without further care, and leaves their examples to operate by chance.31

Johnson, however, overlooked two things in this criticism. One is the artistic defense that the function of an artist is to depict life as it is and not to moralize. The other factor is that Johnson was not consistent in his criticism of Shakespeare for carrying his persons indifferently through right or wrong. Johnson in his own friendships did not always behave as a moralist. His great friends, Boswell and Topham Beauclerk, were infamous rakes.

However, Johnson might have replied by quoting his own advice to Rasselas: "Be not too hasty to trust or to admire the teachers of morality; they discourse like angels, but they live like men."32

32 Johnson, op. cit., p. 83.
Johnson held "It is our first duty to serve society, and after we have done that, we may attend wholly to the salvation of our own souls."

**The Religion of Franklin**

Benjamin Franklin was the epitome of "the healthy soul." He was a Deist whose ethical concepts were guides for everyday living. Franklin championed a religion of good works as opposed to one of faith alone. He believed in virtue as a way of life because it offered the smoothest way of getting on in the world. Franklin was a rationalistic, and like Johnson, he had a love of order. Religion and morality are pillars of society, and Franklin believed in strengthening the pillars.

Unlike Johnson who had been born into an orthodox Church of England family, Franklin sprang from a family of Dissenters. His *Autobiography* recorded how early his ancestors dissented from the established faith:

This obscure family of ours was early in the Reformation, and the continued Protestants through the reign of Queen Mary, when they were sometimes in trouble on account of their zeal against popery. They got an English Bible, and to conceal and secure it, it was fastened open with tapes under and within the cover of a joint-stool. When my great-great-grandfather read it to his family, he turned the joint-stool upon his knees, turning over the leaves then under the tapes. One of the children stood at the door to give notice if he saw the apparitor coming, who was an officer of the spiritual court. In that case the stool was turned down again upon its feet, when the Bible remained...

---

33 Boswell, op. cit., 2, p. 11.
concealed under it as before... The family continued all of the Church of England till about the end of Charles the Second's reign, when some of the ministers that had been ousted for non-conformity holding conventicles in Northamptonshire, Benjamin and Josiah adhered to them, and so continued all their lives...34

Franklin's father, the Josiah of the above reference, came to New England to enjoy religious freedom. Franklin was reared a Presbyterian and attended the Episcopal church as an adult, but was never a strict sectarian.

Franklin was not willing to cleave to one faith merely because he was reared in it. When only 15 he was turned to Deism by reading the arguments against it. However, as early as 1728 he drew up a system of ethics to live by which he called Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion.

His conversion may have stemmed from a serious illness which he underwent in 1727. Franklin had gone to London, England, when still in his early twenties to perfect himself in his printer's trade. He was accompanied by James Ralph, a poet and a Deist. Ralph's immorality and careless living brought him into straitened circumstances, and Franklin, ever eager to rise in the world, was impressed enough by the example to turn to more conventional concepts of religion and morality.

Bernard Fay has presented a keen analysis of Franklin's attitude toward God and religion:

If Franklin never denied his God, he spoke but little of him, thus imitating his deistical masters and following a Protestant tendency. He kept his personal relationship with God to himself, and this mystical element did not enter his social life. The Godhead was too high to have any need of man; prayers should be made in case of necessity, but the only real way of honoring God was by being useful to other men. The two poles of this new disciple of Franklin's were an inner, mystical, discreet and astronomical God, and an outward social code of well-doing and adaptability. 35

Franklin was a scientist. To him, as to many a modern scientist, science seemed to reveal an order in things and a directing hand which led him to retain a pious faith in the existence of a deity.

He regarded God as a kindly father, pleased with the pleasure of His children. He sincerely believed that a life devoted to the advancement of society's welfare was the most pleasing to God, and even that God would be pleased by it alone. He refused to close his mind to the worthiness of sects other than his own. He did not believe with Johnson that a man erred when he chose a religion for himself. In a letter to his father, dated April 13, 1738, Franklin wrote:

I imagine a man must have a good deal of vanity who believes, and a good deal of boldness who affirms, that all doctrines he holds are true, and all he rejects are false. And perhaps the same may be said justly of every sect, church and society of men, when they assume to themselves that infallibility which they deny to the Pope and councils...I think vital religion has always suffered when orthodoxy is more regarded than virtue; and the scriptures assure me that at the last day we shall not be examined what we thought, but what we did;

and our recommendation will not be that we said, "Lord! Lord!" but that we did good to our fellow creatures. See Matt. XXV36

Franklin believed that every sect should have a chance to be heard. He upheld liberty of conscience and religious freedom as it is still understood in America. When George Whitefield, the Methodist evangelist, came to Philadelphia, the local clergy refused him the use of their pulpits. Franklin pioneered in the movement which resulted in buying ground and building a house "expressly for the use of any preacher of any religious persuasion who might desire to say something to the people of Philadelphia; the design in building not being to accommodate any particular sect, but the inhabitants in general; so that even if the Mufti of Constantinople were to send a missionary to preach Mohammedanism to us, he would find a pulpit at his service."37

Franklin doubted the divinity of Christ, but he believed that his teachings contained the highest morality the world has ever known. When an old man, he set forth his religious beliefs in a now-famous letter to Ezra Stiles, dated March 9, 1790.

You desire to know something of my religion...Here is my creed. I believe in one God, creator of the universe. That he governs it by his providence. That he ought to be worshipped. That the most acceptable service we render to him is doing good to his

other children. That the soul of man is immortal, and will be treated with justice in another life respecting its conduct in this. These I take to be the fundamental principles of all sound religion, and I regard them as you do in whatever sect I meet with.

As to Jesus of Nazareth, my opinion of whom you particularly desire, I think the system of morals and his religion, as he left them to us, the best the world ever saw or is likely to see; but I apprehend it has received various corrupting changes, and I have, with most of the present dissenters in England, some doubts as to his divinity; though it is a question I do not dogmatize upon, having never studied it, and think it needless to busy myself with it now, when I expect soon an opportunity of knowing the truth with less trouble. I see no harm, however, in its being Believed, if that belief has the good consequence, as it probably has, of making his doctrines more respected and better observed; especially as I do not perceive that the Supreme Being takes it amiss, by distinguishing the unbelievers in his government of the world with an peculiar mark of his displeasure.

In his Autobiography, Franklin set down his reaction toward formal religion. He said:

I had been religiously educated as a Presbyterian; and tho' some of the dogmas of that persuasion, such as the eternal decrees of God, election, reprobation, etc., appeared to me unintelligible, others doubtful, and I early absented myself from the public assemblies of the sect, Sunday being my studying day, I never was without some religious principles. I never doubted, for instance, the existence of the Deity; that he made the world, and govern'd it by his Providence; that the most acceptable service of God was the doing good to man; that our souls are immortal; and that all crime will be punished, and virtue rewarded, either here or hereafter. These I esteem'd the essentials of every religion; and, being to be found in all the religions we had in our country, I respect them all, tho' with different degrees of respect, as I found them more or less mixed with other articles, which, without any tendency to inspire, promote, or confirm morality, serv'd principally to divide us, and

38 Goodman, op. cit., p. 244.
make us unfriendly to one another...

Tho' I seldom attend any public worship, I had still an opinion of its propriety, and of its utility when rightly conducted, and I regularly paid my annual subscription for the support of the only Presbyterian minister or meeting we had in Philadelphia. He used to visit me sometimes as a friend, and admonish me to attend his ministrations, and I was now and then prevail'd on to do so, once for five Sundays successively. Had he been in my opinion a good preacher, perhaps I might have continued, notwithstanding the occasion I had for the Sunday's leisure in my course of study; but his discourses were chiefly either polemic arguments, or explications of the peculiar doctrines of our sect, and were all to me very dry, uninteresting, and unedifying, since not a single moral principle was inculcated or enforced, their seeming to be rather to make us Presbyterians than good citizens.

At length he took for his text that verse of the fourth chapter of Philippian, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, or of good report, if there be any virtue, or any praise, think on these things." And I imagin'd, in a sermon on such a text, we could not miss having some morality. But he confined himself to five points only, as meant by the apostle, viz.: 1. Keeping holy the Sabbath day. 2. Being diligent in reading the holy Scriptures. 3. Attending duly the publick worship. 4. Partaking of the Sacrament. 5. Paying a due respect to God's ministers. These might be all good things; but, as they were not the kind of good things that I expected from the text, I dispaired of ever meeting with them from any other, was disgusted, and attended his preaching no more. I had some years before composed a little Liturgy, or form of prayer, for my private use (viz., in 1728), entitled, Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion. I return'd to the use of this, and went no more to the public assemblies.39

Franklin sometimes has been termed as a Deist, and even as an atheist. He admitted that he was turned to Deism while still in his teens, by reading the arguments against it, but he had forsaken Deism by the time he wrote the above passage. Atheist

he never was. Like many modern Americans, Franklin disliked formalized religion which offered nothing in the way of moral teaching for a better life or spiritual solace. His mind was too liberal to find spiritual consolation in sermons which were "dry, uninteresting and unedifying." He preferred to formulate his own concepts of moral perfection.

Franklin sought another approach to religion, a substitute for the dry sermons he heard in church. He joined the Order of Free and Accepted Masons. In lodge affairs, he became one of the most outstanding members the order ever had. Bernard Fay presented a summary of eighteenth century Masonry:

Masonry had its own history, seasoned to taste, its own dogmas and moral principles, which closely resembled those of Christianity and were usually derived from them, but which were sufficiently different to be oriented towards man and earth, instead of God and eternity. In general, Masonry was a human, utilitarian and rationalistic application of Christian ideas and discipline.40

This was what Franklin desired, utilitarian and rationalistic application of Christianity! This was what appealed to his logical mind, to his Yankee desire for self-betterment and the welfare of human kind. The Masons preached liberty and equality, political principles dear to Franklin's heart. Franklin was first and last a Mason. This is the opinion of Fay, the biographer who set out to study Franklin in terms of his Masonic career, and who stated flatly that "Franklin's successes and

40 Fay, op. cit., p. 178.
setbacks, his principles and opinions cannot be followed or understood, unless his Masonic career, with all its implications, is carefully studied."

Franklin found in Masonry moral principles and political doctrines which were agreeable to him, just as Dr. Johnson found in the Church of England moral and political doctrines most pleasing.

Although Franklin was not a willing church-goer, he put himself on record as an advocate of church-going for others. In a letter, he urged his daughter, Sally, to "Go constantly to church, whoever preaches," and asked her not to leave "our church."

Franklin urged Philadelphians to erect more churches, and when in 1782 he wrote an essay on the advantages which Europeans may find upon emigrating to America, he mentioned as one, the fact that here "serious religion, under its various denominations, is not only tolerated, but respected and practised. Atheism is unknown there; infidelity rare and secret..."

Franklin, again and again, advocated a creed of good works to replace the empty forms of "sermon-reading or hearing, performing church ceremonies, or making long prayers, filled with flatteries and compliments, despised even by wise men, and

41 Fay, op. cit., p. 1.
42 Goodman, op. cit., p. 237.
much less capable of pleasing the Deity." He emphasized in a letter to Joseph Huey, written from Philadelphia, June 6, 1753, that the "Great Master...preferred doers of the words, to the mere hearers; the son that seemingly refused to obey his father, and yet performed his commands, to him that professed his readiness, but neglected the work; the heretical but charitable Samaritan, to the uncharitable though orthodox priest and sanctified Levite..."\(^{44}\)

Franklin said, "By heaven we understand a state of happiness, infinite in degree, and eternal in duration,"\(^{45}\) and he was convinced that as a doer of good works he would be welcome there.

Franklin expressed belief in the immortality of the soul in a letter to George Whatley written from Rassy, France, on May 23, 1785, in which Franklin said "Thus finding myself to exist in the world, I believe I shall, in some shape or other, always exist..."\(^{46}\)

Despite graceful expressions of belief in other worldliness, a man like Franklin naturally placed more emphasis upon the advantages of getting on in this world. He was extremely friendly toward Whitefield, the Methodist evangelist, whose sermons he publicized in his newspaper, the Pennsylvania Gazette. Once when Franklin offered Whitefield his hospitality, Whitefield asked him if he made the offer \(\text{for Christ's sake.}\) Franklin answered, "Don't let it be mistaken; it was not for Christ's sake but for your sake."\(^{47}\)

---

\(^{44}\) Goodman, op cit., p. 235-36.

\(^{45}\) Ibid., p. 235.

\(^{46}\) Ibid., p. 244.

\(^{47}\) Fay, op. cit., p. 196.
If there was any mystical element in Franklin's nature he found food for it in Freemasonry. He was elected Worshipful Master of the Philadelphia Masons in 1736. In the eighteenth century, Freemasonry was opposed to the kings and the clergy, and Franklin, who was a Whig all his life, also opposed kings and clergy in their secular power over the people.

Franklin was never a moralist in the sense of Dr. Johnson, but he was just as great a lover of order. To Franklin morality meant order, prosperity, the advancement of human welfare, and progress. A workman who married young and reared a large healthy family, who performed an honest day's work for a day's pay, and who did not rob his employer or get drunk and beat his wife was obviously a more prosperous, more thrifty, and more orderly citizen than one who was a drunken, shiftless, thieving fellow.

In eighteenth century America, the almanac was as well-thumbed as the Bible, and Franklin's Poor Richard's Almanack was a best-seller. Franklin filled Poor Richard with time-tested proverbs of morality which he admitted were drawn from "the wisdom of many ages and nations." Franklin borrowed ethical concepts and moral aphorisms from the writings of Bacon, La Rochefoucauld, Swift, Pope, and many more, and re-stated them in homely, Yankee phrases. In this manner, he satisfied the public taste for morality and enlarged his printing business, but more than that, Franklin urged his countrymen to lead orderly,
moral lives to advance themselves and their country on the road to progress.

Although Franklin's outlook was always secular, and rested on his belief that if one did well on earth, heaven would take care of itself, he was willing to seek divine aid. In his Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion, Franklin petitioned God to keep him from "censure, calumny, and distraction; from avarice and ambition, jealousy and intemperance, falsehood, luxury and lasciviousness"; to aid him to be "honest and open-hearted, gentle, merciful, and good, cheerful in spirit, rejoicing in the good of others."48

When a youth he drew up a list of 13 virtues which seemed to him desirable, including temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincere outlook, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquility, chastity, and humility. Methodical, Franklin devised a method to facilitate his practice of these values:

I made a little book, in which I allotted a page for each of the virtues...I determined to give a week's strict attention to each of the virtues successively. Thus, in the first week, my great guard was to avoid every the least offense against Temperance, leaving the other virtues to their ordinary chance, only marking every evening the faults of the day...Proceeding thus to the last, I could go through a course complete in thirteen weeks, and four courses a year. And like him who, having a garden to weed, does not attempt to eradicate all the bad habits at once, but works on one of the beds at a time, and, having accomplished the first, proceeds to a second, so I should have, I hoped, the encouraging pleasure of seeing on my pages the progress I made in virtue...till in the end, by a number of courses, I should be happy in viewing a clean book.49

48 Goodman, op. cit., p. 222.
49 Van Doren, op. cit., p. 89.
Whether he ever achieved a clean book, the self-improving philosopher did not say. This ideal of Franklin's was typical of the eighteenth century belief in progress and in the eventual perfectability of man. It was the American cult of getting on in the world.

It is well-nigh impossible to draw any parallels between the religious beliefs of Franklin and Johnson. Franklin's mind and temperament were wholly secular, whereas Johnson gave his mind to religion and to self-examination. Franklin spoke blithely of the mercy of God, but Johnson was not sure that even the angels were in a state of perfect security. Franklin made no pretense of accepting any religious doctrine or preaching of God's ministers which was not palatable to Franklin's rationalistic mind. Johnson struggled to be credulous and orthodox, to align his rebellious reason with his melancholy temperament which needed so much spiritual solace.

Franklin sniped at the established churches and the entrenched clergy. Johnson defended the Church of England above all others.
Chapter 11

The Political Opinions of Johnson and Franklin

The political opinions of Johnson and Franklin contrasted as saliently as did their concepts of religion. From the vantagepoint of history, it is safe and easy to condemn the ultra-conservative politics of Johnson; history revealed Johnson was wrong and Franklin right. Even loyal Johnsonians apologized for the good doctor's opinions on liberty and subordination and his King George III attitude toward America.

However, there is something to be said on Johnson's behalf. He was a child of the eighteenth century when England had a class system. His mind and temperament desired order in all things, and he knew that change and revolution bring chaos. Johnson despised Americans and wrote bitterly upon the American Revolution, but he may be excused in part on the ground of ignorance of the American colonies.

Moreover, he hated the institution of slavery. Part of his prejudice against Americans was based on the fact that they were slave-owners. "How is it," he once remarked, "that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?" Once at a dinner, Johnson toasted: "Here's to the next insurrection of negroes in the West Indies."

In his ignorance of Americans Johnson called them "rascals, robbers, pirates," and concluded, "I am able to love all mankind except an American."
Johnson may have considered Americans "a race of convicts" who "ought to be thankful for anything we allow them short of hanging" because England had deported some criminals to the colonies, and Georgia was settled mainly by the former inmates of English debtor prisons.

Johnson was unable to understand why anyone short of convicts should emigrate to America.

"To a man of mere animal life, you can urge no argument against going to America but that it will be sometime before he will get the earth to produce. But a man of any intellectual enjoyment will not easily go and immerse himself and his posterity for ages to come in barbarism."

Many Englishmen had emigrated to obtain religious freedom, and Johnson, a staunch champion of the Church of England, was well aware that thousands of Americans were dissenters.

Furthermore, Johnson hated Rousseau's creed of the social contract in government. "I think him one of the worst of men," Johnson remarked of Rousseau. Johnson's opposition to the new theory of the social contract echoed the speeches of many of the most astute British thinkers of his time. With his ignorance of American colonists Johnson could not be expected to understand how strong a foothold the social contract idea had in the colonies.

53 Boswell, Life, 2, p. 357.
54 Boswell, Tour to the Hebrides, p. 208.
In Europe the social contract might be a more or less metaphysical theory. In America, it, or something like it, was ordinarily practice. Associations of men everywhere, from the first settlement, had regularly come together to do what was beyond the strength or capacity of individuals. Mutual help was taken for granted.

Finally, Johnson was an arch-Tory, and Americans, at least those who were so troublesome to the British crown, were Whigs.

George Macaulay Trevelyan, famed British historian, cited Johnson as a prototype of eighteenth century Toryism.

When George the Third came to the throne and Jacobitism died, it was obviously the moment for the revival of a strong Tory party in Parliament. But Toryism was revived not as a real Parliamentary party but as a court party. The king's friends in the Commons under Bute and North, took their orders, not from the Parliamentary chiefs of the Tory party, but from King George the Third himself...But the Toryism of the period 1714 to 1760, though its political activities remain somewhat obscure to us through the deficiencies of history, is know to us all as a personal creed through the merits of literature.

Squire Western represents to us the more old-fashioned rural squirearchy, and Dr. Johnson, the Church, the two pillars of the Tory temple which stood firm under water during the forty years when the Whig deluge covered the earth, to reappear strong aéver when the waves subsided.

Johnson, a man of the people from a cathedral town, is the typical High Churchman as High-churchmanship was understood in that day. His religion, which underlay all he did, was by him identified with his ideal system of politics...

Fielding's imaginary squire and Boswell's very real doctor have in common a traditional view of

---

56 Van Doren, op. cit., p. 213.
politics; a strong dislike of Dissenters and of the Whig lords; an attachment of the Anglican traditions of the earlier kings of the House of Stuart, rendered inoperative in the present by the fear felt by all true Tories of again putting a Roman Catholic prince on the throne, and by their innate respect for law and order, even when administered by their political rivals. Politically Toryism was rather a futile creed under the first two Georges. Its adherents were in an impasse from which they were delivered by the accession to the throne of a particularly strong Protestant with their own Tory sympathies in the person of George the Third. 57

Trevelyan has stated the reasons for Johnson’s Toryism and espousal of the case of King George against the American colonists. Johnson’s political pamphlet, Taxation No Tyranny which appeared in 1775 is a piece of writing concerning which his admirers, both British and American, are likely to feel that the less said the better. Even the admiring Boswell expressed sympathy with the American cause, and thought that Johnson should not put his opinions concerning American politics into writing.

Johnson in Taxation No Tyranny held “that the supreme power of every community has the right of requiring from all its subjects, such contributions as are necessary to the publick safety or publick prosperity...was considered, by all mankind, as comprising the primary and essential condition of all political society, till it became disputed by those zealots of anarchy, who have denied, to the parliament of Britain the right of taxing the American colonies.” 58

58 Johnson, Works, 14, p. 94.
This was doubtlessly true, but the American colonists were not objecting to taxation as a principle but taxation without representation. Johnson went further, and denied the colonists the right of representation on the ground that Englishmen had lost their legal right of representation by emigrating to the New World. Johnson argued:

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 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 Atlantic, he has not nullified his right; but he had 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. 59

This was sound enough legal reasoning certainly, but Johnson, despite his eagerness to speak and write on political subjects, was no political scientist. All that Johnson could see was that colonists, New England tradesmen and southern planters, were getting property and wealth in the colonies. He did not understand that the colonies were a commercial advantage to England and a political advantage as an outpost of the British Empire. Johnson was not an imperialist; references to the British Empire as such were almost nil in his writings and conversation. Johnson had as little political knowledge to speak and write on colonial affairs

as the average American citizen who today dashes off a letter to his favorite newspaper on some public question about which he knows little but feels strongly. All Johnson realized on the subject of the Colonial troubles was that these Americans, these slave-holders, Dissenters and Whigs, dared to threaten the British Parliament, the King's divine right, and the Parliament's right to tax.

The American colonists admitted that they were subjects of King George, but denied that they were subject to the English Parliament which did not represent them. Johnson found this colonial claim to suppose "dominion without authority, and subjects without subordination."  

Part of the colonial argument hinged on the interpretation of colonial charters. The colonists held that the colonies were planted at the expense of private adventurers who were given charters by the king, and therefore, the charters were not liable to revocation by the Parliament, and that the Parliament had no legal right to tax colonies chartered by the king alone. Johnson, on the other hand, held that the charters were liable to revocation, and that the colonies owed their existence to the charters.

To their charters the colonies owe, like other corporations, their political existence. The solemnities of legislation, the administration of justice, the security of property, are all bestowed upon them by royal grant...A charter is a grant of

60 Johnson, Works, op. cit., p. 102.
certain powers or privileges, given to a part of the community for the advantage of the whole, and is, therefore, liable, by its nature, to change of to revocation. 61

Johnson's opinion that the colonies were subject to English taxation was open to rebuttal. He said:

Our colonies, however distant, have been, hitherto, treated as constituent part of the British Empire. The inhabitants incorporated by English charters are entitled to all the rights of Englishmen. They are governed by English laws, entitled to English dignities, regulated by English counsels, and protected by English arms; and it seems to follow, by consequence not easily avoided, that they are subject to English government, and chargeable by English taxation. 62

This was reasonable enough, but Johnson nullified the force of his argument by insisting that there was no difference between those taxed with their consent and those taxed without their consent. In Johnson's opinion, the colonists, having left England, no longer had the rights assured Englishmen by the Magna Carta.

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, or in constituting legislators, but in the happiness of being protected by law, and the duty of obeying it. 63

63 Ibid., p. 116
The colonists' claim for representation in the British Parliament was refuted by Johnson, who asked: "What, at last, is the difference between him that is taxed, by compulsion, without representation, and him that is represented, by compulsion, in order to be taxed?"\(^64\)

Johnson, here, admitted that he saw no difference between taxation without representation and taxation with consent, but his admission involved even more. It was an admission of gross ignorance of and gross indifference to the rights of a people. His own solution to the American problem was to suggest that "Planters, as they grow rich, may buy estates in England, and without, any innovation, effectually represent their native colonies."\(^65\)

Johnson's suggestion, then, boiled down to this: the rich might have representation, and it should be accomplished "without any innovation."

Johnson, essentially, was unfitted to speak or to write on the subject of political liberty. In his mind, politics was so intermingled with religion and the established church that he was unable to separate them. As Trevelyan said, Johnson was a Tory because he was a high churchman. Although he denied he was a Jacobite, Johnson upheld the principle of Jacobitism chiefly on

---

\(^{64}\) Johnson, op. cit., p. 123-124.  
\(^{65}\) Ibid., p. 124.
religious grounds. He declared:

A Jacobite, Sir, believes in the divine right of Kings. He that believes in the divine right of Kings, believes in a Divinity. A Jacobite believes in the divine right of Bishops. He that believes in the divine right of Bishops believes in the divine authority of the Christian religion. Therefore, Sir, a Jacobite is neither an Atheist nor a Deist. That cannot be said of a Whig; for Whiggism is a negation of all principle.66

Fundamentally, Johnson found political activity distasteful, and he argued that he "would not give half a guinea to live under one form of government rather than another."67 He held that the abuse of power is nothing to a private man, and that government left a man's private life alone.

Of course, Johnson had no glimmer of how government regimentation would bring fascism by the twentieth century, but he had traveled in France and should have noted there the terrible effects of absolute government upon the people.

As the greatest conversationalist of his time, Johnson often argued paradoxically to startle and confound his audience. As a conservative, he was fearful that the loose, drawing room talk about universal liberty would undermine eventually the church and state. When a great lady talked about equality, Johnson suggested that her footman be permitted to dine at the family table. When Johnson related the story and described her protests, he added shrewdly: "Sir, your levellers wish to level down as far

as themselves; but they cannot bear levelling up to themselves." 68

Johnson was as famed for his opinions on subordination as for his championship of the established church. Boswell said subordination was the doctor's favorite subject. He held "that no two people can be half an hour together, but one shall acquire superiority over the other." 69

Johnson hated competition, and part of his opposition to the doctrine of equality was that a competitive society was an unhappy one. The peace and happiness of society was his chief concern, and while agreeing with Boswell that the condition of London's beggars was terrible, he added: "It is better that some should be unhappy, that none should be happy, which would be the case in a general state of equality." 70

Eighteenth century progressives might argue that intrinsic merit ought to make the only distinction amongst mankind, but Johnson asked: "How shall we determine the proportion of intrinsic merit? But, Sir, as subordination is very necessary for society, and contentions for superiority very dangerous, making, that is to say all civilized nations, have settled upon a plain invariable principle. A man is born to hereditary rank; or his being appointed to certain offices, gives him a certain rank. Subordination tends greatly to human happiness. Were we all upon an equality, we should have no more enjoyment than mere animal pleasure." 71

69 Boswell, op. cit., 1, p. 518.
70 Ibid., 3, p. 30.
71 Ibid., 2, p. 13.
As long as men kept their thoughts to themselves, Johnson cared little if they thought against the state. He expressed it thus:

This is the gradation 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.72

Johnson held that "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."73 He expanded this opinion in a discussion with a gentleman named Mayo. Johnson maintained:

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 society for which the magistrate is agent. He may be morally or theologically wrong in restraining the propagation of opinions which he thinks are dangerous, but he is politically right. MAYO. 'I am of the opinion, Sir, that every man is entitled to liberty of conscience in religion; and the magistrate cannot restrain that right.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, I agree with you. Every man has a right to liberty 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

72 Boswell., 2, p. 252.
73 Ibid., 4, p. 216.
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.74

Johnson was not far wrong in this reasoning: all countries today, including the United States, have laws against the propagation of subversive ideas, such as communism in a democracy.

Nothing would be more unjust than to assume that Johnson was a social snob or that he espoused too strongly the cause of aristocracy. He granted to rank the honor and rights and deference which he thought was its due, but he granted it nothing more. No literary bootlicker could have drafted Johnson's sarcastic, ironic letter to Lord Chesterfield. Nothing was more typical of Johnson than his remark concerning feudal lords:

I agree with Mr. Boswell that there must be a high satisfaction in being a feudal lord; but we are to consider that we ought not to wish to have a number of men unhappy for the satisfaction of one.75

Johnson, after all, was a free-born Englishman, and like one, he clung to the belief that power cannot long be abused because the people would not stand for it. He explained thus:

When I say 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 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.76

74 Boswell, 1, p. 498-499.
75 Ibid., 2, p. 178.
76 Ibid., 2, p. 170.
Johnson should have said there is a remedy in British and American nature: Germans and Russians seem to lack it.

Again Johnson argued against concentrated power of government:

The more contracted that power is, the more easily it is destroyed. A country governed by a despot is like an inverted cone. Government there cannot be so firm, as when it rests upon a broad basis gradually contracted, as the government of Great Britain which is founded on the parliament, then is in the privy council, then in the king.77

Although Johnson abused Americans for resisting British authority, he sympathized with the Irish whom he thought the government was reducing to beggary. He was also jealous of the constitutional rights of Englishmen. Boswell pointed out that Johnson's Observations on the Present State of Affairs glow with as an animated a spirit of constitutional liberty as can be found anywhere. Thus he began:

The time is now come, in which every Englishman expects to be informed of the national affairs; and in which he has a right to have that expectation gratified. For, whatever may be urged by ministers, or those whom vanity or interest make the followers of ministers, concerning the presumption of prying with profane eyes into the recesses of policy, it is evident that this reverence can be claimed only by counsels yet unexecuted, and projects suspended in deliberation. But when a design has ended in miscarriage or success, when every eye and every ear is witness to general discontent, or general satisfaction, it is then a proper time to disentangle confusion and illustrate obscurity; to show by what causes every event was produced, and in what effects

77 Boswell, op. cit., 3, p. 326.
it is likely to terminate; to lay down with
distinct particularity what rumour always huddles
in general exclamation, or perplexes by indigested
narratives, to show whence happiness or calamity
is derived, and whence may be expected; and honestly
to lay before the people what inquiry can gather of
the past, and conjecture can estimate of the
future.78

Here, Johnson pleaded that ministers have the necessity
to explain their actions to the people. For all his brave
talk of subordination, for all his contempt for colonials, he
would not let ministers and statesmen hoodwink the people.

2 The Politics of Franklin

The homespun, American philosopher, Benjamin Franklin,
was one of the last American patriots to be a British
imperialist. By nature, he was a diplomat, the father of
American diplomacy. He had an honorable career as a public
servant in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania before he went to London
in July, 1757, as colonial agent for Pennsylvania to present the
case of the colonial assembly against the Penn family, hereditary
proprietors.

At home, Franklin had been a successful newspaper publisher;
he had been a justice of the peace, and for 10 years clerk of
the Pennsylvania assembly. His journalistic training enabled
him to present the case against the Pennsylvania in the London
press, and his ease in making useful friends helped him win the
British government to the Pennsylvania point of view, which
78 Boswell, op. cit., 1, p. 359-360.
resulted in the taxation of the Penns for their American holdings. Franklin remained in London as a representative of Georgia, New Jersey, and Massachusetts as well as his own colony. His attack upon the feudal power of the Penns made him a hero at home.

Throughout this period, Franklin wrote and spoke as a good imperialist. He declared that he believed the future grandeur and stability of the empire lay in America, and he wrote press propaganda to urge the union of the colonies with the mother country. He advocated American representation in Parliament. Although he sought imperial unity, Franklin insisted that the colonists should not be deprived of their fundamental rights. In a series of letters on colonial affairs written to William Shirley, governor of Massachusetts, Franklin suggested a plan to strengthen the empire through colonial confederation. In these letters, written in 1754, but published in the London Chronicle, Feb. 6 and 8, 1766, appear the chief arguments that were used later in the struggle of the colonies against England. Franklin skillfully set forth the colonists' chief complaint "That it is an undoubted right of Englishmen, not be taxed but by their own consent given through their representatives," and "That the colonies have no representatives in Parliament." 78

After the infamous Stamp Act was passed Franklin remained in London to pull wires for its repeal. In 1766 he appeared

78 Goodman, op. cit., p. 570.
before the House of Commons for a three-hour examination during which he masterfully set forth the American cause. He told the Commons:

They (the colonists) understand they are entitled to all the privileges and liberties of Englishmen; they find in the great charters, and the petition and declaration of rights, that one of the privileges of English subjects is that they are not to be taxed but by their common consent; they have therefore relied upon it, from the first settlement of the province, that the parliament would never, nor could, by color of that clause in the charter, assume a right of taxing them, till it had qualified itself to exercise such right, by admitting representatives from the people taxed, who ought to make a part of that common consent.79

In Taxation No Tyranny, Johnson argued that colonial charters were subject to revocation. Franklin refuted this argument in a letter to his friend, Lord Kames, the Scottish sympathizer with the colonists:

It is a common but mistaken notion here that the colonies were planted at the expense of Parliament, and that therefore the Parliament has a right to tax them, etc. The truth is they were planted at the expense of private adventurers, who went over there to settle, with leave of the king, given by charter. On receiving this leave, and those charters, the adventurers voluntarily engaged to remain the king's subjects, though in a foreign country; a country which had not been conquered by either king or Parliament, but was possessed by a free people.

When our planters arrived, they purchased the lands of the natives, without putting the king or Parliament to any expense. Parliament had no hand in their settlement, was never so much as consulted about their constitution, and took no kind of notice of them till many years after they were established...Thus all the colonies acknowledge the king as their sovereign; his

79 Goodman, op. cit., p. 599.
governors there represent his person. Laws are made by their assemblies or little parliaments, with the governor's assent, subject still to the king's pleasure to confirm or annul them... The sovereignty of the king is therefore easily understood. But nothing is more common here than to talk of the sovereignty of Parliament, and the sovereignty of this nation over the colonies; a kind of sovereignty the idea of which is not so clear. 80

Although he formulated the case of the colonists so clearly, and concisely, Franklin as late as 1774 sought a way to reconcile the colonists' viewpoint with that of the king's ministers. He had served the king as deputy postmaster general of the colonies. He offered even to reimburse the British government from his own funds for the tea destroyed at Boston harbor. His imperialism died hard.

Franklin took no public notice of Johnson's tract on taxation until about 1789 when he wrote "The Retort Courteous," a sardonic reply to the English creditors who complained that American merchants had not paid the debts contracted by them before the Revolution. In his essay, Franklin wrote:

An essay arrives from England, advised by one of their most celebrated moralists, Dr. Johnson, in his "Taxation No Tyranny," to excite these slaves to rise, cut the throats of their purchasers, and resort to the British army, where they should be rewarded with freedom. This was done, and the planters were thus deprived of near thirty thousand of their working people. Yet the demand for those sold and unpaid still exists; and the cry continues against the Virginians and Carolinians, that they do not pay their debts! 81

80 Goodman, op. cit., p. 605-606.
Franklin quitted London for Philadelphia as war became imminent between England and the colonies. He was to serve in the Continental Congress, and finally to go to France to seek and win French aid and arms for the American cause. During his years in England, his ability and social charm won him many friends among all classes. One of these was William Strahan, king's printer and friend of Dr. Johnson, who was also Franklin's London publisher. On July 5, 1775, Franklin wrote his long-time friend a brief word of farewell:

You are a member of parliament, and one of that majority which has doomed my country to destruction.---You have begun to burn our towns, and murder our people. ---Look upon your hands! They are stained with the blood of your relations!---You and I were long friends: ----You are now my enemy,---and I am yours.82

82 Goodman, op. cit., p. 640.
"A boy at school is the happiest of human beings." Few schoolboys would agree with this cheerful remark of Dr. Johnson's, but if the educational theories of Johnson and Franklin were practised, it might have some justification.

The opinions of both Johnson and Franklin concerning education are still wonderfully fresh and stimulating. Franklin's concepts were stated formally for publication. Johnson's ideas on education were scattered delightfully through his conversations with Boswell and Mrs. Thrale whom he advised on the education of their children. Franklin is remembered as the founder of the University of Pennsylvania. Johnson's opinions never found a university home, but all teachers and parents might find enlightenment by reading once a year what he had to say.

Johnson was childless, but his love of children and the love children had for him adds human interest to the Johnson legend.

The son of parents who were middle-aged when he was born, Johnson described himself as an old man's plaything. He was a prodigy, and his proud parents evidently never missed an opportunity
to display his superior childish intelligence. This memory was so indelible that in adult life Johnson was annoyed and bored by eighteenth century "quiz kids."

Hester Lynch Piozzi, perhaps better known as Mrs. Thrale, Johnson's perennial hostess, related Johnson's disgust with parents who delighted in encouraging their young children to recite or sing for company:

I have known Mr. Johnson give a good deal of pain, by refusing to hear the verses the children could recite, or the songs they could sing; particularly one friend who told him that his two sons should repeat Gray's Elegy to him alternately, that he might judge the happiest cadence. "No, pray Sir, (said he), "let the dears both speak it at once; more noise will be that means made, and the noise will be sooner over."85

A hater of "by-roads in education," Johnson objected to forced precocity as useless effort. "Suppose they have more knowledge at five or six years old than other children?" he asked. "It will be lost before it is wanted, and the waste of so much time and labour of the teacher can never be repaid. Too much is expected from precocity, and too little performed."84

Even in Johnson's day there were those who came forth with new teaching techniques. Some of these ideas must have agitated Boswell for he asked Johnson what he thought children should be taught first. Johnson's reply was a classic:

84 Boswell, op. cit., 1, p. 468.
Sir, it is no matter what you teach them first, any more than what leg you shall put into your breeches first. Sir, you may stand disputing which is best to put in first, but in the meantime your breech is bare. Sir, while you are considering which of two things you should teach your child first, another boy has learnt them both.85

Self-confident, Johnson pooh-poohed the idea that there was any mystery about success in any profession or trade. He was convinced that "whatever is a profession, and maintains numbers, must be within the reach of common abilities and some degree of industry."

Parallel with Johnson's contempt for precocity was his conviction that "people are not born with a particular genius for particular employments or studies." Johnson held that genius was "good sense applied with diligence," a remark suggestive of Thomas Edison's definition of genius as 99 percent perspiration and 1 percent inspiration.86 Johnson did not believe in specialization in knowledge, holding that "the man of general knowledge can often benefit, and always please."87

Although a lexicographer and a distinguished man of letters, Johnson's degrees were honorary, not earned. He cherished a sentimental attachment for Oxford, but relied heavily upon common sense and hard work as a success formula, and deemed the knowledge

85 Boswell, op.cit., 1, p. 523.
86 Ibid., 2, p. 500.
87 Pioszi, op. cit., p. 12.
acquired "running about the world" quite as valuable as reading. He warned against the "refining" of education because "life will not bear refinement; you must do as other people do."\(^8\)

A one-time school-master, Johnson opposed brutality in the classroom. However, he thought a little punishment was better than setting children against each other by scholastic competition since he felt the bad effects of the latter were more lasting. He emphasized to Mrs. Thrale that children remember pain with resentment. He would not, however, leave unchecked faults which would mar adult life. "Ah! Sir," he told Boswell, "A boy's being flogged is not so severe as a man's having the hiss of the world against him."\(^9\)

His common sense as a teacher showed itself when he warned school masters of the absurdity of assigning long tasks to fill up students' time during holidays, and he rejoiced when one master promised to require no more holiday assignments.

Johnson understood child psychology well, and urged Mrs. Thrale to give her children positive not general rules for their behavior. "My mother," he remarked, "was always telling me that I did not behave myself properly; that I should endeavor to learn behavior, and such cant: but when I replied that she ought to tell me what to do, and what to avoid, her admonitions were commonly, that time at least, at an end."\(^9\)

Johnson's belief in the effectiveness of positive rules and examples extended even to preaching. He had no love for the Methodists, who were a new sect in his day, but understood

\(^8\) Boswell, op. cit., 3, p.192.  
\(^8\) Ibid., 1, p. 522.
why such preachers as Wesley and Whitefield drew large crowds. He told Boswell the success of Methodist preachers "was owing to their expressing themselves in a plain and familiar manner...

To insist against drunkenness as a crime, because it debases reason, the noblest faculty of man, would be of no service to the common people; but to tell them they may die in a fit of drunkenness...cannot fail to make a deep impression."91

He would not tolerate the complaints of indulgent parents that they could not make their children obey. "Such people," said he, "multiply prohibitions till obedience becomes impossible, and authority appears absurd."92 Although he believed in parental discipline during childhood, he disdained grown sons and daughters who tie themselves to the maternal apron-string for life. He expressed contempt for a son who asks his parents' consent to be married, and "confesses his inability to decide in a manner which concerns no man's happiness but his own."93

Working girls, too, were entitled to independence in Johnson's opinion, and he once rebuked Mrs. Thrale for reprimanding a maid for sitting down in her mother's presence without permission.

"Why, she gets her living, does she not (said he), without her mother's help? Let the wench alone."94

Johnson believed in education and its good effects. He told

91 Boswell, op. cit., 1, p.531-532.
93 Ibid., p. 20.
94 Ibid., p. 20.
Mrs. Thrale that if he had had children he would have "willingly lived on bread and water to obtain instruction for them." 95 Although he once commented caustically that "mankind has a great aversion to intellectual labour," 96 he held that "a desire for knowledge is the natural feeling of mankind." 97

In politics and religion, Johnson was reactionary, but concerning education, he was progressive. He was imbued with the eighteenth century idea that education brings progress. He insisted that all classes should be literate, and that educational advantages would be withheld from no one. He said:

The privileges of education may sometimes by improperly bestowed, but I shall always fear to withhold them, lest I should be yielding to the suggestions of pride, while I persuade myself that I am following the maxims of policy. 98

With sturdy common sense, Johnson defended the democratization of literature----the printing of many books and newspapers because they diffused knowledge. Boswell reported a discussion of Johnson's on this:

A gentleman maintained that the art of printing had hurt learning, by disseminating idle writings. JOHNSON. Sir, if it had not been for the art of printing, we should now have no learning at all; for books would have perished faster than they could have been transcribed. The same gentleman maintained, that a general diffusion of knowledge among a people was a disadvantage, for it made the vulgar rise above their humble sphere. JOHNSON. Sir, while knowledge is a distinction, those who are possessed of it will naturally rise above those who are not. Merely to read and write was a distinction at first; but we see when

95 Piozzi, op. cit., p. 17.
96 Boswell, op. cit., 1, p.460.
97 Ibid., 1, p.530.
98 Ibid., 2, p.216-217.
reading and writing become general, the common people keep their stations. And so, were higher attainments to become general the effect would be the same. 99

Some Americans might disagree with Johnson's statement that educated persons would "keep their stations." Johnson, however, was right fundamentally, because England up to the Second World War was a class-conscious country. Even the England of John Galsworthy's day was not as liberal concerning class distinctions as the United States. Social position in England was not based less upon education, than on hereditary rank and the class into which one was born.

Johnson was a man of letters. He entered his career at a period when the age of patronage from the great was passing, while that of patronage from the public was just beginning. As a literary man, he naturally was eager to increase the public demand for books and reading, not for selfish reasons but to benefit the public as well as those who earned their living by writing. He defended the generation of new writers against the old:

We must read what the world reads at the moent. It has been maintained that this superstition, this teeming of the press in modern times is prejudicial to good literature, because it obliges us to read so much of what is of inferior value, in order to be in the fashion; so that better works are neglected for want of time, because a man will have more gratification of his vanity in conversation, from having read modern books, than from having read the best works of antiquity. But it must be considered, that we now have more knowledge generally diffused; all our ladies read now, which is a great extension. 100

100 Ibid., 3, p.378.
Here Johnson commented on a controversy which is still alive: whether to read classic or modern authors, whether to teach only classic literature in schools and colleges or to introduce courses in "modern" literature. Robert M. Hutchins and other twentieth century educators who advocate the reading of the "hundred best books" might disagree with Johnson's verdict, but thousands of present-day readers and educators are on his side.

Johnson also championed newspapers. He began his London career as a journalistic writer for Edward Cave's *Gentleman's Magazine*. When Parliament barred press representatives from its sessions, Johnson, with journalistic enterprise, arranged to obtain reports of the sessions from one or two friendly members. He made this classic defense of newspapers when an aristocratic gentleman praised ancient times at the expense of modern:

Sir, the mass of every people must be barbarous where there is no printing, and consequently knowledge is not generally diffused. Knowledge is diffused among our people by the newspapers.101

Although Johnson once said that he did not "read books through", he was a voracious reader. He had a common sense attitude toward reading. "A man ought to read just as inclination leads him," he asserted, "for what he reads as a task will do him little good."102 He never believed in making

101 *Boswell*, *op. cit.*, 2, p. 196.
102 *Ibid.*., 1, p. 496.
reading difficult. "Books," said he, "that you may carry to the fire, and hold readily in the hand, are the most useful after all." 103 Johnson noticed that many read little, and was inclined to blame the style of some writers. "The books that we do read with pleasure are light compositions, which contain a quick succession of events," he said. 104

He twitted Mrs. Thrale for buying books which she thought her children should read instead of what they would like to read. "Babies do not want to hear about babies," he told her. "They like to be told of giants and castles, and of somewhat which can stretch and stimulate their little minds." 105

Johnson believed that the best way to teach children to enjoy good reading was to let them alone with good books. He said:

I would put a child in a library, (where no unfit books are) and let him read at his choice. A child should not be discouraged from reading anything that he takes a liking to, from a notion it is above his reach. If that be the case, the child will soon find it out and desist; if not, he, of course, gains the instruction; which is so much the more likely to come, from the inclination with which he takes up his study.106

This was the wisest advice which Johnson ever offered on education. He knew of what he spoke. As a lad he had the run of his father's bookshop, and read Shakespeare so early

103 Boswell, op. cit., 1, p.416.
104 Ibid., 4, p.252
105 Piozzi, op. cit., pl4
106 Boswell, op. cit., 4, p.24-25.
that the speech of Hamlet frightened him when alone. When
on a boyish search for apples which he thought were hidden
on a shelf, he discovered a folio of Petrarch and sat down
to read it, apples forgotten.

For his era, Johnson entertained advanced ideas concerning
the education of women. He told Boswell "that a woman would not
be the worse wife for being learned,"107 and said of his own
parents, "Had my mother been more literate, they had been better
companions."108

Johnson encouraged Fanny Burney in her novel-writing, and
was kind to Hannah More, a minor poet. He frequently went to
the drawing rooms of ladies such as Mrs. Thrale and Mrs. Macauley
who gave parties which today would be termed literary teas.
Johnson admired pretty women, and if they had intelligence and
learning enough to enjoy his conversation, he liked them all
the better.

Johnson counseled writers who wished to acquire a good style
to "give nights and days to the study of Addison."109 He credited
his own accuracy and flow of language to his studied practice of
expressing himself in the most forcible language he could use.

Johnson's final thought on education may be summarized in
the words of the philosophic Imlac in Rasselas: "They are more
powerful, Sir, because they are wiser; knowledge will always
predominate over ignorance, as man governs other animals."110

107 Boswell, op. cit., 4, p.24-25.
109 Piozzi, op. cit., p. 82.
110 Johnson, Rasselas, p. 64.
2. Franklin on Education

As an influential citizen in the New World, Franklin promoted the founding of the Philadelphia library, an academy for Pennsylvania, and established associations of intellectually awake men for the exchange of ideas on every subject.

Franklin's formal education was meager. Despite the honorary doctor's degree from Oxford and his recognition as a physicist by English and French scientific circles, he was largely self-educated. In his early youth in Boston, he read four books which he later credited with forming his intellectual outlook: Addison's *Spectator*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Defoe's *Essay on Projects*, and oddly enough, Cotton Mather's *Essays to Do Good*.

Franklin imitated these literary models, especially Addison, and this study, coupled with the training in journalistic controversy begun on his brother James' newspaper, helped mold Franklin's lucid, compelling style which made him one of the first ornaments of American literature.

As a Philadelphia printer, newspaper publisher, and bookseller, Franklin did as much as anyone in America to spread the benefits of reading among the working people. As a young businessman, he founded the Junto, an organization of ambitious young merchants, mechanics and tradesmen who met to exchange ideas to improve themselves mentally and to promote schemes of public welfare which would enable them to take part in civic leadership. As early as 1730, Franklin had persuaded the members of the Junto to pool
their books so that all members might share them. At Franklin's suggestion, on July 1, 1731, the Junto organized a subscription library for themselves and Philadelphia citizens who each paid 40 shillings to buy a stock of books, and then assessed themselves 10 shillings yearly to increase the collection.

This was not the first public library in America, but its success encouraged the spread of similar libraries in other colonies. The growth of libraries and the mushrooming of newspapers gave American colonials of all classes, even the mechanics and farmers, a chance to acquire the background in politics which led them to break with the mother country and to the American Revolution. Americans were becoming a literate people, self-conscious about their political rights.

To promote the press, Franklin entered into partnerships with younger men with the object of establishing newspapers and printing shops in other colonies. In 1731 he sent Thomas Whitemarsh to Charleston, S.C., where the following year he founded the South Carolina Gazette. In 1745 Franklin helped launch the New York Gazette, and in 1748, Franklin established a press in Antigua.

However, Franklin realized that libraries and newspapers were not enough. In 1749 he decided Pennsylvania should have a college, and to persuade other citizens, he drew up Proposals Relating to
the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania. He proposed "that some persons of leisure and public spirit apply for a charter, by which they may be incorporated, with power to erect an academy for the education of youth..." These citizens should not only sponsor an academy, but regard the students "as in some sort their children, treat them with familiarity and affection, and, when they have behaved well, and gone through their studies, and are to enter the world, zealously unite, and make all the interest that can be made to establish them, whether in business, offices, marriages, or any other thing for their advantage."111

For his academy, Franklin borrowed the educational ideals of Milton and Locke. He advocated a plain, frugal diet for boarding students, and recommended that all students swim, leap, run and wrestle to keep in health.

He recommended that the academy be housed in a building adjacent to Philadelphia, be near the river, and have a garden, orchard, and a few fields. Franklin recommended "that the rector be a man of good understanding, good morals, diligent and patient, learned in the languages and sciences, and a correct pure speaker and writer of the English tongue."112

The homespun philosopher also laid down suggestions for studies:

---

111 Goodman, op. cit., p. 323-324.
112 Ibid., p. 325.
As to their studies, it would be well if they could be taught everything that is useful, and everything that is ornamental. But art is long, and their time is short. It is therefore proposed that they learn those things that are likely to be most useful and most ornamental, regard being had to the several professions for which they are intended.  

Franklin recommended that the students be taught "to write a fair hand," to draw, and to learn "arithmetic, accounts and some of the first principles of geometry and astronomy.

The English language might be taught by grammar; in which some of our best writers as Tillotson, Addison, Pope, Algernon Sidney, Cato's Letters, etc., should be classics: the styles principally to be cultivated, being the clear and the concise. Reading should also be taught, and pronouncing, properly, distinctly, emphatically.... To form their style they should be put on writing letters to each other, making abstracts of what they read; or writing the same things in their own words; telling or writing stories lately read, in their own expressions....

To form their pronunciation, they must be put on making declamations, repeating speeches, delivering orations, etc.; the tutor assisting at the rehearsals, teaching, advising, correcting their accent.

Franklin desired the students to be taught ancient history, geography, ancient customs, and also morality. He wished them to learn "the excellency of the Christian religion above all others ancient and modern."

Like most eighteenth century progressives, Franklin advocated the study of history, especially modern history which would give students some concept of politics, the advantages of liberty, and the benefits arising from good laws and justice. Verner Winslow Crane pointed out that Franklin's emphasis on modern

113 Goodman, op. cit., p. 326
114 Ibid., p. 326
115 Ibid., p. 326
history would give impetus to a new generation which would seek in history arguments to support American claims to political rights.

Franklin wished the students to learn something of modern political oratory, its use by pen and press, and the rules of logic. This would be reflected in a new generation of Americans who would be convincing orators and insinuating press propagandists for American liberties.

Early Colonial universities had been founded to train ministers, lawyers, and teachers. Franklin wished his college to train young men also for agriculture, business, and even mechanics. He advocated the study of the history of commerce and manufactures, the instruction of mechanics, and the principles of agriculture—gardening, planting, grafting and inoculating. He hoped the students would take field trips to farms to observe farming methods. He urged the teaching of languages:

All intended for divinity should be taught the Latin and Greek; for physic, the Latin, Greek, and French; for law, the Latin and French; merchants, the French, German, and Spanish. And though all should not be compelled to learn Latin, Greek, or the modern foreign languages; yet none that have an ardent desire to learn them should be refused; the English, arithmetic and other studies absolutely necessary, being at the same time not neglected. 117

Next to the founding of the University of Pennsylvania,

Franklin will be remembered by educators for founding the

116 Verner Winslow Crane, Benjamin Franklin, Englishman and American, (Baltimore, Williams & Wilkins, 1936) p. 27.
117 Goodman, op. cit., p. 327
American Philosophical Society. Franklin's interest and research in electricity and science convinced him that there should be an organization of the best-educated men in the Colonies for the exchange of ideas. In May, 1743, he proposed that a society of these men be organized, suggesting that those living in Philadelphia meet monthly to exchange views, and those outside the city correspond regularly. Franklin proposed:

That the subjects of the correspondents be: all new-discovered plants, herbs, roots, their virtues, uses, etc.; methods of propagating them, and making such as are useful, but particular to some plantations more general; improvements of vegetable juices, as ciders, wines, etc.; new methods of curing or preventing diseases; all new-discovered fossils in different countries, as mines, minerals, and quarries; new and useful improvements in any branch of mathematics; new discoveries in chemistry, such as improvements in distillations, brewing, and assaying ores; new mechanical inventions for saving labour, as mills and carriages, and for raising and conveying water, draining of meadows, etc.; all new arts, trades, and manufactures, that may be proposed or thought of; surveys, maps, and charts of particular parts of the seacoasts or inland countries; course and juncture of rivers and great roads, situation of lakes and mountains, nature of the soil and productions; new methods of improving the breed of useful animals; introducing other sorts from foreign countries; new improvements in planting, gardening, and clearing land; and all philosophical experiments that let light into the nature of things, tend to increase the power of man over matter, and multiply the conveniences or pleasures of life.\(^{118}\)

Franklin's concept of progress and knowledge was largely utilitarian and suited to the development of life in a new country. He had the innate American desire to adapt theoretical knowledge to practical uses, and he was eager "to increase the power of man over matter." As a scientist and inventor

\(^{118}\) Goodman, op. cit., p. 320-321
he was the forerunner of later scientists and inventors such as Fulton, Morse, Edison, Ford and Wright who were to make Americans the richest and most mechanized people on earth.

The progressive, common sense concepts of Johnson and Franklin remain as useful today as when they first expounded them. Franklin did much more to advance education than Johnson, largely because Franklin was an influential and enterprising citizen in an aggressive new country. Johnson could offer his educational concepts to a circle of friends, but Franklin could give his to a young nation eager to listen, to learn and to profit.
Chapter IV

Johnson and Franklin on the Pursuit of Happiness

What famous men have said about the attainment of happiness is perennially interesting. Happiness is a word which connotes many intangibles, yet men have associated it largely with getting on in the world and money, marriage, social life, and health. Johnson and Franklin had something wise or witty to say about all of these. Like all men, both valued happiness; like wise men, they realized perfect happiness is unobtainable here; like sensible men, they laid down a few rules for obtaining that happiness which men may enjoy.

1. Getting on in the World

"Few things are impossible to diligence and skill," Johnson wrote in Rasselas, and the thought paralleled similar assertions of Franklin's "Poor Richard." 119

Like Franklin, Johnson was self-made, but started life with greater handicaps. Johnson was handicapped by a moody temperament, a tormented mind, an unsightly physique, a humble social position, and a total lack of money. He invaded London at 28 with only a few shillings and an unpublished play in his pocket, and by his own skill and industry became a skillful journalist, a successful writer and critic, and a leading

119 Johnson, Rasselas , p. 71
lexicographer. He managed to support himself, a wife, a mother, and a houseful of unfortunates, and left a small estate. His only form of patronage was a pension of three hundred pounds a year granted by George the Third after publication of the Johnson dictionary.

A rugged individualist, Johnson despised complaints that the world was unjust. "I never knew a man of merit neglected: it was generally by his own fault that he failed of success," Johnson informed Boswell. "A man may hide his head in a hole; he may go into the country, and publish a book now and then, which nobody reads, and complain he is neglected. There is no reason why any person should exert himself for a man who has written a good book: he has not written it for any individual." 120

Johnson was unmoved by the failure of his tragedy, Irene. Theatre-goers did not like it, and he bowed to the public's opinion. He chided Goldsmith for weeping over the failure of his comedy, the Good-Natured Man. "Leave off foppish lamentations," was a characteristic Johnson comment when his friends complained of life's disappointments.

Johnson did more than any one of his generation to break down literary patronage, and to urge literary men

120 Boswell, op. cit., 4, p. 190
to stand or fall by the public's opinion of their worth. He was generous in giving literary assistance to other writers, but he once said he "hated to give away literary performances, or even to sell them cheaply: the next generation shall not accuse me of beating down the price of literature."121

Johnson knew the value of money, although he valued it chiefly for what it would buy and how much good a man could do with it. He said: "Money will purchase occupation; it will purchase all the conveniences of life; it will purchase variety of company; it will purchase all sorts of entertainment,"122 yet he held that "getting money is not all a man's business; to cultivate kindness is a valuable part of the business of life."123

A realist concerning his occupation, Johnson held: "No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money."124 The great moralist was too hard-headed to take stock in philosophic remarks that wealth is evil in itself. As a Tory, he upheld the right of property, which he deemed to be fixed, but he esteemed money-getting as an innocent diversion. He had no illusions about the happiness of the poor. He said:

When I was running about this town a very poor fellow, I was a great arguer for the advantages of poverty; but I was, at the same time, very sorry to be poor. Sir, all the arguments which are

121 Piozzi, op. cit., p. 36  
122 Boswell, op. cit., 3, p. 204  
123 Ibid., 3, p. 208  
124 Ibid., 3, p. 22
brought to represent poverty as an evil, shew it to be a great evil. You may never find people labouring to convince you that you may live very happily upon a plentiful fortune.---So you hear people talking how miserable a King must be; and yet they all wish to be in his place.125

Johnson never railed against the fixed principles of society. "In civilized society," he said, "we all depend upon each other, and our happiness is very much owing to the good opinion of mankind....A man with a good coat on his back meets with a better reception than he who has a bad one."126

Johnson urged those who must choose a career not to deliberate too long, since after all many a man embarks upon a life work mainly by chance. He advised young Boswell that "If, therefore, the profession you have chosen has some unexpected inconveniences, console yourself that no profession is without them."127

Franklin

Millions of young Americans have regarded Franklin as a pattern for self-made success. He laid down the success pattern in "The Way to Wealth", "Poor Richard's Almanack", and "Advice to a Young Tradesman." He believed that the best and natural economic state was one which allowed the individual freedom to pursue his own gain, always providing

125 Boswell, op. cit., 1, p.509-511
126 Ibid., 1, p. 509
127 Ibid., 2, p. 25
he did not run counter to the general welfare in doing so.

The maxima which Franklin left for a success pattern may sound complacent, but he as a young man practised what he glibly preached. "The art of getting riches consists very much in thrift" was no copy book maxim to him, but a proven method of getting ahead in business. "Nothing in the history of Philadelphia gave Franklin a right to expect that the printer's trade would there be a way to wealth." Yet Franklin made it one. More than a printer, he brought to his first business a powerful and ambitious mind. He was the best writer in America. He cultivated friends among all classes. He started his printing business on a shoestring and in debt, but was out of debt in four years.

He left a simple explanation as to why he succeeded in business:

In order to secure my credit and character.... I took care to be in reality industrious and frugal and to avoid all appearances to the contrary. I dressed plainly; I was seen at no places of idle diversion. I never went a-fishing or shooting; a book, indeed, sometimes debauched me from my work, but that was seldom, smug, and gave no scandal; and, to show that I was not above my business, I sometimes brought home the paper I purchased at the stores through the streets on a wheelbarrow.

This was not a formula for making a million, but one for young men just starting in business who wished to

128 Goodman, op. cit., p. 280
129 Van Doren, op. cit., p. 94
130 Ibid., p. 101
get ahead. Franklin was not a prototype for the money-grubbing American. He retired from business in his forties, and devoted himself to public welfare, civic and colonial offices, and public work such as founding a hospital and an academy, serving his colony as agent in London, and working on his scientific experiments. He never evaded the claims of society and community, and he crowded several careers into one.

Debt was hateful to Franklin. In his "Advice to a Young Tradesman," he cautioned: "In short the way to wealth, if you desire it, is as plain as the way to market. It depends chiefly on two words: industry and frugality; that is, waste neither time nor money, but make the best use of both."131

In the days of his glory, Franklin remembered his humble beginning. He began his will, "I, Benjamin Franklin, printer..."

In a letter to a young friend, John Alleyne, written in 1768, Franklin offered his most attractive success formula:

Be studious in your profession, and you will be learned. Be industrious and frugal, and you will be rich. Be sober and temperate, and you will be healthy. Be in general virtuous, and you will be happy. At least, you will, by such conduct, stand the best chance for such consequences.132

2. Marriage and Women

With his love of taverns and clubs, late hours and convivial society, Johnson might seem to have been the

131 Goodman, op. cit., p. 259
132 Ibid., p. 727
confirmed bachelor. Johnson was a widower during the latter years of his life when his fame as a lexicographer, writer and talker made him a social lion. Neither Boswell nor Mrs. Thrale, his chief contemporary biographers, ever saw Mrs. Johnson who died just as Johnson was emerging from poverty and obscurity into the best-chronicled years of his life.

Johnson's marriage always has been something of a stumbling block to biographers. At about 25 he married Mrs. Elizabeth Porter, a plump and painted widow of 46 with three grown children, and almost no money. Some Johnson students argued that this marriage could not have been either happy or convenient. Joseph Wood Krutch, however, weighing what evidence the world has concerning Johnson and his "Tetty" concluded that the marriage was probably satisfactory enough considering the persons involved.

At no time during his life could Johnson have been rated very highly on the marriage market, and in his youth his stock must have been extremely low.

His personal appearance was grotesque and his odd, uncouth mannerisms reminded some persons of an idiot. At 25 he was miserably poor, and had not even made a start on his life work. The young Johnson who came a-courting Mrs. Porter, or perhaps, as his spiteful towns-woman, Anna Seward, suggested, her
daughter, Lucy, must have cut a ridiculous figure. If Johnson's later friends wondered why Johnson married Mrs. Porter, the friends of Mrs. Porter must have been even more puzzled as to why she married him.

Like most young men, Johnson had strong physical desires, but unlike the majority, he was also a moralist. He knew the sex impulse was not evil in itself, but unorthodox expressions of it were. Johnson was Christian, orthodox, and moral. Such a man solved the sex problem by marriage, and Johnson evidently married the first woman he found who would have him.

It may even have been a love match on both sides as Johnson said. The fact that Mrs. Porter at 46 painted her face heavily and wore fantastic fashions as David Garrick said she did, suggests that she was still interested in her appearance and suitors, and doubtless her vanity was tickled when a 25-year-old one came calling. She married the penniless young Johnson only 10 months after the death of Mr. Porter, so she evidently found marriage agreeable, and she certainly could not have been accused of mercenary motives. Few women of 46 are willing to admit that love and happiness are finished for them, and it must have given her considerable satisfaction to show her teen-age daughter and Lichfield that she could find another husband.
Mrs. Porter may have looked old and painted to discerning eyes, but Johnson's eyes were hardly discerning. Although in later years, Mrs. Thrale asserted Johnson had excellent taste regarding women's dress, everything known about him indicated that Johnson's eyesight was extremely bad. If his sight as a child was so poor that a teacher followed him home to see that he found his way, his sight at 26 would have been sufficiently weak that he could see Mrs. Porter as a "dear pretty creature."

Furthermore, young men, especially intellectual, poor, and ugly young men who do not attract girls their own age, are notoriously easy prey to sympathetic older women.

Like most women of her class, Mrs. Porter could not have had much education, but some of her remarks which Johnson repeated to friends indicate that she must have had a keen wit somewhat like his own. She was capable of judging his worth, for after she got over her first shock at Johnson's appearance, she told her daughter: "This is the most sensible man that I ever saw in my life."133 Evidently she interested herself in Johnson's work after they were married, because she said of The Rambler: "I thought very well of you before; but I did not imagine you could have written any thing equal to this."134

Even Johnson's own description to his mother of Tetty's

133 Boswell, op. cit., 1, p. 110
134 Ibid., 1, p. 243
reaction to his proposal showed that she had a sense of humor. When Johnson's mother protested the rashness of the proposed marriage, Johnson was reported to have replied: "Mother, I have not deceived Mrs. Porter; I have told her the worst of me; that I am of mean extraction; that I have no money; and that I have had an uncle hanged. She replied, that she valued no one more or less for his descent; that she had no more money than myself; and that, though she had not had a relation hanged, she had fifty who deserved hanging." 135

Clearly, Tetty was no fool. After the marriage, times were difficult. Johnson's venture as master of an academy failed in a few years, and when he went to London to seek his fortune, he left his wife behind. Johnson, in later life, disliked relating the "anecdotes of beggary" of his early years in London, but evidently there were times when he was unable to provide a home there for his wife. He was unable to earn enough to stay out of debt, and in their financial distress "dear Tetty" was forced even to sell Johnson's silver cup and spoon which his mother had bought for him when he was a small child. Tetty shared his worst years, and part of his morbidness about her after her death may have resulted because he could not repay her for the sorrows of their adversity. He may have been thinking of the unfortunate

135 Kingsmill, op. cit., p. 36-37
Mrs. Johnson when he spoke of the futility of success with no one to share it.

Nothing emphasized Johnson's rugged common sense as much as his comments on marriage. He was aware always that failure in marriage resulted from the defects of the persons involved. In the No. 45 issue of his Rambler, he noted how often people blame their mates for that which they have only to blame themselves:

"I believe...that marriage is not commonly unhappy, otherwise than as life is unhappy; and that most of those who complain of commubial miseries, have as much satisfaction as their nature would have admitted, or their conduct procured, in any other condition....We are always willing to fancy ourselves within a little of happiness, and when, with repeated efforts, we cannot reach it, persuade ourselves that it is intercepted by an ill-paired mate, since, if we could find any other obstacle, it would be our own fault that it was not removed." 136

While admitting that marriage was often unhappy, Johnson never failed to point out that there was no substitute for it. In Rasselas he said: "Marriage has many pains, but celibacy has no pleasures," 137 and concluded: "Marriage is evidently the dictate of nature; men and women are made to be companions of each other." 138

He wrote his friend, Joseph Baretti, on Dec. 21, 1762, "I do not, however, pretend to have discovered that life has anything more to be desired than a prudent and virtuous

137 Johnson, Rasselas, p. 99
138 Ibid., p. 118
When Boswell was about to marry, Johnson wrote:

"Now that you are going to marry, do not expect from life more than life will afford. You may often find yourself out of humour, and you may often think your wife not studious enough to please you; and yet have reason to consider yourself as upon the whole very happily married." 140

As a realist, Johnson expected no more from marriage than could be counted upon considering the imperfections of human beings. He held that "a man has a very bad chance for happiness ... unless he marries a woman of very strong and fixed principles of religion." 141 On the other hand, he could not understand why some women have so little regard for the moral character of the men whom they marry. He concluded this was because "women have a perpetual envy of our vices." 142

Johnson praised the women of his day as more virtuous because they were better educated, but he liked a little feminine beauty mixed with this intelligence and virtue. "A pretty woman," he said, "if she has a mind to be wicked, can find a readier way than another; and that is all." 143

Mrs. Thrale once annoyed Johnson by asserting that lovers' quarrels cleared the air.

139 Boswell, op. cit., 1, p. 442
140 Ibid., 2, p. 87
141 Ibid., 1, p. 442
142 Ibid., 4, p. 152
143 Ibid., 4, p. 336
Why, what a pernicious maxim is this (cries Johnson), all quarrels ought to be avoided studiously, particularly conjugal ones, as no one can possibly tell where they may end; besides that lasting dislike is often the consequence of occasional disgust, and that the cup of life is bitter enough, without squeezing in the hateful kind of resentment.

Mrs. Thrale, who had trouble enough with her husband, noted that Johnson usually sided with the husband when disputes arose between their married friends because he thought "women give great offense by a contemptuous spirit on non-compliance on petty occasions."145 These provocations, he felt, drove men to mistresses.

As a moralist, however, Johnson upheld the single standard for both sexes, and spoke several times on the value of chastity to the debauched Boswell. On one occasion, Boswell asked:

So, then, Sir, you would allow of no irregular intercourse between the sexes? JOHNSON. To be sure I would not, Sir. I would punish it much more than it is done, and so restrain it. In all countries there has been fornication, as in all countries there has been theft; but there may be more or less of the one, as well as of the other, in proportion to the force of the law. All men will naturally commit fornication, as all men will naturally steal. And, Sir, it is very absurd to argue, as has been often done, that prostitutes are necessary to prevent the violent effects of appetite from violating the decent order of life; nay, should be permitted, in order to preserve the chastity of our wives and daughters. Depend upon it, Sir, severe laws, steadily enforced, would be sufficient against those evils, and would promote marriage.146

144 Pioszzi, op. cit., p. 95
145 Ibid., p. 98
146 Boswell, op. cit., 1, p. 45
Johnson held that the young girl who has had a chance to see something of the world was less likely to stray than one who was too sheltered. He advised Mrs. Thrale that "Solitude is the surest nurse of all prurient passions, and a girl in the hurry of preparation, or tumult of gaiety, has neither inclination or leisure to let tender expressions soften or sink into her heart." 147

The moralist conceded that men usually require more perfection from women than from themselves, but declared it was doing them honour because "women have not the same temptations that we have; they may live always in virtuous company; men must mix in the world indiscriminately." 148

It would be interesting to know what Johnson would have said about working women in the twentieth century who like men must mix in the world indiscriminately.

Once when Johnson was in the mood to philosophize rather than to entertain, he wrote to a Dr. Lawrence whose wife had died:

He that outlives a wife whom he has long loved, sees himself disjointed from the only mind that has the same hopes, and fears, and interest; from the only companion with whom he has shared much good or evil; and with whom he could set his mind at liberty, to retrace the past or anticipate the future. 149

Perhaps when Johnson wrote this letter on Jan. 20, 1780, he was remembering the ill-starred Tetty of his youth.

147 Piozzi, op. cit., p. 71.
148 Boswell, op. cit., 3, p. 326
149 Ibid., 3, p. 476
Franklin

If Johnson's friends had reservations about his marriage, Franklin's friends should have wondered concerning his. At 24, Franklin wedded Deborah Read. She was a tradesman's daughter, and had one unfortunate marriage behind her. According to Franklin, Deborah, grown tired of Benjamin's dilatory suit, had been married to a potter, while Franklin was perfecting his printer's trade in London. The potter deserted Deborah, and went to the West Indies, from where word trickled back that he took another wife. When Franklin returned to Philadelphia, he renewed his courtship of the deserted Deborah, and they made a common-law marriage on Sept. 1, 1730.

Deborah bore Franklin a son, Francis Folger, who died in childhood, and a daughter, Sarah. Deborah was a loyal, thrifty wife and helped her husband in his print shop as well as managing a house and family. To the end of her life Franklin esteemed her, and probably bore her considerable affection, since his letters were always tender and domestic. He addressed her as "My dear Child," and concluded, "I am, my dear Debby, your affectionate husband." Mrs. Franklin referred to her husband always as "Pappy", a source of amusement to his well-bred friends of later years. Her lack of education was revealed in her phonetic spelling.
when she signed herself "I am your afeckshonet wife." Contemporaries spoke of her turbulent temper and the invectives which she hurled at William, Franklin's illegitimate son, who was brought up in the family. Her pet name, "Pappy" was so universally known that it was a favorite joke of Franklin's political antagonists. Although Franklin urged his wife to accompany him on his trips to London as colonial agent, or to join him there, she always refused to leave her home in Philadelphia. This was probably just as well since the good housewife would have been conspicuously out of place among Franklin's fine London friends and acquaintances. Debby was not fashioned to shine in society, and she may have had the good sense to realize it.

Franklin fundamentally was a man of simple tastes, and his plain-looking, plain-speaking, thrifty, hard-working wife may have suited him very well, although he had always an eye for a pretty face. His admiration for the pretty New England girl, Catherine Ray, was no doubt paternal, and his gallantries of his old age among the ladies at the French court were doubtless harmless.

In 1746, Franklin wrote a series of "Reflections on Courtship and Marriage" which took the form of a debate among bachelors who sought to evade marriage, while a wise counsellor proposed a plan for conjugal felicity. As counsellor, Franklin pointed out to the young bachelors that
the faults for which they blamed women were encouraged by men. He said of women: "Do we not blow up their Vanity and Conceit....and gloss over their silly airs and Follies with false Applause, and Epithets of Approbation."150

Franklin lashed out at those who marry for money or similar security calling the wives of such unions "harlots" and the husbands "stallions."151 Unhappy marriages, he believed, resulted from "meek mercenary views in one or both of the Parties; or by the headstrong motives of ill conducted Passion."152

Like Johnson, Franklin opposed the arrangement of marriages by parents, holding "No parental Authority, thus to make ourselves unhappy by marrying, is any way binding on Children."153

In the manner of his own "Poor Richard", Franklin advised young couples to decide before marrying how much of a fortune they needed for happiness, and not to deceive each other on this factor. He believed happiness in marriage "most certainly must arise from an unfeigned Esteem and sincere Friendship for each other."154 He urged young persons to be honest with each other during courtship to avoid disappointment after the wedding:

Let us...appear in our Native Characters, undisguised, and unaffected. If under those we gain Esteem and Friendship, our prospects of maintaining them, are as secure, as our own Minds and Dispositions may be lasting.---Let us be

150 Goodman, op. cit., p. 690
151 Ibid., p. 692
152 Ibid., p. 692
153 Ibid., p. 708
154 Ibid., p. 692
outwardly, what we really are within, and appear in such characters as we steadfastly design to continue. 155

Although he had an illegitimate son, and later an illegitimate grandson, Franklin recommended marriage, and in his defense of Polly Baker, the unmarried mother, urged that bachelors marry and rear legitimate families. He advocated early marriages and large families as socially and economically desirable for a new country like America.

He advised wives to be extremely neat, clean and attractive as they were in the days of their courtship, and to pay as much attention to their appearance at the breakfast table as when they go abroad. He also advised them to be good cooks and neat housekeepers, and never to live beyond a husband's income. He concluded his reflections with three common sense principles:

FIRST. That unhappy Matches are often occasion'd by mere mercenary Views, in one or both of the Parties: or by the headstrong Motives of Ill Conducted Passion.

SECOND. That by a prudent and judicious Proceeding in our Addresses to a young Lady of a good natural Temper, we may lay a very good Foundation for making her an agreeable Companion, a steady Friend, and a good Wife.

AND THIRDLY. That after Marriage, by continuing in the Road of Prudence and Judgment, we may make the Nuptial State as happy as we can promise ourselves from an other. 156

In a letter to a newly-married friend, John Alleyne,

Franklin wrote wisely:

155 Goodman, op. cit., p. 698
156 Ibid., p. 720
Treat your wife always with respect; it will procure respect for you, not from her only but from all that observe it. Never use a slighting expression to her, even in jest, for slights in jest, after frequent bandyings, are apt to end in angry earnest. 157

Like Johnson, Franklin warned against "squeezing the mind of resentment."

3. Social Life

Both Johnson and Franklin were so eminently social and socially sought after, at least during the greater part of their lives, that it would require a large folio to adequately present the social element in their lives. Johnson loved people. With his melancholy temperament, his tendency to brood upon religion, death and the state of his soul, he required companionship to divert and stimulate his mind.

He believed in friendship, in keeping friendships in constant repair, and in adding new acquaintances as he advanced through life. He tolerated, nay sought and enjoyed, the friendship of such rakes as Boswell and Topham Beauclerk because he needed their youth, gaiety, and admiration to take him out of his melancholy. He realized his need for extroversion, and in seeking out the gay and the young he sought to identify himself with youth and gaiety. Friendship for him had a peculiar meaning; a friend was one with whom he could exchange intimate thoughts. He said of Oliver Goldsmith:

157 Goodman, op. cit., p. 727
"He was not a social man. He never exchanged mind with you."

Johnson knew everyone worth knowing in his London. At the famous Club he consorted with Reynolds, Garrick, Goldsmith, Burke and other notables whose names dazzle the pages of history. Johnson met King George the Third with the same social poise with which he dined with a tradeswoman.

Johnson as a widower filled his house with blind Miss Williams, ignorant but kindly Dr. Levett, and any other unfortunates which he might bring home because there was no refuge for them elsewhere. The kindest of men to the down&rodden, he left his estate to his faithful Negro servant, Francis Barber. There is no part of the Johnson legend more attractive than the picture of the big man putting pennies in the hands of slum children as they slept in doorways, and going out himself to buy oysters for the cat, Hodge.

He loved clubs, coffee houses, and the conviviality of taverns. "A tavern chair is the throne of felicity," he told Boswell. He was a great diner-out and enjoyed the pleasures of the table so much he was disappointed if the dinner was not up to his expectations.

158 Boswell, op. cit., 3, p. 43
159 Ibid., 2, p. 517
Johnson loved London. He found "Charing Cross the full-tide of human existence; and said: "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford."\textsuperscript{160}

His clubs, taverns, friendships with all classes and all types of men and women won hours of freedom for his sick soul. He believed in social pastimes such as cards and dancing, although he did not indulge in either. He thought harmless amusements kept people from vice. When he gave a half-pence to a beggar, he did not mind if the beggar spent it for gin or tobacco. "And why should they be denied such sweeteners of their existence?" he asked Mrs. Thrale. "It is surely very savage to refuse them every possible avenue to pleasure, reckened too coarse for our own acceptance. Life is a bitter pill which none of us can bear to swallow without gilding; yet for the poor we delight in stripping it still barer, and are not ashamed to shew even visible displeasure, if ever the bitter taste is taken from their mouths."\textsuperscript{161}

Thus spoke Johnson at his best and most social.

Franklin

Franklin, the genial extrovert, delighted as much in talk and fellowship as Johnson. He founded the Junto for stimulating talk and society and kept it alive for 30 years.

\textsuperscript{160} Boswell, op. cit., 3, p. 202
\textsuperscript{161} Pioszzi, op. cit., p. 516-517
He helped the best minds in America to communicate with each other through the American Philosophical Society. He found in Freemasonry the brotherhood which for him supplanted religion. He believed man's duty was to society, and even as a struggling Philadelphia tradesman busied himself with civic life, and improving the fire and police systems.

In England and in France his simple charm of manner, his ingratiating speech, and ability to be at home everywhere won friends for himself and understanding for his country. In all modesty he could write his sister, Jane Mecom, from Passy, France, on Oct. 25, 1779:

> Perhaps few strangers in France have had the good fortune to be so universally popular...This popularity has occasioned so many paintings, busts, medals, and prints to be made of me, and distributed throughout the Kingdom, that my face is now almost as well known as that of the Moon. 162

Not only because of his agile and brilliant mind, but also because of his amiable nature, Franklin was a born diplomat. He was as popular at home as in the countries to which he was accredited.

Nor did Franklin keep his charm only for the outer world. He was a devoted, even indulgent father and grand-father. He cherished members of his family circle, and his favorite sister, Mrs. Mecom, was among his regular correspondents. He was a dutiful son as long as his parents lived. His letters and presents from

162 Goodman, op. cit., p.655.
abroad to his wife and daughter at showed how often they were in his thoughts. His Philadelphia residence was always a place of hospitality, and even strangers came to see his inventions. When he travelled as deputy postmaster general about the Colonies he found a welcome and hospitality everywhere until he said he almost forgot that he had a home elsewhere.

His increasing wealth, governmental position, and scientific honors brought him fame and respect, but his simple, kindly manner and speech brought him admiration and love from Philadelphia townsmen and men of the court alike.

4. Health

Johnson died at 75. During his life-time he was afflicted with scrofula, St. Vitus dance and melancholia. His hearing was so defective that he cared little for music and the theater, and his eyesight was so imperfect that he temporarily lost the sight of one eye. Boswell said Johnson was a hypochondriac, yet Johnson had almost nothing to say on the subject of health. He might have been sometimes irritable of temper because of his physical sufferings, and he was obsessed by the fear of losing his mind, but he never complained to the world. Although he spoke often of the evils of alcohol, he objected to excessive drinking on the moral ground that drinking clouded reason. He never mentioned any effect which it had upon health.
Franklin, in contrast, was extremely interested in health and in medicine. He preached inoculation against smallpox and wrote to his sister concerning a cancer cure. He recommended electrical treatment for paralysis, and even wrote an essay on healthful sleep and the art of procuring pleasant dreams. He drew up, when young, 11 rules for health and long life, all of which repeated his principle that "Excess in all other things whatever, as well as in meat and drink, is to be avoided."163

In his youth he dieted and abstained from drinking, but mainly for reasons of economy, since in later years he was known to enjoy the pleasures of the table and the bottle so much that he was plagued by gout.

He recommended exercise, and oddly enough for the eighteenth century, frequent bathing and fresh air in houses. Franklin was inclined to seize upon health fads, and to practice and advocate them, thereby foreshadowing the modern American's desire for physical fitness.

One of Franklin's health measures was the cold air bath of which he wrote a friend in 1768:

I rise almost every morning, and sit in my chamber without any clothes whatever, half an hour or an hour ...either reading or writing. This practice is agreeable; and, if I return to bed afterward...I make a supplement to my night's rest...164

Johnson knew nothing of this habit of Franklin's, but when Boswell told him that Lord Monboddo took cold air baths for his health, Johnson remarked: "I suppose, Sir, there is no more in it

163 Goodman, op. cit., p. 540.
than this, he awakes at four, and cannot sleep until he chills himself, and makes the warmth of the bed a grateful sensation!^{165}

^{165} Boswell, op. cit., 3, p. 191.
Conclusion

This thesis has presented some of the opinions of Dr. Johnson and Dr. Franklin on a variety of subjects, to show on what the two men differed and how they agreed, and the strong undercurrent of common sense which ran through what they wrote and said.

These two men were unique. They were eminent in their own time, and they will live as long as English is written and spoken. Aside from their different contributions to their respective countries and to the world in general, they will live also because they were representative in some way of their particular nationalities.

Franklin was a prototype of shrew Yankee know-how and ingenuity. He had the American's desire to improve life and make happier, easier and more convenient living. His inventions and contributions to science were primarily utilitarian. He also had the Yankee or American drive for worldly success, to earn money, to rise in the world, to obtain self-education. Moreover, Franklin had the inherent American desire to improve the world, to benefit mankind, and to leave the world somewhat better than he had found it. That was why Franklin became the forerunner of the success pattern in America.
Johnson was just as typically British; just as much a true-born and representative Englishman. He had the Englishman's reverence for kings, rank, and property. He loved a lord.

Johnson had the Englishman's reverence for established religion. He had the Englishman's belief in the soundness of family and family name. He had the Englishman's love of tavern life and of London. He had the Englishman's love of children and animals. He had a touch of the Englishman's insularity, and the old-fashioned Englishman's contempt for colonials. He had the Englishman's respect for established customs and manners. And he had the Englishman's respect and love for literature which has helped make English literature the most prolific and the greatest in the world. That is Johnson's contribution to his world.

These men still live because they represented some of the best characteristics of their respective nationalities.
Sources


Boswell, James. Tour to the Hebrides. (London, Oxford University Press, 1930)


Crane, Verner Winslow. Benjamin Franklin, Englishman and American. (Baltimore, Williams & Wilkins Co., 1936)


Franklin, Benjamin. Autobiography. (N.Y., Houghton Mifflin, 1925)


Kingsmill, Hugh, ed. Johnson Without Boswell. (N.Y., Alfred Knopf, 1941)

Krutch, Joseph Wood. Samuel Johnson. (N.Y., Henry Holt, 1944)

Piozzi, Hester Lynch. Anecdotes of Samuel Johnson. (Cambridge University Press, 1932)


Van Doren, Carl. Benjamin Franklin. (N.Y., Garden City Publishing Co., 1941)

White, W. Hale, ed. Selections from Dr. Johnson's Rambler. (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1933)