THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF BENJAMIN RUSH

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PREFACE

This thesis is concerned with illustrating and examining the political thought of Dr. Benjamin Rush of Philadelphia. Rush, the most famous American physician of his day, moved within the circle of such men as George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, and numerous other luminaries of that era. Furthermore, his adult life spanned the period from the Stamp Act Crisis of 1765 to the War of 1812. His importance notwithstanding, Rush has not been studied thoroughly by historians, and his political thought is only one facet of this versatile and significant individual that has been neglected.

Many people come to mind while contemplating the debts of gratitude I owe regarding this thesis. Some were not immediately involved in the project. In this category, I must include my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Floyd Lambert of Tishomingo, Oklahoma, whose encouragement over the years has been instrumental in my educational achievements to date. Thanks is also due a number of professors, both at East Central State College, Ada, Oklahoma, and at Oklahoma State University, who have inspired me to further my professional training.

A special acknowledgment should also be extended to the staff of the Oklahoma State University Library for their willing assistance in my research problems. Especially helpful in this regard were Miss Heather MacAulpine and her staff at the Interlibrary loan desk.

Of those more intimately associated with the writing of this thesis, my adviser, Professor H. James Henderson, must be immediately recognized. Professor Henderson first sparked my particular interest in the Revolutionary and Federal Period of American History, and it was in his seminar that I became acquainted with Benjamin Rush. In addition, his advice, constructive criticism, and encouragement were indispensible to the completion of this thesis. Professor Theodore L. Agnew also read my chapters and offered invaluable criticism and commentary. Both gentlemen gave prompt and careful attention to my work, for which I am most grateful. However, any errors in fact or interpretation that may remain are the fault of the author.

Pages could be filled to express my appreciation for my wife's assistance in this project. Judy contributed her essential typing and editing skills; but perhaps even more important, she provided both inspiration and patience.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

At the time of his death in 1813, Dr. Benjamin Rush of Philadelphia had reached the peak of his fame and influence. Concerning the loss of their friend, Thomas Jefferson wrote John Adams: "Another of our friends of 76, is gone . . . a better man . . . could not have left us, more benevolent, more learned, of finer genius, or more honest."[1] Adams replied that he also lamented Rush's passing, for he knew "of no Character living or dead, who has done more real good in America."[2] Rush's career had indeed been long, varied, and at times, highly controversial.

Rush was destined to be a controversial figure by a combination of two factors: his wide range of activities and interests, and his personality. George Bancroft correctly observed that "the key to his [Rush's] character is, that he was of an impatient and impulsive nature, fond of quick decision and quick action. . . ."[3] Thus in 1781

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[1]Lester J. Cappon, The Adams-Jefferson Letters (2 vols.; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), May 27, 1813, II, 323.

[2]Ibid., June 11, 1813, II, 328.

[3]George Bancroft, Joseph Reed: A Historical Essay (New York: 1867), pp. 31-32, quoted in "A Physician Philanthropist in the Eighteenth Century: Benjamin Rush, 1746-1813," Social Science Review (June, 1928), p. 282.

Rush could remark that "in politics . . . prudence is a rascally virtue. . . ."[4] Twenty-six years later, he was still convinced that prudence never "achieved anything great in human affairs. . . ."[5]

Furthermore, Rush always seemed to find himself on the side of God and morality in his crusades and controversies. His cause was generally "the cause of virtue and heaven."[6] Under these circumstances, there could be no compromise for Benjamin Rush. Consequently, by 1789 he had learned to "expect to be persecuted for doing good, and . . . to rejoice in persecution."[7]

In addition to the fervor of Rush's crusades, the number and variety of his activities immediately gives rise to amazement. He was of course a physician first, and Lyman H. Butterfield has asserted that he was a "more famous and influential" medical doctor "than any who have followed him in America. . . ." Rush was noted both as a theorist and as a practitioner,[8] and the list of his publications on medical topics was indeed long and varied.

Though Rush's medical practice and teaching occupied the bulk of

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[4]Rush to Horatio Gates, June 12, 1781, Lyman H. Butterfield, ed., Letters of Benjamin Rush (2 vols.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), I, 264. Hereinafter referred to as Letters.

[5]Rush to John Adams, July 9, 1807, ibid., II, 949.

[6]Rush to John Montgomery, April 14, 1783, quoted in ibid., I, lxx.

[7]Rush to Noah Webster, December 29, 1789, ibid., 530. Indeed, Rush was not unlike Woodrow Wilson in his vanity and in his tendency to moralize issues. See John M. Blum, Woodrow Wilson and the Politics of Morality (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1956).

[8]Lyman H. Butterfield, "The Reputation of Benjamin Rush," Pennsylvania History, XVII (January, 1950), 3-22.

his daylight hours, he still found time to write numerous letters, publish essays over a wide range of topics, and to keep diaries and assorted notebooks. As a social reformer, Rush battled for the abolition of slavery, was the progenitor of the American temperance movement,[9] staunchly opposed capital punishment, and strongly advocated penal reforms. Furthermore, he was both an educational theorist,[10] and "the harbinger of American psychiatry."[11]

Butterfield has noted that Rush's contemporary fame:

> sprang from his vigorous and magnetic personality; from his substantial accomplishments in medicine, psychiatry, education, and social reform; from the great body of his published writings; from his gifts as a teacher and a lecturer; and finally, from the letters he wrote to scores of friends, relatives, patients, pupils, and colleagues on both sides of the Atlantic.[12]

Indeed, Rush was, as Daniel Boorstin has written, "one of the most versatile men of the age."[13]

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[9]See John H. Krout, The Origins of Prohibition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1925), Chapter IV.

[10]Rush's educational ideas as they relate to his political thought will be discussed below.

[11]Carl Binger, Revolutionary Doctor: Benjamin Rush, 1746-1813 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1966), p. 280. Hereinafter referred to as Revolutionary Doctor.

[12]Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, lxi. Concerning his private correspondence and note keeping, Rush once observed that "even a common note upon the most common matter should be written as if it were one day to be read in a court or published in a newspaper." Rush to James Rush, May 25, 1802, ibid., II, 849.

[13]Daniel J. Boorstin, The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1948), p. 14. Hereinafter referred to as Lost World. Rush was associated with the following societies: The Society for the Encouragement of Manufactures and the Useful Arts, The American Society for promoting Useful Knowledge, The American Academy of Arts and Sciences, The American Philosophical Society, and The

Not the least significant of Rush's interests was politics. Given his environment, it would have been unusual, if not impossible, for him to have completely avoided involvement with politics. As a citizen of Philadelphia, Rush was located at the foci of both national and Pennsylvania government. In addition, political events which he either participated in or observed ranged from the Stamp Act Crisis to the War of 1812. Rush was deeply involved in the movement for Independence, the partisan struggle over the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776, and the ratification of the Federal Constitution in his native state. During the 1790's, he became a supporter of Thomas Jefferson and the French Revolution.

Although there have been no significant books on Rush's political thought, some historians have been bold enough to attempt to categorize this complex man in a few words. Thus he has been labeled an "enlightened conservative,"[14] a "Christian-Fascist,"[15] a "republican purist,"[16] a "conservative constitutionalist," and a "Jeffersonian

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Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage. In addition, he was elected an honorary member of the Royal Humane Society of London in 1807, and after 1791 Rush was a member of the Library Company of Philadelphia. Harry G. Good, Benjamin Rush and his Services to American Education (Berne, Indiana: Witness Press, 1918), pp. 88n-89n. Hereinafter referred to as Rush and Education.

[14]Macklin Thomas, "The Idea of Progress in the Writings of Franklin, Freneau, Barlow, and Rush," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1938), p. 228. Hereinafter referred to as "The Idea of Progress."

[15]Ibid., p. 247.

[16]John A. Schutz and Douglas S. Adair, The Spur of Fame (San Marino, California: Huntington Library, 1966), p. 8.

liberal."[17] Rush has also been charged with inconsistency, as when Butterfield asserts that he "veered from radicalism in the early Revolutionary years to arch-conservatism in the late 1780's (when he denounced as absurd the popular demand for a bill of rights in the Constitution)," and yet within several years "became an ardent supporter of Jefferson."[18] This immediately evokes an image of the physician vacillating from one pole of the political spectrum to the other. This image, however, is a false one. George Bancroft, writing more than a century ago, was perhaps closer to a correct assessment of Rush's political thought: "From his early life to his old age . . . whenever a question regarding freedom arose he was sure to take the side of freedom. . . . To his last breath" Rush "was devoted to those principles which were humane and liberal."[19] Though Bancroft's evaluation is simplistic, he does conceive Rush to have been consistent in his political thought, which indeed he was.

From the time he signed the Declaration of Independence in 1776 until he died in 1813, Rush's political thought hinged upon one central theme--the fulfillment of the Puritans' dream of creating a perfect society in the New World. This was to be accomplished by severing the

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[17]George W. Corner, ed., The Autobiography of Benjamin Rush: His "Travels Through Life" Together with His Commonplace Book for 1789-1813 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), p. 2. Hereinafter referred to as Autobiography.

[18]Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, lxix-lxx. Corner also refers to Rush as having first been a "fomenter of insurrection, then a conservative constitutionalist and at last a Jeffersonian liberal." Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 2.

[19]George Bancroft, Joseph Reed, pp. 31-32, quoted in "A Physician Philanthropist in the Eighteenth Century," p. 282.

ties with the Mother Country, by establishing republican governments in which hereditary institutions would have no place, and by promoting religion and patriotism through education. Rush's republic was to be peopled with industrious, frugal, and pious individuals,[20] and there would exist a high regard for liberty and property rights.

Demonstrating the consistency of Rush's thought, however, is not the primary concern of this essay; rather, the major goal of this work will be to illustrate as fully as possible the political beliefs and motivations which animated him throughout his adult life. To achieve this end, it is necessary to begin by examining Rush's reaction to and role in the American Independence movement.

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[20]Rush many times used the word "virtue" in describing these traits.

CHAPTER II

BENJAMIN RUSH AND AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE

Benjamin Rush desired Independence perhaps as much as any man in the American colonies. Even the physician's signature upon the Declaration of Independence, though certainly significant, does not illustrate adequately his zeal for separation from the Mother Country.[1] Indeed, in league with such men as Thomas Paine, James Cannon, Timothy Matlack, and Thomas Young, Rush was a key man in a Philadelphia "machine" working feverishly for Independence.[2]

Not the least significant of Rush's contributions to the movement for separation was his rather skillful work as a propagandist. In his autobiography, Rush claims to have taken "an early but obscure part" in the struggle to bring Pennsylvania public opinion in favor of Independence.[3] As early as 1773 he had written several pieces "in defense of Patriotism" that were published in Philadelphia newspapers under the signature of Hamden.[4] He also wrote about such topics as

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[1]Rush had been elected to the Continental Congress on July 20, 1776, and had taken his seat in Congress by July 22. Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 105n. It was on August 2 that Rush added his signature to the Declaration of Independence. Binger, Revolutionary Doctor, p. 109.

[2]David Hawke, In the Midst of a Revolution (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961), p. 102.

[3]Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 109.

[4]Rush to William Gordon, October 10, 1773, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 82.

the various techniques of making saltpeter for gunpowder manufacture.[5]

Rush also knew how to magnify the impact of his writings for the revolutionary cause: "I wrote under a variety of signatures, by which means an impression of numbers in favor of liberty was made upon the minds of its friends and enemies."[6] He "bore a busy part" in the controversy which raged in the Philadelphia papers over the momentous question of Independence.[7] Perhaps even more significant than Rush's writing activities was his role in the publication of Thomas Paine's Common Sense.

In later years, Rush recorded that he had met Paine at a Philadelphia bookstore and was intrigued by his conversation. He soon became convinced that Paine's ideas concerning American Independence were similar to his own. Rush had been preparing a pamphlet espousing Independence, but had hesitated, fearing the consequences of its "not being well received." He therefore proposed that Paine write such a pamphlet, and Paine readily assented to the idea. As Paine progressed in his work, he called upon Rush at his home and read each chapter to him. When Paine completed his pamphlet, Rush suggested that he show his work to Benjamin Franklin, David Rittenhouse (the noted astronomer and American patriot), and Samuel Adams. Rush also countered Paine's proposed title, Plain Truth, with Common Sense, and in Robert Bell found a publisher bold enough to print the pamphlet.[8]

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[5]Binger, Revolutionary Doctor, p. 86.

[6]Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 110.

[7]Ibid., p. 115.

[8]Ibid., pp. 113-14. See also Rush to James Cheetham, July 17,

The tremendous influence of Paine's essay has been generally recognized by historians. With obvious pride Rush observed in 1809 that in 1776 Common Sense "burst from the press . . . with an effect that has rarely been produced by types and paper in any age or country."[9] Certainly Rush was quite ardent in his wish to see the American colonies separated from the Mother Country; but what were the reasons for the development of his belligerent attitude toward England?

Rush's high regard for liberty and the rights of property was an essential ingredient in the growth of his antipathy toward Great Britain. Indeed, for Rush and many other colonials the two concepts were entwined.[10] Consequently, he felt that essential for the composition

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1809, Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 1008. While it is possible that Rush, in writing some twenty-five years after the fact, could have magnified his role in the genesis of Common Sense, there is other evidence available to substantiate his story. In a letter to Rush, General Charles Lee referred to the pamphlet as "your common Sense." See James T. Flexner, Doctors on Horseback (New York: Viking Press, 1937), p. 72. John Adams also noted in his autobiography that "Dr. Rush put him [Paine] upon writing on the subject, furnished him with the Arguements which had been urged in Congress an hundred times, and gave him his title of common Sense." Lyman H. Butterfield, ed., Diary and Autobiography of John Adams (4 vols.; Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961-1962), III, 330. In later years, Rush became alienated from Paine chiefly because of his Deistic beliefs as expressed in his "absurd and impious Age of Reason." Rush to John Dickinson, February 16, 1796, Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 770.

[9]Rush to James Cheetham, July 17, 1809, Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 1008.

[10]Edmund S. Morgan has pointed out that it is fallacious to assume that those who "showed the greatest concern for property rights were not devoted to human rights." In fact, property rights and liberty were equated. "Property in eighteenth-century America was not associated with special privilege, as it came to be for later generations. Land was widely owned." Edmund S. Morgan, "The American Revolution: Revisions in Need of Revising," William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd. Series, XIV (January, 1957), 11-12.

of a free government was "security for property, liberty, and life."[11] As early as 1769, Rush declared that "the love of liberty . . . was among the first passions that warmed my breast." He hastened to add that the "representative assembly should have the exclusive right of taxing their country themselves. They represent the greatest part of the people" and from their greater number were most likely to possess "more property in the state. . . ."[12]

Given Rush's attitude toward the rights of liberty and property, his stance toward the Mother Country's attempts to raise revenue in the American Colonies following the Seven Years War could have been anticipated. His outlook toward these imperial initiatives was exemplified by his attitude concerning two of the major issues which excited the Colonies in the pre-Revolutionary years--the Stamp Act of 1765 and the tax on tea.

Rush, a youth of nineteen years in 1765, was militantly opposed to the Stamp Act. To his friend Ebenezer Hazard, residing in New York, Rush passed the following news in November of 1765: "An effigy of our stamp officers has been exposed to public view affixed to a gallows. My next letter I hope will contain a full history of something more spirited." In the same letter, Rush condemned both the Quakers and Benjamin Franklin for their moderate stance concerning acceptance of

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[11]Benjamin Rush, Observations on the Government of Pennsylvania (1777), in Dagobert D. Runes, ed., The Selected Writings of Benjamin Rush (New York: The Philosophical Library, Inc., 1947), p. 60. Hereinafter referred to as Observations on Government.

[12]Rush to Catherine Macaulay, January 18, 1769, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 71.

the new tax: "O Franklin, Franklin, thou curse to Pennsylvania and America, may their accumulated vengeance burst speedily on thy guilty head!"[13]

Rush was immensely gratified with the eventual repeal of the Stamp Act. Upon hearing a rumor that the tax had been revoked, he exclaimed with youthful enthusiasm: "Blow ye winds, and conspire ye water, and swiftly roll into our waiting trembling ports the welcome barge that shall confirm the joyful tidings!"[14] Nathan G. Goodman has asserted that Rush's antagonism toward the British Crown never disappeared after the passage of the Stamp Act.[15] This is questionable, however, for Rush seems to have placed most of the blame for British "tyranny" on Parliament rather than the King in the years immediately following 1765. Reflecting upon his visit to the chamber of the House of Commons in 1768, Rush proclaimed:

> This, thought I, is the place where the infernal scheme for enslaving America was first broached. Here the usurping Commons first endeavored to rob the King of his supremacy over the Colonies and divide it among themselves. O! cursed haunt of venality, bribery and corruption![16]

By 1773 Rush was prepared to oppose Parliamentary taxation with something more than elegant rhetoric in private correspondence. He considered the British manipulations enabling dutied tea to be sold

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[13]Rush to Ebenezer Hazard, November 8, 1765, ibid., 18.

[14]Rush to Ebenezer Hazard, March 29, 1766, ibid., 23.

[15]Nathan G. Goodman, Benjamin Rush: Physician and Citizen (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1934), p. 13.

[16]Rush to Ebenezer Hazard, October 22, 1768, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 68.

in the colonies as an attempt to dupe Americans into accepting British taxation. In the Philadelphia press, he opposed the tax on tea, arguing that its landing in Philadelphia should be prevented: "Should it be landed . . . then farewell American liberty. . . . Let us with one heart and hand oppose the landing of it. The baneful chests contain in them . . . the seeds of slavery."[17]

Rush's activities in opposition to the tea tax, however, were not limited to the use of his pen. In October, 1773, he informed William Gordon of Massachusetts that "we are preparing here to oppose the landing of the East India tea."[18] In later years Rush reported that he had been among a small group of men who had met at a Colonel William Bradford's house in October to plan the resistance to the landing of the tea.[19] This advance planning bore fruit in December, 1773, when a committee of citizens informed the captain of a ship loaded with English tea that it would not be wise for him to land his cargo. The captain sailed for Britain with his ship still laden with tea.[20] Evidently Rush was willing to defend American liberty and property rights with action as well as writing.

Closely related to Rush's concern for American liberty and property rights was his bitterness toward British mercantilistic controls

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[17]Benjamin Rush, "On Patriotism," Pennsylvania Journal, October 20, 1773, in ibid., 84.

[18]Rush to William Gordon, October 10, 1773, ibid., 82.

[19]Rush to John Adams, August 14, 1809, ibid., II, 1014.

[20]Merrill Jensen, The Founding of a Nation (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 442-43.

over American manufactures and commerce. The Mother Country's restrictions also wounded the young Philadelphian's budding sense of nationalism. Moreover, he felt that the development of manufacturing in the colonies would reduce their dependence on the Mother Country and help thwart the Ministry's revenue schemes.

As early as 1768, Rush was speaking of promoting American enterprises and had declared that "we will be revenged of the mother country. For my part, I am resolved to devote my head, my heart, and my pen entirely to the service of America. . . ."[21] Indeed, he believed that "there is scarce a necessary article or even a luxury of life but what might be raised and brought to perfection in some of our provinces."[22] Thus he was "fully convinced of the possibility of setting up a china factory in Philadelphia"[23] and was also interested in the possibility of silk production in Pennsylvania.[24] Considering Rush's attitude toward American manufacturing, it is not surprising that he became the President of the United Company of Philadelphia for Promoting American Manufactures upon its formation in 1775.[25]

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[21]Rush to Thomas Bradford, April 15, 1768, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 54.

[22]Rush to _____ _____, January 26, 1769, ibid., 74. Rush was certainly not alone in this view. See Edmund S. Morgan, "The Puritan Ethic and the American Revolution," William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd Series, XXIV (January, 1967), 33-43.

[23]Rush to Thomas Bradford, June 3, 1768, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 60-61.

[24]Rush to _____ _____, January 26, 1769, ibid., 74.

[25]Carl Bridenbaugh, Cities in Revolt: Urban Life in America, 1743-1776 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), p. 268.

The most important factor in Rush's passion for Independence was his fear of British corruption. In 1768 he had proclaimed Parliament to be a "cursed haunt of venality, bribery and corruption!"[26] As the British government continued after 1768 its efforts to "enslave" the Colonies, Rush and others envisioned the British North American provinces (excluding Canada) as the last bastion of liberty in the world. Hence Rush could assert in 1788 that "it was generally believed by the friends of the Revolution, that the very existence of freedom upon our globe, was involved in the issue of the contest in favor of the United States."[27]

Even more disturbing to Rush than the effects of corruption upon the government and society of Great Britain was the notion that British habits, ideas, and manners were polluting American society. In Rush's eyes, the very existence of liberty and republicanism was in peril--Independence had become an absolute necessity. His strong concern with what he considered to be the degeneration of Colonial society can be seen in an excerpt from one of his letters to Patrick Henry. Referring to the recently passed Declaration of Independence, Rush declared that:

> Such inestimable blessings can not be too joyfully received nor purchased at too high a price. They would be cheaply bought at the loss of all the towns & of every fourth, or even third man in America. I tremble to think of the mischiefs that would have spread thro' this country had we

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[26]Rush to Ebenezer Hazard, October 22, 1768, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 68.

[27]Benjamin Rush, "Influence of the American Revolution," (1789), in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 325.

> continued our dependence on Gt Britain twenty years longer. The contest two years ago found us contaminated with british customs manners & ideas of government.[28]

It was easy for Rush to see ramifications of British influences in Philadelphia. He could easily point to the rise of the mercantile elite of that city with their "conspicuous consumption" as damning evidence,[29] and undoubtedly viewed Philadelphia's general lack of enthusiasm for Independence as a sign of the English corruption of that city's population.[30] Rush also believed that the evils and vices of British society had already begun to destroy the piety and virtue of Americans. Obviously it was logical for Rush to desire separation from Britain; but the factors involved in the evolution of his attitude must be explored.

An important element in the development of Rush's outlook toward the Mother Country in 1776 was his early religious training. His initial guidance was received at the hands of his pious Presbyterian mother who played an important role in inculcating upon the young Benjamin a devotion to moral and religious principles.[31] Rush's mother also sent him to his uncle Samuel Findley's academy for his first taste of formal education.

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[28]Lyman H. Butterfield, ed., "Dr. Rush to Governor Henry on the Declaration of Independence and the Virginia Constitution," American Philosophical Society, Proceedings, VC (no. 3, 1951), 251-52. Hereinafter referred to as "Dr. Rush to Governor Henry."

[29]See Frederick B. Tolles, Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682-1763 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948).

[30]See David Hawke, Midst of a Revolution, pp. 44-57, for a good discussion of Philadelphia's attitude toward Independence.

[31]Goodman, Benjamin Rush, p. 4.

Findley, a Presbyterian minister, apparently had a considerable impact upon the young man's religious development. In his autobiography, Rush ascribed to Findley his "not having at any time of my life ever entertained a doubt of the divine origin of the Bible."[32] It was also Findley who dissuaded him from practicing law and suggested that he become a physician.[33] Rush was in turn strongly influenced by his next schoolmaster, Samuel Davies of the College of New Jersey at Princeton.[34]

By 1765 Rush had become very much concerned with religion. At this time, he was exposed to the preaching of the English evangelist George Whitefield; and like many other Americans, he was much impressed with the English minister, filling entire pages of his correspondence with enthusiastic descriptions of Whitefield's preaching.[35] Indeed, Rush had once expressed the wish to engage in the "sublime study of divinity," declaring that "every pursuit of life must dwindle into nought when Divinity appears."[36] Though Rush eventually made medicine rather than the ministry his career, he was always deeply religious having early discovered "how full of comfort are the Holy Scriptures

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[32]Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 31.

[33]Ibid., p. 37.

[34]For an expression of Rush's affection for Davies, see Rush to John Witherspoon, March 25, 1767, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 34.

[35]Good, Rush and Education, p. 14.

[36]Rush to Enoch Green, 1761, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 3. Goodman has asserted that Rush's desire to preach was satisfied in later years by his numerous reform campaigns. Goodman, Benjamin Rush, p. 10.

to those reconciled to God!"[37]

David Hawke has summarized Rush's religious development by noting that he was a Calvinist and "considered himself a product of the Great Awakening, having studied under two of its greatest preachers, Samuel Findley and Samuel Davies, whose principles he honored throughout his life."[38] This statement can be misleading, as Rush rejected "severe Calvinistic principles" during the 1780's to embrace the doctrine of Universalism. Because of this and other considerations, he left the Presbyterian Church and in his later years attended a number of different churches with equal comfort.[39] Nonetheless, Hawke is certainly correct in that Rush never modified his puritanical moral code. He was involved with promoting virtue[40] and eliminating vice--meticulously avoiding the "sin" of idleness virtually to his last day. Given Rush's religious background, it was quite natural for him to have been vitally concerned about the vice of Americans in the years immediately preceding the American Revolution and diligent in eliminating the causes of that vice.

As early as 1761, Rush had observed that the Quaker City of Philadelphia was a "seat of corruption, and happy are those who escape its

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[37]Rush to Ebenezer Hazard, November 18, 1765, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 20.

[38]David Hawke, ed., United States Colonial History: Readings and Documents (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1966), p. 315.

[39]As early as 1769, Rush had acquired a toleration for the various religions. "The Deity pays no regard to those little ceremonies, in worship, which divide most of the Christian Churches. He will always worship acceptably who worships him in Spirit and Truth." Benjamin Rush, "On Manners," (1769), in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 394.

[40]Pious, frugal, and industrious people were "virtuous" in Rush's view.

evils and come off conquerors."[41] Three years later, Rush again reported that "vice and profanity openly prevail in our city. . . . Our young men in general (who should be the prop of sinking religion) are wholly devoted to pleasure and sensuality. . . ."[42] When he journeyed to Edinburgh in 1766 to study medicine, Rush's friends there were "chiefly those who are governed by the principles of virtue and religion."[43]

The Edinburgh sojourn was a key factor in the development of the staunch republicanism which Rush exhibited after 1773. Despite his concern about the Stamp Act, Rush apparently entertained no serious reservations about kingly government prior to his trip across the Atlantic. He had been more inclined to blame Parliament than the Crown for that unfortunate piece of legislation. Rush was quite young when he embarked for Edinburgh (he was twenty-one years old) and before that time he had been occupied with education, religion, and his apprenticeship to Doctor John Redman of Philadelphia. Consequently, Rush could write from Liverpool, England, after having just completed his long voyage, that he was now in a country "long celebrated for Liberty--Commerce--and the Learning of her Sons."[44]

Rush later recorded in his autobiography that he was first

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[41]Rush to Enoch Green, 1761, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 4.

[42]Rush to Ebenezer Hazard, August 2, 1764, ibid., 7.

[43]Rush to Jonathan B. Smith, April 30, 1767, ibid., 39-40.

[44]Rush to Thomas Bradford, October 25, 1766, Lyman H. Butterfield, ed., "Further Letters of Benjamin Rush," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, LXXVIII (January, 1954), p. 28. Hereinafter referred to as "Further Letters."

introduced to republican principles in Edinburgh by one John Bostock:[45] "Never before had I heard the authority of Kings called into question. . . . I now exercised my reason upon the subject of Government."[46] Rush was certainly exposed to the more radical type of British republicanism. Caroline Robbins has noted that Bostock was a radical and a "raptuous admirer of Algernon Sidney." He was also influenced by the English historian Catherine Macaulay, considered by many contemporaries to be one of the most radical republicans in England. She was disdainful of hereditary monarchy and titles, advocated annual parliaments, equal electoral districts, and manhood suffrage.[47] By January, 1769, Rush held an "exalted opinion" of her "character and principles. . . ."[48]

Upon leaving Edinburgh, Rush spent some time in England, where he was deemed worthy to dine, "in company with several gentlemen from

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[45]Bostock was also a student at Edinburgh. He received his M.D. degree in 1769, and practiced medicine in Liverpool, England, until his untimely death in 1774. Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 45n. Rush's close relationship with Bostock must have been recognized by some of their contemporaries in Edinburgh. In fact, some thirty-five years after Rush had met Bostock, he received a letter from Bostock's son asking for information about the elder Bostock, who had died during his son's childhood.. Good, Rush and Education, p. 18n. It is also likely that Rush met others in Scotland who reinforced Bostock's influence. David P. Heatley has noted that many of the young Americans who had studied in Edinburgh later actively favored Independence. Indeed, Heatley postulated that the influence of these Edinburgh trained men "could have been decisive," in favor of Independence. David P. Heatley, Studies in British History and Politics (London: Smith, Elder, and Company, 1913), XV, 40-41.

[46]Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 46.

[47]Caroline Robbins, The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. 358-60.

[48]Rush to Catherine Macaulay, January 18, 1769, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 69.

America and others from . . . England," with John Wilkes[49] in the King's Bench Prison. To the young American, Wilkes was "one of the most entertaining men in the world." Rush also noted that Wilkes had observed that "titles are the bane of an infant country."[50]

Rush also toured France for a time, and while finding much to admire in the French people, he held little but contempt for Louis XV of France. Furthermore, he found the Dauphin (the future Louis XVI) to be rather unattractive and ill-mannered.[51]

Returning to Philadelphia in 1769, Rush began associating with men whose conversation "daily nourished" those republican principles to which he had been exposed in Edinburgh. This group included the Philadelphians David Rittenhouse and Owen Biddle and, after 1773, John and Samuel Adams, John Hancock, and Pennsylvania insurrectionists such as James Cannon and Timothy Matlack.[52] Consequently, Rush became a staunch believer in republicanism. His antipathy toward monarchy and aristocratic trappings remained throughout his life.

In addition to Rush's contacts with republican minded men, he was exposed to another important influence. Gordon Wood has noted that in the years preceding the Revolution, the Calvinist ministers "fashioned an explanation of the British tyranny as a divine punishment for the

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[49]Wilkes was an English political agitator who engaged in harpooning the Ministry and was extremely popular among the people of London and the American Sons of Liberty. Ibid., 73n.

[50]Rush to _____ _____, January 19, 1769, ibid., 72.

[51]Rush, "On Manners," in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, pp. 389-90.

[52]Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 115. See also Rush to Mrs. Rush, July 23, 1776, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 106. Rush to John Adams, December 26, 1811, ibid., II, 1114. Hawke, Midst of a Revolution, p. 129.

abominations [pursuit of luxury, infidelity, intemperance, etc.] of the American people." Consequently, the clergy called for a regeneration of American society. "Thus," Wood asserts, "'the city upon the hill' assumed a new republican character. It would now hopefully be, in Samuel Adams' revealing words, 'the Christian Sparta'."[53] Therefore, it was not illogical for the clergy to interpret British tyranny as God's way of punishing the colonists for their sins. Considering Rush's religious background and his burgeoning republicanism, he was almost certain to embrace these concepts.

When the first Continental Congress assembled at Philadelphia, Rush "mixed freely with . . . particularly the two Adamses and other members from New England who had anticipated and even cherished the idea of Independence."[54] Indeed, Rush reports that "John and Samuel Adams domesticated themselves in my family. Their conversation was at all times animating and decided in favor of liberty and republicanism."[55] Both of these men were certain to reinforce Rush's predisposition to accept the Calvinist ministers' arguments; it is not at all surprising then that he accepted the view that America must become a "Christian Sparta." Rush as well as many others felt that America's present vices were the result of the corrupting effect of

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[53]Gordon Wood, The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), pp. 117-18. Bernard Bailyn has also noted that the New England Puritan influence fostered the notion that "the colonization of British America had been an event designed by the hand of God to satisfy his ultimate aims." The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 31.

[54]Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 112.

[55]Ibid., p. 110.

British influence. Independence was the most obvious and effective way to escape the English seedbed of vice. One question that still remains, however, is what did Rush foresee to be the ultimate ramifications of the Revolution?

Rush believed that once Independence was secured, the United States, free from mercantilistic controls and tyranny, would enter into an age in which there would be "no end" to its "commerce, freedom, and happiness."[56] Even more important for Rush than these pleasant prospects was his hope for some fundamental changes in American society.

As early as July 16, 1776, Rush felt that the people of the United States were "purified from some . . . british customs manners & ideas of government. . . . In particular we dare to speak freely & justly of royal and hereditary power." This was a cheerful sign for Rush as he anticipated that post-Revolutionary Americans would be wholly republican. He also hoped that Americans would "vie for wisdom" with the citizens of other nations; "but our virtue will I hope know no bounds."[57]

Virtue was a major concern for Rush, and he felt that the Revolution would bring about a regeneration of American society--a return to a bygone age of purity and piety. He desired that the end of the Revolution would find "among us the same temperence in pleasure, the same modesty in dress, the same justice in business, and the same veneration

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[56]Rush would have added grandeur, "but grandeur belongs not in republics." Rush to Anthony Wayne, August 6, 1779, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 238.

[57]Butterfield, ed., "Dr. Rush to Governor Henry," p. 252.

for the name of the Deity which distinguished our ancestors."[58] But how did Rush expect this change in American society to take place; for the mere fact of separation from the Mother Country, while eliminating a source of corrupting influence, could not of itself bring about a regeneration of such great magnitude?

Rush certainly realized that Independence alone would not be sufficient to purify American society. Referring to the recently proclaimed Declaration of Independence, Rush observed that "the republican soil is broke up, but we have still many monarchial and aristocratic weeds to pluck from it. . . . We have knocked up the substance of royalty, but now and then we worship the shadow."[59]

Rush expected the exigencies of the Revolution to stimulate a behavioral reformation among Americans. Consequently, in August, 1777, he confided to John Adams that "a peace at this time would be the greatest curse that could befall us," because it would take "one or two more campaigns to purge away the monarchial impurity we contracted by laying so long upon the lap of Great Britain."[60] In 1780 Rush still felt that "nothing but a premature peace can ruin our country."[61] As late as April, 1782, he still feared that Independence at that time would "unnerve the resentments of Americans and introduce among us all the consequences of English habits and manners. . . . The patriotism of

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[58]Rush to John Adams, August 8, 1777, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 152.

[59]Rush to Dr. Walter Jones, July 30, 1776, ibid., 108.

[60]Rush to John Adams, August 8, 1777, ibid., 152. See also Rush to John Adams, January 22, 1778, ibid., 190. Rush to Jonathan B. Smith, April 20, 1778, ibid., 214.

[61]Rush to John Adams, August 25, 1780, ibid., 255.

too many is founded only in resentment."[62] By the end of the War, Rush had realized that the adversities of revolution had not been enough to bring about the extensive reformation that he had desired.

Nevertheless, Rush was still hopeful, for he felt with others such as John Adams and Thomas Jefferson that republican government itself would have a regenerative effect upon the American people.[63] Therefore, while Rush lamented in 1781 that "it will require half a century to cure us of all our monarchial habits and prejudices," he could also be hopeful for "our republican forms of government will in time beget republican opinions and manners. All will end well."[64]

Rush's faith that all would "end well" with the American Revolution was engendered in part by his belief that the colonists were basically virtuous people. His attitude toward Americans was obviously affected by the Puritan concept of mission. In the environment of the New World, Americans had become hard-working, frugal, and pious--free from the vices of the Old World. It had only been in recent years, Rush felt, that the impurities of Great Britain had begun to spoil colonial society. Consequently, he believed that Americans were merely tainted rather than thoroughly corrupted, and their endemic virtue was a major prop for Rush's belief that American society could be regenerated.[65]

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[62]Rush to Nathaneal Greene, April 15, 1782, ibid., 268-69.

[63]Wood, Creation of the American Republic, pp. 120-21.

[64]Rush to Horatio Gates, September 5, 1781, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 265.

[65]Rush's faith in the virtue of Americans may also be illustrated by a scheme which he proposed to Richard Henry Lee in 1777. To maintain enough shirts for the army to afford cleanliness, Rush suggested

In addition to his ideas about American virtue, Rush was bolstered in his forecast of the eventual outcome of the Revolution because he saw in it the "hand of heaven." As early as May, 1776, Rush exclaimed that the cause of Independence "prospers in every county of the province. The hand of heaven is with us. Did I not think so, I would not have embarked in it."[66]

During the course of the War, Rush continued to notice the role of divine intervention in favor of the Americans. He was much cheered with the signing of the French Alliance and the evacuation of Philadelphia by General Howe in 1778. However, these events were not due to wise leadership and military strength; rather, "heaven seems resolved to have all the glory of deliverance to itself."[67] Referring to the blunders of Congress and the Generals, Rush declared that "had not heaven defeated their councils in a thousand instances, we should be hewers of wood and drawers of water to the subjects of the King of Britain."[68] Rush finally became convinced that "divine providence has saved us in spite of all that we have done to ruin ourselves" and consequently, "our independence is as secure as the everlasting mountains."[69]

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that a request be made to "every man in America for one or two of his shirts for the benefit of the army. . . ." He was sure this plan would be successful. Rush to Richard Henry Lee, January 6, 1777, Butterfield, ed., "Further Letters," p. 16.

[66]Rush to Mrs. Rush, May 29, 1776, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 99.

[67]Rush to Abigail Adams, September 3, 1778, ibid., 218.

[68]Rush to William Gordon, December 10, 1778, ibid., 222.

[69]Rush to John Adams, August 19, 1779, ibid., 239. See also, Rush to John Adams, October 23, 1780, ibid., 255.

It was not difficult for Rush to discover the hand of God working to forward the revolutionary cause, considering his view of the purpose of the Revolution. It was designed to bring about a reformation of American society. The "city upon a hill" was to be re-created on the American continent for all the world to observe and perhaps some day emulate. While looking toward a future of economic development and prosperity, he also sought the return to a past age when Colonials were untainted with the corruptions of the Mother Country. For Benjamin Rush, a product of the Great Awakening, the American Revolution was to serve as a second Great Awakening--the perfect republic was to be created.

CHAPTER III

THE REPUBLICAN RUSH

With the advent of peace in 1783, Benjamin Rush continued his struggle to establish Samuel Adams' Christian Sparta--the pure republic. His activities following the Revolutionary War have been characterized as a "one-man crusade to remake America."[1] Indeed, for Rush the Revolution was not over: "On the contrary, nothing but the first act of the great drama is closed." The formidable task of bringing "the principles, morals, and manners of our citizens" in line with republican institutions remained to be completed.[2]

Rush pursued his mission in a variety of ways. Through public letters, broadsides, and pamphlets, he propagandized for the establishment of proper republican governments, penal reform (including abolition of capital punishment), and educational reforms and innovations. He also attacked slavery, spirituous liquors, war, tobacco, and other "evils" of American society. The enormity of his burden led him to exclaim in 1789: "O! for an ocean of health and time!"[3]

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[1]Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, lxviii.

[2]Benjamin Rush, "Address to the People of the United States," American Museum, I (January, 1787), 9-13, in ibid.

[3]Rush to Jeremy Belknap, October 13, 1789, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 526.

Rush's various pursuits were linked by means of his mechanistic system of psychology. He believed that the ability of an individual to distinguish between virtue and vice or good and evil was dependent upon physical stimulations. Consequently, man's environment was of the utmost importance in determining his outlook toward republicanism and morals.[4] Therefore, Rush's belief in republican forms of government, his views on education, his opposition to slavery, and his ideas on the rehabilitation of criminals fall into a consistent and well-knit system.[5] For Rush there was "an indissoluble union between moral, political and physical happiness. . . ."[6]

Government was logically an important factor in Rush's plans for promoting republicanism in the United States. During the Revolution he had expected that republican forms of government would promote republican attitudes, habits, and ideas. There was, of course, no place in his conception of republican government for anything that smacked of monarchy or hereditary institutions. He did not, however, favor the establishment of a simple or direct democracy; rather,

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[4]Benjamin Rush, "The Influence of Physical Causes upon the Moral Faculty," (1786), in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, pp. 181-211. See also, Joseph L. Blau, Men and Movements in American Philosophy (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1952), pp. 69-70. Binger, Revolutionary Doctor, p. 172.

[5]Blau, Men and Movements, p. 70.

[6]Benjamin Rush, Three Lectures on Animal Life (Philadelphia, 1799), p. 62, quoted in Herbert W. Schneider, A History of American Philosophy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946), p. 75. Rush saw no conflict between his materialism and religious beliefs. Indeed, it would be a "happy era! when the divine and the philosopher shall embrace each other, and unite their labors for the reformation and happiness of mankind." Rush, "Influence of Physical Causes," in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 211.

republican government was to strike a middle ground between a simple democracy and a monarchy. Consequently, the ideal republican government would provide "restraints against the tyranny of rulers on the one hand and the licentiousness of the people on the other."[7]

An understanding of Rush's view of the "common man" or average American is crucial to comprehension of his philosophy of republicanism. Despite his concern about licentiousness, Rush had a great deal of faith in the people's ability to maintain free republican government. Indeed, he felt that the "farmers and tradesmen" were "the pillars of national happiness and prosperity."[8]

Several factors were involved in Rush's sympathetic attitude toward the common people. Of considerable importance was his family background. His father was a gunsmith whose major claim to public recognition was his honesty.[9] Indeed, Rush's immediate background was humble enough, and his ancestors in America "were all farmers and mechanics." He was proud of them, nonetheless, for they were endowed with "Christian and rural virtues" and innocent and pure characters.[10] Rush's inauspicious origins most likely influenced

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[7]Rush to John Adams, October 12, 1779, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 240. Rush's thoughts concerning the proper forms of republican government shall be discussed fully in the following chapter.

[8]Rush to Elias Boudinot, July 9, 1788, ibid., 472. See also, Rush to _____ _____: "Information to Europeans who are Disposed to Migrate to the United States," April 16, 1790, ibid., 554. Rush to Horatio Gates, December 26, 1795, ibid., II, 768.

[9]Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 25.

[10]Rush to John Adams, July 13, 1812, Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 1151-52.

his attitude toward others with similar backgrounds.

Rush's positive attitude toward the common man was also augmented by his negative attitude toward the aristocracy. In the years prior to the Revolution, most of the more affluent citizens of Philadelphia were Loyalists and would not patronize Rush, whose whig sympathies were known. Consequently, he found most of his patients among the poor.[11] Also, with the publication in 1773 of his An Address to the Inhabitants of the British Settlements in America, upon Slave-Keeping, he drew the enmity of slave-owners, a group including a number of Philadelphia's merchant elite.[12] Rush's attitude toward the aristocracy is evidenced by observation that "to be a gentleman subjects one to the necessity of resenting injuries, fighting duels and the like, and takes away all disgrace in swearing, getting drunk, running debt, getting bastards, etc."[13]

Rush's religious development during the 1780's both reflected and reinforced his attitude toward the average man. Even though he had been reared in the Presbyterian faith, he had always been tolerant of other sects.[14] Thus it was not difficult for him to be converted to a different belief--the doctrine of Universalism.

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[11] Goodman, Benjamin Rush, p. 32.

[12] Ibid., p. 36.

[13] Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 224.

[14] In 1787, Rush reported that he had dined and talked "alternatively with a Lutheran, a Calvanist, a Roman Catholic, and a Moravian minister--all of whom I found to be sensible, agreeable men." Rush to Annis Boudinot Stockton, June 19, 1787, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 424.

Rush claimed that he had first doubted the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination and atonement in 1780 upon reading a book by John William Fletcher (one of the founders of Methodism). This work, he wrote, "prepared my mind to admit the doctrine of Universal salvation preached in our city by the Revd. Mr. [Elhanan] Winchester."[15] Rush came into contact with Winchester in 1785, and the impact of Universalism came at a time when he was alienated from the Presbyterians for political reasons.[16] Rush eventually came to accept Universalism, and though he did not join that church,[17] he "corrected and arranged" the "articles and plan of government" drawn up by the Universalists' convention which met in Philadelphia in 1790.[18]

Rush rejected "severe Calvinistic Principles" because he felt it "impossible to advance human happiness while we believe the Supreme Being to possess the passions of weak or wicked men and govern our conduct by such opinions."[19] Moreover, he observed that "if Christ died for all, as Mr. Wesley always taught, it will soon appear a necessary consequence that all shall be saved."[20] As early as 1787, Rush declared that he had "long . . . embraced the doctrines of

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[15]Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 163.

[16]Most of the Pennsylvania Presbyterians supported the State Constitution of 1776. Rush was a leader in an eventually successful effort to replace the Constitution. His reasons for opposing that document will be surveyed in the following chapter.

[17]Doctor and Mrs. Rush joined the St. Peters Episcopal Church in 1788. Good, Rush and Education, p. 185.

[18]Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 185.

[19]Rush to Jeremy Belknap, October 7, 1788, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 490.

[20]Rush to Elhanan Winchester, November 12, 1791, ibid., 611.

universal salvation and final restitution." Furthermore, he exclaimed, "these interests have bound me to the whole human race; these are the principles which animate me in all my labors for the interest of my fellow creatures."[21]

Hence Rush's viewpoint toward the common American was entwined with his religious beliefs. To Rush, all men were worthy to appear before their Maker if they led good Christian lives. Men were therefore equalized, not in condition but in opportunity to go to heaven. These religious views naturally supported a belief in the common man's worth and capabilities. Considering his family background, experiences, and religious beliefs, Rush's faith in the ability of masses to support republican governments was understandable.

Rush did not believe, however, that all Americans would automatically become good republicans; for he had been disabused of this notion prior to the end of the Revolution. Indeed, just as all men were capable of going to heaven if they met certain conditions, Rush felt that the common people could become good republicans only if properly prepared.

For Rush, the essential ingredient in preparing the masses for republicanism was education. He believed that the ability to reason correctly was not an "innate and universal faculty" among men, rather, it was a learned skill.[22] Consequently, education was necessary for "where the common people are ignorant and vicious, a nation, and above

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[21]Rush to Richard Price, June 2, 1787, ibid., 419.

[22]Macklin Thomas, "The Idea of Progress," p. 236.

all a republican nation, can never be long free and happy."[23] Moreover, Rush argued that unless learning is promulgated among all groups in society "the government . . . will always be an aristocracy. . . . It is by diffusing learning that we shall . . . establish a true commonwealth."[24]

To enable Americans to receive a proper education, Rush proposed a unified educational system for Pennsylvania. He first advocated the establishment of free public schools in every township. In addition, four colleges should be established, one each at Philadelphia, Carlisle, Lancaster, and some years hence at Pittsburgh. The system was to be completed with a state university located at Philadelphia.[25] By this system, Rush believed that the masses could receive education and become intelligent voters.[26]

A necessary adjunct to Rush's proposed educational system was an adequate means of disseminating news and information. Therefore, he felt it vital that "every state--city--county--village--and township in the union be tied together by means of the post-office. . . ." Newspapers should be delivered free of charge, Rush asserted, for

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[23]Benjamin Rush, "To the Citizens of Philadelphia: A Plan for Free Schools," The Independent Gazetteer, March 28, 1787, in Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 412.

[24]Benjamin Rush, "To the Citizens of Pennsylvania of German Birth and Extraction: Proposal of a German College," Pennsylvania Gazette, August 31, 1785, in ibid., 368n.

[25]Benjamin Rush, "Education Agreeable to a Republican form of Government," (1798), in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, pp. 98-99.

[26]Rush noted in 1784 that the Germans, "who are an uninformed body of people," joined with the Presbyterians to give the Consitutional Party power in 1776. Rush to Charles Nisbet, August 17, 1784. Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 336.

"they are not only the vehicles of knowledge and intelligence, but the sentinels of the liberties of our country."[27] Newspapers should print brief accounts of "all the laws that are passed in all the states in the Union" and when possible "the future debates of the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States."[28]

One must not assume, however, that Rush believed all men would be equally capable of governing upon exposure to education, news and information. Not all men had equal abilities and ambition even if they did have an equal opportunity (both in obtaining learning and reaching heaven), and he was thus opposed to inherited advantages in educational opportunity and in society. Even though hereditary aristocracy was anathema to him, he did believe in an aristocracy of learning and ability. Virtually all men could become good republicans, but not all were capable of being wise rulers.

Rush's predisposition toward a learned elite is most apparent in his proposal in 1788 for the establishment of a national or federal university. It was to be a post-graduate school, the primary purpose

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[27]Benjamin Rush, "On the Defects of the Confederation," (1787), in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 30.

[28]Rush did not advocate the printing of all news. He was especially concerned that the affairs of Europe receive little coverage in the press. Particularly objectionable to him were articles detailing "British vices and follies" such as "duels, elopements, kept mistresses, murders, thefts, boxing matches, and wagers for eating, drinking and walking. . . ." Rush's continued fear of British corruption obviously reflected his mechanistic psychology. Thus he asserted that "such stuff, when circulated through our country by means of a newspaper, is calculated to destroy that delicacy of mind which is one of the safeguards of a young country." Rush to Andrew Brown: "Directions for Conducting a Newspaper in Such a Manner as to Make it Innocent, Useful, and Entertaining," Federal Gazette, October 1, 1788, in Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 487.

of which was to prepare young men for public life. Rush strongly believed that the nation should educate men specifically for its governmental service.[29] Therefore, he proposed that:

> In thirty years after this [federal] university is established, let an act of Congress be passed to prevent any person being chosen or appointed into power or office, who has not taken a degree in the federal university. . . . We are restrained from injuring ourselves by employing quacks in law; why should we not be restrained in like manner, by law, from employing quacks in government?[30]

Harry G. Good has characterized Rush's advocacy of allowing only those who take a degree from the national university to hold public office as "most undemocratic . . . a suggestion too wild to deserve consideration."[31] Rush's plan would seem to place undue power in the hands of the government, but his perspective differed somewhat from Good's, since the latter was writing in 1917. Rush did not anticipate in 1788 the rise of political parties vying for power; instead, he foresaw a national polity free from parties and factions. With the onset of the partisan struggles of the early national period, Rush discontinued his advocacy of a federal university. Good is correct, however, in that Rush's plan could have conceivably allowed a ruling elite to perpetuate its power.

Rush viewed the national university, along with his other educational proposals, as the remedy for the ills of the nation. "We shall never restore public credit, regulate our militia, build a navy, or

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[29]Goodman, Benjamin Rush, pp. 311-12.

[30]Benjamin Rush, "Plan of a Federal University," (1788), in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 104.

[31]Good, Rush and Education, pp. 177-78.

revive our commerce," he wrote, "until we remove the ignorance and prejudices, and change the habits of our citizens. . . ." To this end, Rush felt that it would be necessary to inspire them with "federal principles, which can only be effected by our young men meeting and spending two or three years together in a national University, and afterwards disseminating their knowledge and principles" throughout the United States.[32] He clearly felt that his comprehensive educational schemes were crucial to the establishment and perpetuation of his ideal republic.

Hence the American Revolution was not over for Benjamin Rush in 1786: "we have only finished the first act of the great drama." It remained to "effect a revolution in . . . principles, opinions, and manners so as to accommodate them to the forms of government we have adopted." This reformation was to be accomplished through education.[33] Rush was not referring only to the common people's lack of education; rather, all classes of American society stood in need of becoming truly republican in character. The aristocratic airs and vices of the existing elite, carry-overs from Old World society, could also be purged from the new republic by proper education.[34]

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[32]Rush, "Plan of University," in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 105.

[33]Rush to Richard Price, May 25, 1786, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 388.

[34]Rush never lost faith in the power of education to establish his model republic. In 1798, he declared that the Pennsylvania legislature could confer a "golden age" of happiness upon her citizens "by establishing proper modes and places of education in every part of the state." Benjamin Rush, "On the Mode of Education Proper in a Republic," (1798), in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 96. Hereinafter referred to as "Mode of Education." In 1808, Rush was still proclaiming

Rush was convinced of the efficacy of education in promoting republicanism because he felt that the newly independent nation was in a "forming state." Republican habits could "be acquired by a good example and proper instruction as easily as bad ones without the benefit of either."[35] Indeed, he felt that mothers and schoolmasters "plant the seeds of nearly all the good and bad which exist in our world."[36] Hence women should also be educated: "they should not only be instructed in the usual branches of female education, but they should be taught the principles of liberty and government; and the obligations of patriotism should be inculcated upon them." Women often regulate "the opinions and conduct of men . . . and their approbation is frequently the principle reward of the hero's dangers, and the patriot's toils." Rush also observed that women have a tremendous influence upon the minds of children.[37]

Rush's mechanistic psychological theories led him to believe that through education it was "possible to convert men into republican machines." This was desirable, for a true republic must "revolve upon the wills of the people, and these must be fitted to each other by means of education before they can be made to produce regularity and

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that "education in our country stands in need of a revolution. It should be accommodated to our governments and state of society." Rush to Samuel Miller, July 5, 1808, Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 968. Good has observed that when Rush wrote upon education for democracy, "he becomes most eloquent." Good, Rush and Education, p. 194.

[35]Rush to John Howard, October 14, 1789, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 528.

[36]Benjamin Rush, "The Amusements and Punishments which are Proper for Schools," (1790), in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 114.

[37]Rush, "Mode of Education," in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 95.

unison in Government."[38] Rush therefore considered education to be crucial to the establishment and perpetuation of a true republic, but how was education to bring about such profound results?

The physical environment and activities of the students were extemely important to Rush, as he believed that mental behavior and morals were dependent upon physical factors. Thus he could prescribe the following physical regimen for students:

> They should live on a temperate diet, consisting chiefly of broths, milk and vegetables. . . . They should also be accustomed occasionally to work with their hands, in the intervals of study, and in the busy seasons of the year in the country. Moderate sleep, silence, occasional solitude and cleanliness should be inculcated upon them, and the utmost advantage should be taken of a proper direction of those great principles in human conduct--sensibility, habit, imitations, and association. The influence of these physical causes will be powerful upon the intellects as well as the principles and morals of young people.[39]

In his autobiography, Rush observed that it would be wise for country schoolmasters to forbid the "amusements of hunting, gunning, and the

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[38] Rush, "Mode of Education," in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 92. Writing in 1938, Macklin Thomas saw a "sort of chilly fascination" in Rush's educational program. His schemes to "convert men into Republican machines" reminded Thomas of the totalitarian methods of Hitler and Mussolini. Hence Thomas labeled Rush a "Christian Fascist." Thomas, "The Idea of Progress," pp. 247, 260. It is doubtful, however, that the term "republican machine" evoked such an ominous picture for Rush. In his autobiography, he noted that Roger Sherman of Connecticut was "so democratic in his principles that he was called by one of his friends 'a republican machine'." Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 145.

However, Rush's proposed methods for inculcating republican values upon Americans were undemocratic in that students apparently would not be allowed to independently develop their own basic beliefs. Perhaps it should be observed in passing that our modern educational system has also tended to promote acceptance of traditional American institutions and values, though perhaps not so overtly as Rush advocated.

[39] Rush, "Mode of Education," in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, pp. 91-92.

like," because "they are all attended with more or less risk to health and morals."[40]

Another important aspect of education for Rush was history, for he felt that students should be taught to look to the past for lessons in preserving republicanism. "Above all," he wrote, "let our youth be instructed in the history of the ancient Republics, and the progress of liberty and tyranny in the different states of Europe."[41] History would, therefore, enable students and the nation to avoid mistakes that had been inimical to republicanism in earlier times.

Education was also to perform the function of inculcating religion and patriotism in young people, both of which were vital elements in his republican concept. Hence Rush could remind the Board of Trustees for Dickinson College that the school was "intended as a nursery for religion and patriotism as well as for human learning."[42]

Indeed, for Rush, religion and republicanism were inseparable. He was convinced that the teachings of the Bible were vital in promoting republican attitudes and beliefs. In 1791 he lamented that although Americans professed to be republicans, "we neglect the only

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[40]Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 33.

[41]Rush, "Mode of Education," in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 94.

[42]Rush to the Board of Trustees of Dickinson College, April 17, 1786, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 383. See also, Thomas, "The Idea of Progress," pp. 252-53. Rush felt that the public schools should be sectarian in nature so that the children "may be instructed with the more ease in the principles and forms of their respective churches. By these means the schools will come more immediately under the inspection of the ministers of the city, and thereby religion and learning more intimately connected." Rush, "Plan for Free Schools," in Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 414.

means of establishing and perpetuating our republican forms of government. . . ." By this Rush meant "the universal education of our youth in the principles of Christianity, by means of the Bible. . . ." Above all other books, the Bible "favours that equality among mankind, that respect for just laws, and all those sober and frugal virtues, which constitute the soul of republicanism."[43] Rush declared in 1798 that "a christian cannot fail of being a republican," for the Bible provides the "strongest argument that can be used in favor of the original and natural equality of all mankind." Moreover, "every precept of the Gospel inculcates those degrees of humility, self-denial, and brotherly kindness, which are directly opposed to the pride of monarchy and the pageantry of a court."[44] In 1802 he expressed a wish that every candidate for a degree at Princeton be obliged "to undergo an examination in theological science" as well as in the worldly disciplines.[45]

Rush also viewed religion as a vital means of social control. He believed that "religion is necessary to correct the effects of learning. Without religion . . . learning does real mischief to the morals of mankind. . . ."[46] In fact, Rush held that "without the restraints

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[43]Benjamin Rush, "The Bible as a School Book," (1791), in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 130.

[44]Rush, "Mode of Education," in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, pp. 88-89.

[45]Rush to Ashbel Green, December 9, 1802, Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 854. Rush was convinced that "it is only necessary for republicanism to ally itself to the Christian religion to overturn all the corrupted political and religious institutions in the world." Rush to Thomas Jefferson, August 20, 1800, ibid., 820.

[46]Rush to John Armstrong, March 19, 1783, ibid., I, 294.

of religion and social worship, men become savages much sooner than savages become civilized by means of religion and civil government."[47] For religion to be of greatest use as a social control, Rush believed that children should be "carefully instructed in the principles and obligations of the Christian religion." They would then become "dutiful children, teachable scholars, and afterwards, good apprentices, good husbands, good wives, honest mechanics, industrious farmers, peaceable sailors, and . . . good citizens."[48]

Religion was effective as a means of social control in Rush's view because it promoted virtue and discouraged vice. He was sure that without religion, "there can be no virtue, and without virtue there can be no liberty, and liberty is the object and life of all republican governments."[49] Consequently, for Rush, "public and private integrity" were the "only basis on which a republican government can be errected or maintained."[50]

Rush exhibited his intense concern about vice in 1788 when he enumerated "a few of those practices which prevail in America which

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[47]Benjamin Rush, "To American Farmers About to Settle in New Parts of the United States," The American Museum, V (March, 1789), 226-27, in ibid., 505.

[48]Rush, "Plan for free Schools," in Butterfield, ed., Letters, 414. Carl Binger, having correctly observed that "Rush conceived of republican education as a process of social evolution," has asserted that Rush's "importance as a political thinker lies in the fact that he was the first to spell out this idea." Binger, Revolutionary Doctor, p. 169.

[49]Rush, "Mode of Education," in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 88.

[50]Rush to Daniel Roberdeau, March 9, 1778, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 206.

exert a pernicious effect upon morals and thereby prepare our country for misery and slavery." He first discussed "sources of vices of a public nature." These were:

1. Use of "spirituous liquors"--This led to numerous evil consequences. Legislators act "absurdly . . . for permitting the use of them."

2. Militia laws--"Meetings of citizens for militia exercises are generally attended with intemperance, quarreling, profanity" and destruction of property.

3. Fairs--"They tempt to extravagance, gaming, drunkenness, and uncleannness."

4. Lawsuits--These "should be discouraged as much as possible," for they expose one to "idleness, drinking, gaming, and the delays of justice seldom fail of entailing hereditary discord among neighbors."

5. "Licentiousness of the Press"--This was "a fruitful source of the corruption of morals."

6. Horse racing and cockfighting--They "occasion idleness, fraud, gaming, and profane swearing, and harden the heart against the feelings of humanity.

7. Clubs devoted to "feeding"--"These clubs expose men to idleness, prodigality, and debt."

8. Amusements on Sunday--These activities "begat habits of idleness and a love of pleasure which extend their influence to every day of the week."[51]

Rush also noted that there were five "domestic sources of vices" which "indirectly affect the happiness of our country." In this category he included:

1. "Frequent or long absence of the master and mistress from home"--This dissolves the "bonds of domestic government" and thus "proves a fruitful source of vice among children and servants."

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[51]Benjamin Rush, "To the Ministers of the Gospel of all Denominations: An Address Upon Subjects Interesting to Morals," Essays, Literary, Moral, and Philosophical (Philadelphia, 1798), pp. 114-24, in ibid., 462-65.

2. "Frequent and large entertainments"--This tends to remove children and servants "too long from the eye of authority," and exposes them "to the temptation of eating and drinking to excess."

3. Use of children as servants to a "genteel" family--"They are seldom instructed properly by their masters or mistresses." Moreover, "their leisure hours are . . . spent in bad company," from whom they will acquire vices.

4. "Servants . . . should always be hired by the year; otherwise no proper government can be established over them." Many people carry through life "the sorrowful marks . . . of their being early initiated into the mysteries of vice by unprinciples servants. . . ."

5. "Apprentices should always board and lodge, if possible, with their masters and mistresses when they are separated from their parents." This is to avoid the corruption that one may be exposed to in the evening hours.[52]

One of the most serious vices, in Rush's view, was the "sin" of idleness. This was one aspect of his Calvinistic background which he never rejected. The Puritan doctrine of "calling" emphasized the virtues of industry, thrift, and frugality. Hence those who revelled in luxury and idleness were considered corrupt.[53] In 1776 Rush had hoped that Americans would assume the characters of the pious Puritans of an earlier age. He never relinquished this wish because his ideal republic required a virtuous population.

Consequently, Rush held in very high esteem Pennsylvania's large German and Quaker population, excepting those of the mercantile elite. He felt that the Germans' piety, frugality, and industriousness would, with the aid of education, make them very good republicans.[54] Rush

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[52]Ibid., 465-66.

[53]Edmund S. Morgan, Puritan Political Ideas, 1558-1794 (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), pp. xxxviii-xl.

[54]Benjamin Rush, "An Account of the Manners of the German

illustrated his attitude toward these virtues when he observed in 1803 that he had worked with his "brains . . . hands and heels at the same time . . . ever since he was sixteen years old." Moreover, his life on the whole had been "a happy one." He most certainly would not exchange his "labors for the independent situation of any idle, sauntering, purse-proud citizen of Philadelphia."[55]

In addition to religion, Rush also charged education with the responsibility of fostering patriotism in American society. Indeed, education in the United States was much preferable to education in a foreign land, for "the principle of patriotism stands in need of prejudices, and it is well known that our strongest prejudices in favor of our country are formed in the first one & twenty years of our life."[56] Rush felt that the young student should be taught to "love" the people of all nations, "but he must cherish with a more intense and peculiar affection, the citizens of Pennsylvania and of the United States." One should be taught to love his family, but he must "forsake and forget them when the welfare of his country requires it."[57] To qualify as a good republican, one must put public or national interest ahead of private interest.

In 1778, Rush declared that "one of my marks . . . of a good whig

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Inhabitants of Pennsylvania," edited by Theodore E. Schmauk, Proceedings of the Pennsylvania German Society, XIX (1910), 85.

[55]Rush to James Rush, March 29, 1803, Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 860.

[56]Rush, "Mode of Education," in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 87.

[57]Ibid., p. 90.

is that he must not grow rich during the war."[58] He was convinced by 1781 that "every man in a republic is public property. His time and talents--his youth--his manhood--his old age--nay more, life, all belong to his country."[59] Accordingly, Rush felt there was no place for political parties in a sound, well balanced republican government. Men should work for the good of the general public rather than for the benefit of a group or for personal gain. Hence in 1788, he hoped "that the contending parties (whether produced by the controversies about Independence or the national government) . . . would" forgive each other, and unite "in plans of general order and happiness."[60]

Rush's intense nationalism was evident early in his career. In 1773, he declared in the Philadelphia press that "men always promote their own interest most in proportion as they promote that of their neighbors and their country."[61] During the debate in the Continental Congress on representation in the proposed confederation, Rush took a nationalistic (and big-state) stance. In voting by province, he declared, "we lose an equal representation. We represent the people. . . . When I entered that door I considered myself a citizen of

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[58]Rush to James Searle, January 21, 1778, in Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 190.

[59]Rush, "Defects of the Confederation," in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 31. In 1788, Rush declared that "even our old age is not our own property. All its fruits of wisdom and experience belong to the public. 'To do good' is the business of life. 'To enjoy rest' is the happiness of heaven." Rush to John Dickinson, July 15, 1788, in Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 478.

[60]Rush, "Influence of American Revolution," in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 333.

[61]Rush, "On Patriotism," in Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 84.

America."[62] Indeed, Rush's attachment to the national polity was so strong by 1777 that he could "conceive of no temporal punishment to be severe eno' for that man who attempts to dissolve, or weaken the Union. . . ."[63]

Rush's nationalism did not, however, encompass a desire for foreign expansion. In 1776 he expressed the idea that it might be for the best if the British were to retain Canada after the war. Then Canada would serve as a "nursery of enemies to the states on purpose to keep alive their martial virtue."[64] In 1787 Rush declared publicly that "there is but one path that can lead the United States to destruction, and that is the extent of her territory." In fact, "it was probably to effect this that Britain ceded us so much territory."[65] Rush feared this area would be settled too rapidly, and that men would be too long without the influences of education and religion. Under these circumstances, he feared men would become "savages." This eventuality could be avoided, Rush declared, by a carefully regulated settlement of the territories. He proposed that "one new state be exposed to sale at a time; and let the land office be shut up till every

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[62]Butterfield, ed., Diary and Autobiography of John Adams, II, 247-48. See also, Rush to Nathanael Greene, April 15, 1782, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 268.

[63]Benjamin Rush, "Diary," February 4, 1777, quoted in Edmund G. Burnett, Letters of Members of the Continental Congress (8 vols.; Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1921-1936), II, 234. See also, Rush to John Adams, January 21, 1781, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 260-61.

[64]Butterfield, ed., "Dr. Rush to Governor Henry," p. 52.

[65]Rush, "Defects of the Confederation," in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 30.

part of this new state is settled."[66]

An added reason for Rush's opposition to expansion could logically have been his fear of standing armies and military men. As early as 1769, Rush exhibited his distrust, declaring that military leaders should be excluded from "having any share in the legislature." He feared that if popular generals were so inclined, "their knowledge in arms and their popularity with the soldiers and common people would give them great advantages over every other citizen. . . ." This would "render the transition from democracy to anarchy, and from anarchy to monarchy very natural and easy."[67]

Rush was no doubt influenced in his attitude toward standing armies by classical historians, particularly those of the Roman republic. Therefore, he argued that the Continental Congress, rather than the general officers, should select the major generals of the Continental Army; for Rome, "one of the most powerful and happy commonwealths in the world," called "her general officers from the plough and paid no regard to rank, service or seniority."[68]

During the Revolution, Rush also favored the use of short term militia rather than having an Army committed for three years or the duration of the war: "The militia began, and I sincerely hope the militia will end, the present war."[69] In fact, Rush asserted that

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[66]Ibid.

[67]Rush to Catherine Macaulay, January 18, 1769, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 70.

[68]Rush, "Diary," February 19, 1777, in Burnett, Letters of the Members of the Continental Congress, II, 262.

[69]Rush to John Adams, October 1, 1777, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 157.

militia, "when properly commanded and led on speedily to action . . . are the best troops in the world, especially in a war and country like ours."[70]

Rush's anti-martial attitude was accompanied by a growing revulsion toward war which reached its peak during the 1790's. He turned again to education to combat the evil of war: "Wars originate in errors and vice. Let us eradicate these by proper modes of education and wars will cease to be necessary in our country." Indeed, Rush asserted that "as Satan did from our Savior," war-like nations will "retire" if they should approach our coasts; "for the flames of war can be spread from one nation to another, only by the conducting mediums of vice and error."[71]

Rush was strongly opposed to initiating hostilities with France in 1797. To go to war in defense of honor, dignity or glory "is nothing but dueling on a national scale. Even the property we have lost by French spoilage is not a sufficient or just cause for war." He favored suspending trade for one year, for then "a war might be avoided, and the proudest nations in Europe might be forced to do us justice."[72]

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[70]Rush to Horatio Gates, February 4, 1778, ibid., 199. Despite his inherent fears of military rule, Rush agreed with many other ardent republicans in December, 1776, that "General Washington must be invested with dictatorial powers for a few months, or we are undone," Rush to Richard Henry Lee, December 30, 1776, ibid., 123.

[71]Rush, "Amusements and Punishments for Schools," in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 108.

[72]Rush to John Montgomery, June 16, 1797, Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 787.

In 1798 Rush proposed establishing a Peace-Office for the United States. The Secretary of the Peace was to be a "genuine republican and a sincere Christian, for the principles of republicanism are . . . friendly to universal and perpetual peace." Indeed, "it is for the Supreme Being alone . . . to take away life."[73] Rush also proposed painting the following inscriptions on a sign and placing it over the door of the War Office:

1. An office for butchering the human species.
2. A widow and Orphan making office.
3. A broken bone making office.
4. A Wooden leg making office.
5. An office for creating public and private vices.
6. An office for creating a public debt.
7. An office for creating speculators, stock jobbers, and bankrupts.
8. An office for creating famine.
9. An office for creating pestilential diseases.
10. An office for creating poverty, and the destruction of liberty, and national happiness.[74]

Hence Rush opposed war for religious and humanitarian reasons, and also because he considered it to be a severe threat to republicanism.

The only significant military establishment Rush favored maintaining in strength was a navy. In April, 1782, he expressed the wish that peace with Britain "may be deferred till a naval war has given us as many fleets and admirals as a land war has given us armies and generals." In July of that year, using the pseudonym Leonidas, he wrote a letter to the editor of The Pennsylvania Journal, advocating the creation of a powerful American navy. His letter was printed in

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[73]Benjamin Rush, "A Plan of a Peace-Office for the United States," (1799), in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, pp. 19-20.

[74]Ibid., p. 22.

that paper on July 4, 1782.[75]

One reason Rush supported a strong navy at this time was that he saw it to be a military necessity. A navy would also serve as a first line of defense in peace time, and would not represent such an ominous threat to liberty as a standing army or well organized militia. In addition, a navy would be needed to protect the new republic's commerce.

Commerce, along with agriculture and manufactures, was to be a key factor in the economic development of the young nation. Rush observed in 1782 that "America possesses immense resources for national importance which can only be brought forth by commerce. . . ."[76] He also came to view commerce as the "best security against the influence of hereditary monopolies of land, and therefore, the surest protection against aristocracy." In addition, commerce suited Rush's pacifism as he considered its "effects as next to those of religion in humanizing mankind," and it could unite the "different nations of the world. . . . by the ties of mutual wants and obligations."[77]

Rush also strongly advocated the development of manufacturing and the pursuit of agriculture. He had been interested in promoting American manufactures prior to the Revolution. Moreover, Rush felt that agriculture was crucial to a republic. He believed that "our rulers must be taken . . . from the cultivators of the earth." Their seasons

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[75]Benjamin Rush, "To the Editor of The Pennsylvania Journal: On the United States Navy," The Pennsylvania Journal, July 4, 1782, in Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 273-77. Rush also claimed to have written several other pieces published during the preceding few weeks under the signature of Retaliation. Ibid., 276.

[76]Rush to Nathanael Greene, September 16, 1782, ibid., 285.

[77]Rush, "Mode of Education," in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 94.

of leisure provide them time for government, he noted, "and their manner of life secures them best from that corruption to which all governors are naturally disposed."[78]

Rush viewed "Agriculture, Commerce, and Manufactures, together with the learned and mechanical Professions," as "necessary to each other and all useful in a cultivated society."[79] To promote these various endeavors, Rush again saw education to be especially useful. He therefore included in the curriculum of his proposed Federal University the study of: "Agriculture in all its numerous and extensive branches, . . . the principles and practice of manufactures," and "the history, principles, objects and channels of commerce."[80] He also advised Andrew Brown, who was endeavoring to print a newspaper in Philadelphia, to "let the advancement of agriculture, manufactures, and commerce be the principal objects of your paper."[81]

Hence Rush's ideal republic was to be populated by hard-working, patriotic and virtuous people. All citizens would have an equal opportunity to receive learning, and those who were superior in ambition and ability were to hold public office. Those who did not become rulers would be wise voters. Furthermore, there would be no vice or

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[78]Rush, "Proposal for a German College," in Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 367.

[79]Benjamin Rush, "Observations on the Federal Procession in Philadelphia," The American Museum, IV (July, 1788), 75-78, in ibid., 472.

[80]Rush, "Plan of University," in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 101.

[81]Rush, "Directions for Conducting a Newspaper," in Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 488.

war in his republic, and the nation would prosper economically. The establishment and perpetuation of Rush's utopia hinged upon two necessities--education and the creation of proper republican governments.

CHAPTER IV

THE QUEST FOR PROPER GOVERNMENT

Benjamin Rush actively promoted the establishment of what he deemed necessary and proper forms of republican government for both Pennsylvania and the United States from 1776 until 1790. It was in the latter year that the radically democratic Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776 was replaced with a document that met Rush's approval. The Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776 had established that state's government as a simple, representative democracy. An assembly elected by universal manhood suffrage held the ultimate power in Pennsylvania for neither the Council (chosen by the Assembly) nor its President were invested with veto power. The Assembly was virtually all powerful.[1]

Rush was equally as ardent in his opposition to the state constitution of 1776 as in his support of Independence from Great Britain. Indeed, Gordon Wood has noted that Rush's Observations upon the Present Government of Pennsylvania in Four Letters was the most comprehensive critique of the Pennsylvania Constitution.[2] For Rush to become such a staunch opponent of the new state government, it was necessary for him to part company with many of his radical friends in the Independence movement.

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[1]Other aspects of this Constitution will be discussed below in connection with Rush's criticisms of the document.

[2]Wood, Creation of the American Republic, p. 246.

Rush had been closely connected to the Pennsylvania Radicals and for a time looked favorably upon the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention (which sat from July to September, 1776)[3] when it virtually took control of the state government from the hapless, conservative Assembly. The Convention appointed delegates to Congress, formed new committees of safety, raised troops, formally approved the Declaration of Independence, imposed taxes, collected arms, and performed other governmental functions. Rush favored this action as it was obviously designed to forward the cause of Independence. It was only after the Convention had dealt with the more pressing exigencies of the War that the question of a constitution was considered.[4]

David Hawke has offered an interesting though somewhat misleading interpretation of Rush's reasons for deserting the Radicals to oppose their Constitution. Hawke asserts that Rush associated himself with the radical Philadelphians primarily because he was "discontented and convinced that his professional colleagues in Philadelphia held him in contempt. . . ."[5] Notwithstanding his association with the Radicals, Hawke continues, Rush "steered a cautious course" as he had a prosperous trade to protect. It was for this reason that he had earlier

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[3]Robert L. Brunhouse, The Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania, 1776-1790 (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1942), p. 13. Hereinafter referred to as Counter-Revolution.

[4]E. Bruce Thomas, Political Tendencies in Pennsylvania, 1783-1794 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1939), p. 27.

[5]It is true that Rush was at swords-point with most of the physicians of Philadelphia at this time. Upon his return to Philadelphia from Europe in 1769, Rush immediately determined to replace the medical system of Boerhaave, widely accepted in Rush's native city, with that of his mentor, Dr. William Cullen. He publicly attacked

recruited Thomas Paine to write a pamphlet, Common Sense, promoting Independence, rather than authoring it himself.[6]

Upon Rush's election by the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention to the Continental Congress, Hawke asserts that Rush began to change:

> Now for the first time, he was accepted as an equal among some of the most eminent men in America. Rush's sense of discontent began to diminish. . . . He was in Congress when he heard about the Constitution [James] Cannon [a leading Pennsylvania Radical] was devising. It was, he said, 'thought by many people to be rather too much upon the democratical order.' Rush carefully avoided any personal commitment whether a democratical Constitution should be condemned or praised. John Adams soon told him what to think. [!] 'You were my first preceptor in the science of government,' he later told Adams. 'From you I learned to discover the danger of the Constitution of Pennsylvania.'[7]

Professor Hawke's interpretation contains some serious loopholes. First, his notion that Rush had linked himself with the Pennsylvania Radicals solely because he was discontented and chose this means to attack the establishment is inadequate, if not totally inaccurate. As illustrated earlier in this essay, Rush was quite ardent in his desire for Independence. It was a common wish to escape the British empire which united him with the Pennsylvania Radicals. In addition, Hawke's quotations from Rush, when taken out of context, are misleading. Thus

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Boerhaave's system, and his untactful manner alienated him from his fellow physicians. Goodman, Benjamin Rush, pp. 35-36.

[6]It should be noted that although Rush hesitated to attach his name to such a treasonable pamphlet, his whiggish sentiments were certainly well known in Philadelphia.

[7]Hawke, Midst of a Revolution, pp. 193-94. Carl Binger has asserted that Rush "at first supported wholeheartedly" the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776. However, Binger does not document his assertation in any manner. I have discovered no evidence that would indicate that Rush supported the radical Constitution at any time. Binger, Revolutionary Doctor, p. 108.

Hawke has Rush reply upon hearing of the Constitution the Radicals were framing that the document was "thought by many people to be rather too much upon the democratical order." However, Rush did not end his sentence at this point; rather he continued:

> for liberty is as apt to degenerate into licentiousness as power is to become arbitrary. . . . Had the Governor and Council . . . possessed a negative upon the proceedings of the Assembly, the government would have derived safety, wisdom, and dignity from it.[8]

Instead of being noncommittal on the new Constitution as Hawke declares, Rush was obviously not pleased with the unicameral legislature being assigned a dominant position in the new government.

Furthermore, Hawke's assumption that Rush knew not what to think about the Radicals' Constitution led him to exaggerate John Adams' role in bringing Rush into opposition to the new frame of government. It should be noted that the quotation in which Rush refers to Adams as his "first preceptor in the science of government," and declares that it was from him that Rush "learned to discover the danger of the Constitution of Pennsylvania" was taken from a letter written to Adams in 1790.[9] At this time Rush and Adams were differing over such issues as monarchy, the use of titles, and the relevance of teaching Latin and Greek. Indeed, Rush was coming to see Adams as being tainted with monarchism, and the two men were soon to become politically estranged.[10] Rush still admired and respected his old friend, however, and in the

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[8]Rush to Anthony Wayne, September 24, 1776, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 114-15.

[9]Rush to John Adams, February 12, 1790, ibid., 530.

[10]Rush's differences with Adams will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter V.

above statement he was illustrating that although he (Rush) held "different principles upon some subjects, . . . I cannot help loving and respecting you."[11] Thus while writing some fourteen years after the fact, Rush, in expressing his respect for John Adams while begging to differ with him, overstated the influence Adams had on him in 1776. Professor Hawke is mistaken when he asserts that John Adams told Benjamin Rush "what to think" about the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776.

However, in fairness to Hawke, it should be noted that John Adams apparently did influence Rush's political thought. In September, 1776, Rush was impressed enough with Adams to declare that "this illustrious patriot has not his superior, scarcely his equal, for abilities and virtue on the whole continent of America."[12] In 1779 Rush recalled that upon first seeing a copy of Pennsylvania's Constitution, John Adams exclaimed: "Good God! the people of Pennsylvania in two years will be glad to petition the crown of Britain in order to be delivered from the tyranny of their Constitution."[13] In fact, Rush even used Adams as an authority in his published attack against the radical frame of government.[14]

Notwithstanding Adams' impact upon his political thought, Rush would likely have opposed the Radical Constitution with or without

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[11]Rush to John Adams, February 12, 1790, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 530.

[12]Rush to Barbeu Dubourg, September 16, 1776, ibid., 111.

[13]Rush to John Adams, October 12, 1779, ibid., 240.

[14]Rush cited Adams' views on a government with a single legislature. Rush, Observations on Government, in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 58.

the New Englander's influence. By 1776 he was a confident, self-assured young man. Indeed, as early as 1769 he had dared to write Catherine Macaulay criticizing her proposed constitution for the Isle of Corsica.[15] As a member of the Pennsylvania Provincial Conference called to set the ground rules for a constitutional convention, Rush had firmly but futilely opposed the passage of a religious oath for delegates to the convention.[16] By the time he was elected to Congress, Rush had certainly demonstrated that he could and would think for himself on political issues.

Obviously, Rush's defection from the ranks of the Pennsylvania Radicals must be explained by some means other than emphasizing the influence of John Adams. Hawke himself points the way by noting that the Independent Party in Pennsylvania "had embraced both moderate and radical-minded men [concerning the nature of their government] from the start. The common desire for Independence had kept their differences submerged. . . ."[17] Rush was radical in his desire for Independence, which he viewed as an essential step in the creation of his ideal society. He therefore aligned himself with other Philadelphians eager for separation from Great Britain, although many of these men held

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[15]Rush did not, however, take exception to the bicameral legislature which the English historian had advocated. Rush to Catherine Macaulay, January 18, 1769, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 69-71.

[16]Hawke, Midst of a Revolution, p. 175.

[17]Ibid., p. 137. Leonard Labaree has observed that a person may be liberal or even radical in some areas while decidedly conservative in others. Leonard Labaree, Conservatism in Early American History (New York: New York University Press, 1948), p. xii. See also, Clinton Rossiter, Conservatism in America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1955), pp. 11-12.

views on government differing from his own. Rush was certainly one of those more moderate minded men in the Independence movement to which Hawke alludes.

Consequently, Rush was repelled by the very novelty of the new state constitution. He complained that the new fundamental law of Pennsylvania paid no regard to the "ancient habits and customs of the people" of that state. Indeed, Rush continued, "the suddenness of the late revolution, the attachment of a large body of the people to the old Constitution . . . and . . . human nature made an attention" to precedent "a matter of the utmost importance. . . ."[18] Several years later, he described the Constitution of 1776 as containing a number of "newfangled experiments, absurd in their nature and dangerous to the liberties of the state."[19] Moreover, Rush was struck by the fact that the novelties of the new state government were in direct contrast with the ideas of many eminent political thinkers of the past. In his published attack against the radical constitution, he noted that "Montesquieu--Harrington--Milton--Addison--Price--Bolingbroke, and others . . . have left testimonies upon record of the extreme folly

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[18]Rush, Observations on Government, in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 60.

[19]Rush to Charles Nisbet, August 27, 1784, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 336. Hawke has observed that "while an experiment that breaks away completely from an old pattern may succeed brilliantly in science, it is certain to fail in politics." The majority of the people of Pennsylvania had expected that the new government would involve little more than a disassociation of connections with the crown. Hawke, Midst of a Revolution, pp. 197-99. Thus there was some substance to Rush's assertion that a majority of the people were opposed to the new Constitution. Rush to Anthony Wayne, April 2, 1777, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 137.

and danger of a people's being governed by a single legislature."[20]

For Rush, perhaps the most objectionable aspect of the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776 was its lack of checks and balances and separation of powers. Indeed, he felt that Locke was an "oracle as to the Principles . . ." of government, but Harrington and Montesquieu were "oracles as to the forms of government."[21] Consequently, he believed that "all governments are safe and free in proportion as they are compounded in a certain degree, and . . . all governments are dangerous and tyrannical in proportion as they approach to simplicity."[22]

Rush argued that there was no distinct separation of powers in the new state government, for the executive and judiciary were not wholly independent of the Assembly. The President was elected by the combined vote of the Assembly and Council, and since the Assemblymen outnumbered the Councilors five to one, they "of course chuse the President." In addition, "the salaries of the President and each of the Counsellors are fixed by the Assembly." This, Rush reasoned, would render the President and Council dependent upon the Assembly. He noted as well that the judiciary was also subordinated to the

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[20]Rush, Observations on Government, in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 59.

[21]Ibid., p. 78. Edmund Morgan has observed that the Puritan idea of Calling was, in the eighteenth century, "turned to the purpose of keeping government under control of the people." Thus the various branches of government came to be regarded as separate and distinct, and no branch or official was to overstep its bounds. Edmund S. Morgan, Puritan Political Ideas, pp. xxxvii-viii.

[22]Rush, Observations on Government, in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 60.

Assembly, for "if the Council are dependent upon the Assembly, it follows of course that the judges, who are appointed by the Council, are likewise dependent upon them." Rush further observed that the judges were also dependent upon the Assembly for their salary. Hence he concluded that the executive, judicial, and legislative powers of the state are "all blended together."[23]

Rush was obviously concerned that the new constitution of Pennsylvania established the legislative branch as the dominant power in the state government. Of course his strong belief in balanced government would have led him to reprobate any branch subordinating the others; but it was worse in Pennsylvania's situation because the all-powerful legislature was unicameral. An unbalanced assembly was absolute folly in Rush's view. He observed in 1777 that "all the dissentions of Athens and Rome . . . originated in single Assemblies possessing all the power of those commonwealths. . . ."[24] Rush declared to John Adams in 1789 that the Pennsylvania Assembly was similar to a "wheelbarrow or a balloon. . . . I never see our self-balanced legislature meet but I feel as if I saw a body of men ascending in one of those air vehicles without sails or helm."[25]

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[23]Ibid., pp. 69-70.

[24]Ibid., p. 59.

[25]Rush to John Adams, January 22, 1789, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 498-99. In 1777 Rush dismissed the fact that Benjamin Franklin and David Rittenhouse, "gentlemen distinguished for their uncommon abilities," favored the idea of a single legislature: "Divine Providence seems to have permitted them to err upon this subject, in order to console the world for the very great superiority they both possess

One reason that Rush was so concerned about Pennsylvania's unchecked Assembly dominating that state's government was his whiggish fear of rulers.[26] For Rush, the Pennsylvania Assemblymen constituted "the only unaccountable body of men that ever existed in a free country."[27] This was extremely serious to Rush since he felt that when supreme authority is vested in a single individual or a group of individuals, "absolute and without control, tyranny is the result."[28] Indeed, Rush asserted in a letter to Anthony Wayne that he "had rather live under the government of one man than of 72 . . . absolute, unconditional power should belong only to God. It requires infinite wisdom and goodness to direct it."[29] The corrupting influence of unchecked power was so great in Rush's view that he likened men possessed of unlimited and uncontrolled power to "beasts of prey."[30] Referring to the Continental Congress in 1780, he declared that "the safety of our

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over the rest of mankind in every thing else except the science of government." Rush, Observations on Government, in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 67.

[26]Gordon Wood has observed that for the English Whigs, there was a rigid distinction between rulers and ruled. Both contend for power. Moreover, they believed that when one group gains power, the other loses it. Wood, Creation of the American Republic, pp. 18-20. The Puritans had also realized that their rulers were human and thus subject to corruption. Morgan, Puritan Political Ideas, p. xxv.

[27]Rush to Anthony Wayne, April 2, 1777, in Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 137.

[28]Rush, Observations on Government, in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 59.

[29]Rush to Anthony Wayne, May 19, 1777, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 148.

[30]Rush, Observations on Government, in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 73.

infant republic consists in keeping a watchful eye over our rulers and in exposing their faults with a manly freedom."[31]

In addition to his fear of rulers, Rush also feared the possible rise of licentiousness and demagogues. Pennsylvania's "balloon Assembly" was elected annually through universal manhood suffrage. While Rush had considerable faith in the people's ability to become good republicans, he believed this process would take time, proper education, and the experience of stable republican governments. Hence Rush feared that in Pennsylvania's situation, the government would be dominated by "some demogogue who rules the Assembly by his eloquence and arts."[32]

Rush believed that the evils inherent in Pennsylvania's unicameral legislative system could be eliminated only by the addition of an equally powerful upper house or "council." It would be a smaller body than the Assembly, but chosen by the annual suffrage of the people. "A body thus chosen," Rush argued, "could have no object in view but the happiness of their constituents."[33] He defended having a smaller body in a legislative council equal in power to an assembly in two ways. First, he supposed that the council would consist of "men of the most knowledge and experience in the state," and second; "their obligations to wisdom and integrity" will be stronger than the

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[31]Rush, "To William Shippen," Pennsylvania Packet, November 21, 1780, in Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 258.

[32]Rush, Observations on Government, in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 70.

[33]Ibid., p. 61.

assembly's, for "fewer men will be answerable for unjust or improper proceedings at the bar of the public."[34] Rush, therefore, tended to view a compound legislature as effecting a double representation of the people.

Rush saw a number of advantages in a bicameral legislature. He summarized these advantages in the following manner:

> 1. There is the utmost freedom in a compound legislature. The decisions of two legislative bodies cannot fail of coinciding with the wills of a great majority of the community.
>
> 2. There is safety in such a government, in as much as each body possesses a free and independent power, so that they mutually check ambition and usurpation in each other.
>
> 3. There is the greatest wisdom in such a government. Every act being obliged to undergo the revision and amendments of two bodies of men, is necessarily strained of every mixture of folly, passion, and prejudice.
>
> 4. There is the longest duration of freedom in such a government.
>
> 5. There is the most order in such a government. By order, I mean obedience to laws, subordination to magistrates, civility and decency of behaviour, and the contrary of every thing like mobs and factions.
>
> 6. Compound governments are most agreeable to human nature, inasmuch as they afford the greatest scope for the expansion of the powers and virtues of the mind. Wisdom, learning, experience, with the most extensive benevolence, the most unshaken firmness, and the utmost elevation of soul, are all called into exercise by the opposite and different duties of the different representations of the people.[35]

Rush's belief that the people were not yet ideal republicans led him to fear another aspect of the Pennsylvania Constitution. The

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[34] Ibid., p. 64.

[35] Ibid., pp. 68-69.

Radicals had determined to keep the legislature as dependent upon the people as possible. In addition to providing for annual election of Assemblymen by all free males, the Constitution of 1776 stipulated that the doors of the Assembly were to remain open, and its votes were to be published weekly. Even more extraordinary was Section 15 of the Constitution which provided that every bill passed by the Assembly be printed and distributed for consideration by the general public before it could become law in the next legislative session.[36] Therefore, the Radicals seemed to be placing the sovereignty of the state into the hands of the people--an absurd concept in Rush's view.

Rush summarized his notion of the proper foci of sovereignty in his published critique of the radical Constitution:

> It has been said often that . . . 'all power is derived from the people,' but it has never been said that all power is seated in the people. Government supposes and requires a delegation of power: It cannot exist without it.[37]

Richard Buel, Jr. has noted that in a society where political abilities varied greatly, the mass of the people looked upon the representative as their political superior. He was not elected simply to reflect the wishes and opinions of the people, but to render them the benefits of his "distinguished abilities."[38] This certainly reflects

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[36]Wood, Creation of the American Republic, pp. 227-32.

[37]Rush, Observations on Government, in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 71. Morgan has noted that the Puritan concept of Calling in politics separated ruler and ruled. When government officials were placed in office by what ever means, they were to do the governing. Also, the influence of Puritan convenant theology encouraged the idea of "submitting to rulers who could control man's innate corruptions." Morgan, Puritan Political Ideas, pp. xxii-xxiii.

[38]Richard Buel, Jr., "Democracy and the American Revolution: A

Rush's view since he believed that the mass of the people were not yet good republicans, much less good rulers.[39]

The undemocratic manner in which the Radicals established and maintained their democratic Constitution in Pennsylvania also disgusted Rush. The new frame of government was never submitted to a referendum of the people, and a provision in the Constitution required that a person had to swear an oath of allegiance to the Constitution before he could exercise the suffrage or hold office. This, of course, directly applied to those patriots who opposed the Constitution as well as to loyalists.[40]

Rush was further piqued because the Constitution of 1776 fixed its "imperfections upon the people for seven years, by precluding them from the exercise of their own power" to amend the document in any manner except by a septennial convention, called by the Council of

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Frame of Reference," William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd. Series, XXI (April, 1964), 188.

[39]Rush, Observations on Government, in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, pp. 71-72. Wood has declared that to many political thinkers "it seemed that once it was conceded that the legislature did not possess the full power of the people to do anything it wished for the good of the state, then there could be no logical way of restraining the slippage of nearly all authority from the legislature to the people-at-large." Wood, Creation of the American Republic, p. 376.

[40]Rush expressed his opposition to the Oath in this manner: "What do you think of a man, who would consent to shut his eyes, and swallow a quantity of food that had never before been tasted by a human creature, and swear at the same time, that if it should disorder him in ever so great a degree, he would take nothing to relieve him for eight and forty hours? Such a man would be wise, compared with the man who takes a oath of allegiance to the Constitution of Pennsylvania," Rush, Observations on Government, in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 77. In 1789, Rush published An Enquiry Into the Consistency of Oaths With Reason and Christianity.

Censors.[41] In addition, the convention was limited to making only such alterations in the Constitution as suggested by the Censors. Here, just as with the Assembly, was another unchecked body exercising considerable power.[42]

Rush perhaps provided the best summary of his criticisms of the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776 in a letter to John Adams in 1779:

> The perfection of government consists in providing restraints against the tyranny of rulers . . . and the licentiousness of the people. . . . By our Constitution we are exposed to all the miseries of both without a single remedy for either.[43]

To attack this defective document, Rush became a prominent member of the Pennsylvania Republican Party, the membership of which was devoted to reforming or completely replacing the Radicals' Constitution. Supporters of the Constitution formed the Constitutional Party and the state's fundamental law became the focal point of a bitter party struggle. Rush and the Republican Party finally triumphed in 1790 when Pennsylvania adopted a new frame of government that was much more acceptable to them.

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[41] Rush, Observations on Government, in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 56. The Council of Censors were to be elected and meet once every seven years. This body was authorized to "censure public officials, to order impeachment, to point out defects in the Constitution, and to call for a convention for amending the Constitution." A two-thirds vote of the Council of Censors was required to call such a convention. Brunhouse, Counter-Revolution, p. 15.

[42] Rush, Observations on Government, in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 65.

[43] Rush to John Adams, October 12, 1779, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 240. In commenting about the licentiousness of the people, Rush was referring specifically to an incident in which a mob attacked James Wilson's house. Wilson, a noted lawyer, who later became a prominent Federalist and Supreme Court Justice, had been legal counsel for some Tories. See Brunhouse, Counter-Revolution, pp. 75-76.

During the latter half of the 1780's, however, Rush and other Pennsylvania partisans were caught in a controversy over another document--the Federal Constitution of 1787. Rush viewed the movement to strengthen the national government with considerable interest. In May, 1786, he reported to Richard Price (an English minister and friend of Franklin and Rush) that "we entertain the most flattering hopes" in the Annapolis Convention, for "an increase in power in Congress is absolutely necessary for our safety and independence."[44] Again Rush optimistically related to Price in February, 1787, that "a convention . . . is to set in this city on the 10th of next May" with its purpose being to devise a means of strengthening the national government. In addition, it was to be "composed of the most respectable characters in the United States."[45]

During the course of the Convention's deliberations (May 25 to September 17, 1787), Rush heard enough about what was being created so that by August he could report that "from the conversation of the members of the convention, there is reason to believe the Federal Constitution will be wise, vigorous, safe, free, and full of dignity." In addition, "General Washington it is said will be placed at the head of the new government. . . ."[46] When the new Federal Constitution was

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[44]Rush to Richard Price, May 25, 1786, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 388.

[45]Rush to Richard Price, February 14, 1787, Butterfield, ed., "Further Letters," p. 28.

[46]Rush to Timothy Pickering, August 30, 1787, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 440.

presented to the public, Rush did not hesitate to declare his open and active support for ratification.[47]

There were several factors motivating Rush's ardent support of the Federal Constitution. Extremely important was the fact that the new Constitution became a major issue in Pennsylvania politics. Many of the principles embodied in the Federal Constitution were basically those that the Pennsylvania Republicans (those who opposed the State Constitution of 1776) had been advocating for Pennsylvania's government for years. Generally speaking, therefore, the Pennsylvania Constitutionalists (those who supported the Constitution of 1776) became Antifederalists and the Republicans became Federalists.[48]

Rush's deep involvement in partisan state politics may be shown by a brief examination of his attitude toward those who supported the radical Constitution of 1776. He considered the Constitutionalists to be "tyrants, fools, and traitors" from whose hands the state had

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[47]In fact, Rush apparently was active in promoting acceptance of the Federal Constitution even while the Convention was still in session. In his autobiography, he recorded that he had begun early to write and speak in favor of the new Constitution and had "continued to write in its favor until it was adopted by all the states." Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 160. In 1812 Rush informed John Adams that he had "pointed the public attention to . . . " Washington "as the future President of the United States in several of our Newspapers while the Convention was sitting that framed our Constitution." At the same time, Rush had "mentioned" John Adams' name as Vice-President. Rush to John Adams, February 12, 1812, Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 1122.

[48]Thomas, Political Tendencies in Pennsylvania, p. 134. Jackson Turner Main has noted that an exception to this generality was that many Philadelphia Constitutionalists favored ratification of the Federal Constitution. Jackson Turner Main, The Antifederalists: Critics of the Constitution, 1781-1788 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 190.

to be rescued by a new Constitution.[49] Indeed, Rush believed that "no man can be of their party and preserve his integrity."[50] Moreover, he was convinced that heaven was on the side of the Republicans; hence there could be no compromise in Rush's opposition to the Radicals.[51]

Rush's bitter opposition to the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776 and his activities designed to bring about its destruction were well known to his political enemies. Thus the Antifederalist writer "Centinel" asserted that the Pennsylvania Republicans were character assassins and that "Galen" (Rush) "in this barbarous game of policy" had "shone conspicuous beyond all the imps of the well born."[52] Again

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[49]Rush to John Montgomery, November 5, 1782, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 292.

[50]Rush to John Dickinson, April 14, 1786, ibid., 384.

[51]Rush to John Montgomery, November 5, 1782, ibid., 292. Rush's unyielding stance toward the Constitutionalists may be further observed in his relationship with Thomas Mifflin (Revolutionary patriot and staunch opponent of the Constitution of 1776). In the years preceding and during the War of the Revolution, Rush and Mifflin were intimate friends. Hence Rush could implore Horatio Gates in 1778 to "please . . . give my love to Mifflin, from whom no clamors can ever tear me." He turned away from Mifflin in 1790, however, when Mifflin compromised with the Constitutionalists enabling him to become Governor of Pennsylvania. In a Commonplace Book entry for October, 1790, Rush lambasted Mifflin as a man of "very immoral character." He accused him of adultery, swearing, and obscene conversation, and further asserted that Mifflin's "political character was as bad as his moral. He had deserted his friends and joined with the men who slandered them." Ibid., p. 82n. Rush to Horatio Gates, April 9, 1778, ibid., 208. Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 190.

[52]"Centinel," The Independent Gazetteer, November 13, 1788, in John B. McMaster and Frederick Stone, Pennsylvania and the Federal Constitution, 1787-88 (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1888), p. 677. It is possible that a few of the "Centinel" letters were written by Eleasar Oswald, printer of The Independent Gazetteer; However, Samuel Bryan, son of the Constitutional Party leader George Bryan, is believed to have written most of them. Cecelia M. Kenyon, ed., The Antifederalists (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1966), p. 1.

referring to Rush, "Centinel" noted that "Doctor Puff the paragraphist" was, next to James Wilson, the chief propagandist for the new Constitution. Indeed, the Antifederalist continued, "beneath his pen thousands of correspondents rise into view, who all harmonize in their sentiments and information about the new constitution."[53] "Centinel" also accused Rush of supporting the Federal Constitution because he felt it would lead to the destruction of the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776.[54]

"Centinel" was most certainly correct in linking Rush's support of the Federal Constitution with his desire to destroy his state's constitution. Indeed, Rush asserted that "the new federal government like a new continental wagon will overset our state dung cart with all its dirty contents (reverend & irreverent) and thereby restore order and happiness to Pennsylvania."[55] He was certain that "the new government will demolish our Balloon Constitution. If it had no other merit, this would be enough for me."[56]

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[53]"Centinel," The Independent Gazetteer, January 30, 1788, in McMaster and Stone, Pennsylvania and the Federal Constitution, pp. 642-43. Rush used the same tactics in progagandizing for Independence in 1775-76.

[54]"Centinel," The Independent Gazetteer, November 8, 1788, ibid., p. 682.

[55]Rush to Timothy Pickering, August 30, 1787, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 439-40.

[56]Rush to John Adams, July 2, 1788, ibid., 469. Rush was one of five men elected to represent Philadelphia in the Pennsylvania State Ratifying Convention. He wasted little time in using this forum for attacking the State Constitution of 1776. On the first day the Convention convened, he moved that a minister be obtained to deliver a prayer upon the opening of the "business of the convention" the next day. This was to avoid a past mistake: "that the convention who framed the government of Pennsylvania, did not preface their

Rush's strong opposition to the Antifederalists' demand for a bill of rights, for which he has been deemed an "arch-conservative," also seems to have been largely conditioned by partisan political considerations.[57] Gordon Wood has observed that most Federalists believed that the "frenzied advocacy of a bill of rights by most anti-federalists masked a basic desire to dilute the power of the national government in favor of the states. . . ." Hence they opposed this demand vigorously.[58] This view is certainly applicable to Rush, whose strong nationalism has already been noted, and who was already quite hostile toward those Pennsylvanians calling for a bill of rights in the Federal Constitution.

In opposing the Antifederalists' demands, Rush argued that a bill of rights was unnecessary in a republican form of government.[59] He maintained that "there can be only two securities for liberty in any government, viz., representation and checks," and "these form the two capital features of the proposed Constitution of the United States." Furthermore, "men who call for a Bill of Rights have not recovered from the habits they acquired under the monarchial government of Great

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business with prayer is probably the reason that the State has ever since been distracted by their proceedings." Pennsylvania Herald, November 27, 1787, in McMaster and Stone, Pennsylvania and the Federal Constitution, p. 214.

[57]Indeed, in 1777 Rush had written that every free government should contain a bill of rights extolling "the great principles of natural and civil liberty." Rush, Observations on Government, in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 54.

[58]Wood, Creation of the American Republic, p. 537.

[59]James Madison, whom no one has labeled an "arch-conservative," felt that a bill of rights was not really necessary.

Britain."[60] However, Rush did not object to the eventual inclusion of the Bill of Rights in the Federal Constitution, which would seem to indicate that his reservations concerning a bill of rights were somewhat ephemeral.

Rush's advocacy of the Federal Constitution was not based solely on local partisan motives. Shortly after the contents of the proposed Federal Constitution were made known to the public, Rush declared that it would be the "freest, purest, and happiest government on the face of the earth."[61] This was true because the new government made use of the principles of separation of powers and checks and balances. Hence he noted approvingly that "neither the House of Representatives, the Senate, or the President can perform a single legislative act by themselves." Moreover, he continued, the very nature of man "will lead them to watch, to check, and to oppose each other should an attempt be made by either of them upon the liberties of the people."[62] Rush had, of course, been advocating a balanced government for Pennsylvania since 1776.[63]

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[60]Rush to David Ramsay, March or April, 1788, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 453. Rush also asserted that "never was a Bill of Rights made which was not broken. . . ." Goodman, Benjamin Rush, p. 78.

[61]Rush to John Coakley Lettsom, September 28, 1787, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 444.

[62]Rush to David Ramsay, March or April, 1788, ibid., 454. By July, 1789, Rush had come to wish that the Federal Constitution had been "more completely balanced, that is, had the President possessed more power, I believe it would have realized all the wishes of the most sanguine friends to republican liberty." Rush, to John Adams, July 21, 1789, ibid., 522.

[63]A lesser but by no means unimportant reason for Rush's supporting the Federal Constitution was the influence he felt it would have on the institution of slavery in the United States. He exclaimed in

Another reason Rush strongly supported the new government was his dissatisfaction with the Articles of Confederation. One of the faults which he found in the Confederation was the lack of equal representation in the Congress. He had early disapproved of representation by states for voting purposes in the Continental Congress and had expressed the hope that this arrangement would be changed in the Confederation then under consideration.[64] His concern for equal representation remained with him throughout the Confederation period. Thus in 1790 Rush could declare that factions "arise from unequal representation. . . . Justice must produce happiness and order."[65] Rush was also critical of the fact that "the sovereign power of the United States is . . . vested . . . in a single legislature."[66] He had not worried earlier about the possible tyranny of the one-house Continental Congress, for "they never touch the liberty, property, nor life of the individuals of any states . . . and they are liable to be checked by each of the Thirteen States." However, by May, 1787,

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December, 1787, that in twenty-one years "the new government will probably put an end to the African trade forever in America. . . . The prospect of the glorious event more than repays me for all the persecutions and slander to which my principles and publications exposed me. . . ." Rush to Elizabeth G. Ferguson, December 25, 1787, ibid., 417.

[64]Rush to Robert Morris, February 22, 1777, ibid., 135. Gordon Wood has noted that equality of representation was highly stressed by the American Whigs in 1776. Wood, Creation of the American Republic, p. 170.

[65]Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 198. See also, Rush to John Adams, July 21, 1789, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 522.

[66]Rush also noted that the Confederation as well as many of the state constitutions had been formed "under very unfavorable circumstances." The hatred of the British monarch caused them to reject some aspects of the British system which were desirable. Rush,

Rush had come to view the single legislature of the Confederation as being unsafe. In addition, Rush felt it would "become more dangerous" as it inevitably gained "more ample powers of levying and expending public money."[67]

Perhaps the most important defect of the Confederation government in Rush's view was its weakness. Gordon Wood has observed that the Confederation interlude was certainly a "critical period" to contemporary American intellectuals. Corruption was felt to be destroying the American Republic as it had the Roman Republic before it.[68] Rush was certainly no exception as he viewed the Confederation period as "years of anarchy." Such occurrences as Shays' Rebellion were foreign to Rush's concept of a well-ordered republic. In 1788 he declared to the historian David Ramsay of South Carolina that the "present moral character" of the American people proved "too plainly that the people are as much disposed to vice as their rulers," and "nothing but a vigorous and efficient government can prevent their degenerating into savages or devouring each other like beast of prey."[69]

Rush summarized his viewpoint of the causes and nature of the turmoil of the Confederation period in the following manner:

> The termination of the war . . . in 1783, did not terminate the American Revolution. The minds of the citizens of

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"Defects of the Confederation," in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, pp. 26-27.

[67]Ibid., p. 28.

[68]Wood, Creation of the American Republic, pp. 423-24.

[69]Rush to David Ramsay, March or April, 1788, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 454.

> the United States were wholly unprepared for their new situation. The excess of the passion for liberty, inflamed by the successful issue of the war, produced, in many people, opinions and conduct which could not be removed by reason nor restrained by government. For a while, they threatened to render abortive the goodness of heaven to the United States, in delivering them from the evils of slavery and war. The extensive influence which these opinions had upon the understandings, passions, and morals of many . . . citizens . . . constituted a species of insanity, which I shall take the liberty of distinguishing by the name of Anarchia.[70]

For Rush, the Revolution would not be terminated until the masses had become the ideal republicans he envisioned.

Rush's wish for a well-ordered, stable republic was conditioned significantly by his high regard for the rights of property. The reverence Rush held for liberty and property rights in his early years did not diminish as he became a substantial property owner. By 1780 his property was evaluated at £ 162,000 for tax purposes.[71] Rush disclosed in 1784 that he had acquired a "pretty little fortune with Mrs. Rush" and had added to it to "produce an estate which, if thrown into cash, would yield about £ 300-0-0 a year sterling."[72]

Following the Revolutionary War, Rush joined other Americans who had a few dollars to spare in speculating in land. In 1787 he held a number of tracts of land in Central Pennsylvania, and by 1794 his holdings totaled more than 41,000 acres.[73] In later years, Rush could

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[70]Rush, "Influence of the American Revolution," in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 31.

[71]This was of course an inflated value in 1780 currency. Pennsylvania Archives, 3rd. Series, XV (30 vols.; Harrisburg: State Printer, 1894-1899), 225.

[72]Rush to Lady Jane Wishart Belsches, April 21, 1784, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 327.

[73]Goodman, Benjamin Rush, pp. 301-03.

inform John Adams that he (Rush) had enjoyed "such abundant success that I am now in easy circumstances. . . . We now have a competent and real income, chiefly from well-situated real property. . . ."[74]

In addition to the natural desire of a substantial property owner for stability, Rush also reprobated the issuance of paper money practiced by the national government and some states during the Confederation period. His attitude toward currency was apparently conditioned by his status as a creditor in his land dealings and medical practice, as well as by his observations on the Continental currency during the War of the Revolution.

During the course of the War, Rush began to feel that "Continental money is the offspring of all the vice in our country. Its quantity and the instability of its value would corrupt a community of angels."[75] Referring to the Continental currency in 1781, Rush declared that he had "no conception of greater political and moral evils than the paper age has introduced in the span of five years in our country."[76] Consequently, he could rejoice in his anticipation

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[74]Rush to John Adams, December 14, 1812, Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 1169.

[75]Rush to James McHenry, June 2, 1779, ibid., I, 224. Rush did realize that the major reason for inflation of the Continental currency was its "excessive quantity." Thus he asked, "would not an equal quantity of gold and silver circulating among us hold the same place in value as our paper money?" Rush to Jonathan B. Smith, April 20, 1778, ibid., 212.

[76]Rush to John Adams, January 21, 1781, ibid., 261. In 1785 Rush again observed that while "war tends to loosen the bonds of morality and government in every country; the effects of it have greatly increased by the people of America handling for four or five years a depreciating paper currency." Rush to John Coakley Lettsom, April 8, 1785, ibid., 350.

that with acceptance of the Federal Constitution, "an eternal veto will be stamped on paper emissions. . . ."[77]

Rush was also disillusioned with the Confederation government because of the sad state of commerce and manufacturing.[78] He had conceived that these interests would play an important role in his republican utopia. In 1782 he declared that America possessed important resources for national importance that could "only be brought forth by commerce, which in the present state of things can be the only offspring of peace."[79] Rush believed the new government under the Federal Constitution would promote economic prosperity and growth, as "commerce will hold up her declining head, under the influence of general vigorous, uniform regulations. . . ."[80]

Indeed, Rush looked upon the Federal Constitution as the nation's deliverer from all the evils engendered by the Articles of Confederation. He held this view because the Federal Constitution created a balanced and therefore safe and vigorous national government, and because it drastically increased the power of the central government vis-a-vis the states. As early as September, 1782, Rush had asserted that "if our states can be limited, we may continue our republican

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[77] Pennsylvania Packet, December 5, 1787, in McMaster and Stone, Pennsylvania and the Federal Constitution, p. 300.

[78] Rush, "Defects of the Confederation," in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 31.

[79] Rush did "not think wealth acquired by commerce (provided that commerce is not in the souls of men) is necessarily fatal to liberty." Rush to Nathanael Greene, September 16, 1782, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 285.

[80] Pennsylvania Packet, December 5, 1787, in McMaster and Stone, Pennsylvania and the Federal Constitution, p. 300.

forms of government for many centuries to come."[81] He also looked upon the Annapolis convention with the hope that it would bring about an increase in the power of the central government.[82]

The question of state sovereignty was an important issue in the debate over the ratification of the Federal Constitution. Many Anti-federalists feared that two distinct sovereignties, as the new Constitution proposed, could not exist within the same limits.[83] Rush may have agreed with them on this point, as the Pennsylvania Packet reported that Rush had "insinuated that he saw and rejoiced at the eventual annihilation of the state sovereignties!"[84] Indeed, in the Pennsylvania Ratifying Convention, Rush declared that "passion for separate sovereignty had destroyed the Grecian Union." Moreover, he continued, "this plurality of sovereignty is in politics what plurality of Gods is in religion--it is the idolatry, the heathenism in government."[85] The prospect of a strong national government was certainly welcomed by Rush.

With the adoption of the Federal Constitution and the resulting powerful central government, Rush felt that anarchy no longer

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[81]Rush to Nathanael Greene, September 16, 1782, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 285.

[82]Rush to Richard Price, May 25, 1786, ibid., 388.

[83]This fear was eventually overcome by the Federalists through the notion that the ultimate sovereignty rests with the people. Thus the Federalists contended that under the Federal Constitution, the people parcel the power to the state and national governments. Wood, Creation of the American Republic, p. 529.

[84]Pennsylvania Packet, December 6, 1787, in McMaster and Stone, Pennsylvania and the Federal Constitution, p. 300.

[85]Pennsylvania Packet, December 3, 1787, ibid., pp. 299-300.

threatened the republic: "The reign of violence is over. Justice has descended from heaven to dwell in our land. . . ."[86] Equally important to the nationalistic Rush was his observation that the Federal Constitution "makes us a nation"[87] and "we are no longer the scoff of our enemies."[88]

On the eve of the Constitutional Convention, Rush still believed strongly that the American people were "proper materials for republican government."[89] All that was necessary to make them good republicans in Rush's view was proper republican governments and education. The new Federal Constitution established a strong national government in the form Rush deemed desirable and was to him, therefore, a major step toward the completion of the Revolution. Indeed, Rush was convinced that the Constitution "in its form and adoption, is as much the work of a Divine Providence as any of the miracles recorded in the Old and New Testament were the effects of a divine power."[90] Hence Rush was an ardent Federalist in 1787 and 1788, but during the 1790's he was to desert that party, become a follower of Thomas Jefferson, and an enthusiastic defender of the French Revolution.

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[86]Rush to Elias Boudinot?, July 9, 1788, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 475. A few days earlier Rush had declared to John Adams that the new government "rescues us from anarchy and slavery." Rush to John Adams, July 2, 1788, ibid., 469.

[87]Rush to John Adams, July 2, 1788, ibid.

[88]Rush to Elias Boudinot?, July 9, 1788, ibid., 475.

[89]Rush, "Defects of the Confederation," in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 30.

[90]Rush to Elias Boudinot?, July 9, 1788, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 475.

CHAPTER V

FROM FEDERALISM TO JEFFERSONIANISM

The final major event in Rush's political career came early in the last decade of the eighteenth century. In 1790 the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776 was replaced with a new state constitution, and Rush was an instigator in the calling of a constitutional convention. Indeed, the plans for bringing about the convention had been formulated in his parlor with the aid of political allies Geradus Wynkoop, William Maclay, Thomas Fitzsimons, and James Wilson.[1]

Rush was immensely pleased with the new state constitution because his prediction that it would "move in exact unison (with some additional notes) with the government of the United States"[2] had been realized. With the "reformation" of Pennsylvania's government, Rush's "last political wish" was reality. He noted that he had "never known a defeat or final disappointment" in any of those wishes, and "I ascribe my successes wholly to my perseverance."[3] Rush was to persevere no

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[1] Rush to John Montgomery, March 27, 1789, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 509.

[2] Rush to John Adams, March 19, 1789, ibid., 507. Brunhouse noted that the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1790 was one of the most liberal of the state constitutions. Brunhouse, Counter-Revolution, p. 225.

[3] Rush to John Adams, February 12, 1790, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 531.

longer, for with this achievement he ceased participating in politics.

There were several factors involved in Rush's retirement from active political involvement. In fact, by 1788 he was "gradually withdrawing himself from public duties and public life . . . because my health will not bear as formerly more labors than the duties of my profession." He also had a growing family to consider: "My boys . . . begin now to require some of those evenings which I formerly gave to my country. . . ."[4]

In addition to considerations of health and family, Rush also felt that with the establishment of good republican governments on both the state and national level, his active involvement with politics could end. As early as February, 1788, he declared that as soon as good government was established in America, his "first wish . . . will be to devote the whole of my life to the peaceable pursuits of science, and to the pleasures of social and domestic life."[5] Thus with the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1790, Rush apparently felt that he had done all a physician could do in politics to forward his republican ideal.

Another significant factor connected with Rush's retreat from public life was the fact that he had been hurt by his involvement with politics. Thus in 1790 he informed John Adams that a politician's enemies are not his greatest source of discomfort, but rather "the

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[4]Rush to Noah Webster, February 13, 1788, ibid., 451.

[5]Rush to Jeremy Belknap, February 28, 1788, Belknap Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Collections, Series 6, IV, 397-98, quoted in Goodman, Benjamin Rush, pp. 80-81. See also, Rush to Noah Webster, February 13, 1788, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 451.

folly, the envie, and the engratitude of his friends are the principal sources of his suffering."[6] Indeed, his friends had been "unkind, ungrateful, and even treacherous."[7]

In addition to his disillusionment with participation in politics, Rush faced a dilemma in the 1790's which may have played a role in his withdrawal. Had Rush remained active, his distaste for Alexander Hamilton's financial programs (discussed below) would have driven him into the ranks of his old enemies--the Pennsylvania Antifederalists who were using Hamilton's financial schemes as a key political issue.[8] To collaborate with his former foes, however, would have been inconceivable for the uncompromising and unforgiving physician.

Although Rush refrained from participating in politics during the 1790's, he remained a keen observer. In fact, it was during this decade that Rush became alienated from the Federalists and was attracted to Thomas Jefferson. The most important reason for Rush's disaffection from the Federalists was his deep-seated opposition to Treasury Secretary Hamilton's plan for funding the national debt. Hamilton had proposed

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[6]Rush to John Adams, February 12, 1790, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 531.

[7]Rush noted that "one of the Republican party who had long seen with pain the zeal and success of my services, I have reason to believe employed his talents for evil and ridicule against me in the public papers." Rush to John Adams, February 24, 1790, ibid., II, 533. The psychiatrist Carl Binger has interpreted a 1790 dream of Rush's as showing that Rush "retired from political life because he was not tough enough for it and had been hurt by it." Binger, Revolutionary Doctor, p. 288.

[8]Raymond Walters, Jr., "The Origins of the Jeffersonian Party in Pennsylvania," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, LXVI (October, 1942), 444-48.

redeeming at par the paper that had been issued during the Revolutionary War to pay soldiers and other creditors. It had become almost worthless and much of it had passed into the hands of speculators, who, with the prospect of considerable profit, began to acquire more. During the course of the debate in Congress on the Secretary's plan, James Madison moved to differentiate between the original creditors and present certificate holders. Madison felt that the initial owners should be paid in full, but the speculators should receive only the present market price, with the remainder accruing to the former group. This motion was voted down February 23, 1790.[9]

Rush was strongly sympathetic toward Madison's motion, for he viewed funding all certificates at face value regardless of ownership as "honorable fraud and oppression."[10] Shortly after Madison's effort had been defeated, Rush congratulated him for the "honor you have done to the claims of justice and patriotism by your motion. . . . The decision on that great question will leave a stain on our country which no time or declamation can ever wipe away."[11] Indeed, Rush took such a jaundiced view of the funding program that he declared to Thomas Fitzsimons, a supporter of the funding scheme, that "the Spanish cruelties in America and the English cruelties in the East Indies . . . do not stain human nature" more "than the conduct of the present Congress towards the Army that established our independence and new

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[9]Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 541n.

[10]Rush to Thomas Fitzsimons, February 19, 1790, Butterfield, ed., "Further Letters," p. 31.

[11]Rush to James Madison, February 27, 1790, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 538.

government. . . ." Moreover, Rush continued, "the whole profits of the war will center in the hands of American tories, Amsterdam jews, and London brokers, while the brave men who deserved them" will die in "jails and hospitals or beg their bread from door to door."[12]

It was especially disturbing to Rush that the new government, from which he had expected wisdom and justice, would fix such an "unjust" act upon the people. He even informed Madison that he felt "disposed to wish that my name was blotted out from having contributed a single mite towards the American Revolution." After having been delivered from the injustices of Great Britain, he continued, the people were now "to be subjugated by a mighty act of national injustice by the United States." He was sure that the funding system would establish the concept "that revolutions are the rage of the many for the benefit of the few."[13]

Rush answered the argument that Madison's proposal concerning the payment of the war debt was not feasible by asserting that he "would as soon believe in the grossest absurdity in Gulliver's travels, as admit anything to be impractical in legislation that is perfectly just."[14] Indeed, Rush felt that the "weight of reason, morality, and even religion" was so great behind Madison's motion that he wondered that any "man of character should have opposed it."[15]

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[12]Rush to Thomas Fitzsimons?, August 5, 1790, ibid., 569.

[13]Rush to James Madison, February 27, 1790, ibid., 539.

[14]Rush to Thomas Fitzsimons, February 19, 1790, Butterfield, ed., "Further Letters," pp. 30-31.

[15]Rush to James Madison, February 27, 1790, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 538.

Consequently, Rush soon came to suspect that corruption had played a large role in the passage of the funding system. By August, 1792, he could believe John Beckly (Clerk of the House of Representatives) when he asserted that "26 members of the House of Representatives and 8 of the Senate . . . were . . . certificate holders."[16] This news was certain to raise Rush's moral indignation to a fever pitch, blinding him to any beneficial aspects of the funding system.

Rush also attributed the "speculative mania" of the early 1790's to Hamilton's funding program. He reprobated this rise of speculative interest, for he felt it was corrupting the morals of the nation. Good republicans, in Rush's view, should be productive, frugal, and certainly not obsessed with attaining wealth through speculation. By August, 1791, he believed that the funding system had introduced into the United States "half the miseries and vices of hell itself."[17] In 1808 Rush illustrated how he felt the funding system could destroy men's characters by citing the case of Elias Boudinot: "The funding system pampered his canine appetite for wealth and at the same time altered his moral habits. He has ever since been an oppressor of the

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[16]Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 227. Charles Beard has shown that almost one-half of the members of the first Congress were large certificate holders. Charles A. Beard, "The Economic Origins of Jeffersonian Democracy," American Historical Review, XIX (January, 1914), p. 282. In 1811 Rush, referring to the passage of the funding system, declared "the present legislature of the United States may be innocent, but they are the offspring of vice. They are sons of _____. I will not name their mother." Rush to John Adams, January 10, 1811, Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 1077.

[17]Rush to Mrs. Rush, August 12, 1791, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 602-03.

poor, and tricky in all his bargains."[18]

Rush even expressed his opposition to the funding system in verse:

> 'Pay the poor soldier! He's a sot,'
> Cries our grave ruler, Boudinot.
> 'No pity from us now he claims;'
> In artful accents echoes [Fisher] Ames.
> 'A soldier's pay are rags and fame
> A wooden leg, a deathless name.
> To specs [speculators], both in and out of Cong [Congress]
> The three and six percents belong.'[19]

Repelled by Hamilton's funding scheme, Rush quickly developed a distaste for the man.[20] He was also disgusted by the aristocratic New Yorker's domination of the Federalist party and consequent pervasive influence in the national government. Hamilton wielded considerable power through his numerous disciples in the party (including John Adams' cabinet) even following his "retirement" to New York. As early as June, 1789, Rush had declared that New York "is the very sink of British manners and politics."[21] In January, 1797, Rush congratulated Thomas Jefferson upon his escaping the Presidency. Congratulations were in order, he asserted, for it would have been

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[18]Rush to John Adams, April 5, 1808, ibid., II, 963. In 1811 Rush informed John Adams that Boudinot had made "an immense estate . . . out of the rags and bellies and blood of the soldiers of the American Revolution . . . for which he worships the names of Washington and Hamilton." Rush to John Adams, September 20, 1811, ibid., 1105.

[19]Rush claimed to have published this doggerel in a Philadelphia newspaper during the Congressional debate over the funding system. Rush to John Adams, January 10, 1811, ibid., 1076-77.

[20]Rush was apparently on relatively friendly terms with Hamilton as late as January, 1789. See Rush to Alexander Hamilton, January 5, 1789, Butterfield, ed., "Further Letters," pp. 29-30.

[21]Rush to John Adams, June 4, 1789, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 513.

impossible for Jefferson "to have preserved the credit of republican principles or your own character for integrity had you succeeded to the New York administration of our government."[22]

Hamilton was aware of Rush's antipathy toward him and the funding system, and it was soon apparent that he reciprocated the sentiment. During the yellow fever epidemics which plagued Philadelphia in 1793 and 1797, there was considerable controversy concerning the proper mode of treating the malady. Hamilton in 1793 publicly supported a rival physician, Edward Stevens, and his cure against Rush's use of bleeding and purging. Rush, who was as uncompromising and petulant in his medical controversies as in his political battles, deeply resented Hamilton's action. Moreover, during the bitter dispute over yellow fever treatment in 1797, Rush seriously considered leaving Philadelphia to obtain a position on the Columbia medical faculty, but acceptance of him at that institution was blocked by the veto of one trustee--Alexander Hamilton.[23] Obviously Rush had ample reason to be alienated from Hamilton and therefore support his political enemies, but why did he turn toward Thomas Jefferson rather than becoming an Adams Federalist?

Rush and John Adams had been close friends since the early days of the Revolution, and Adams' influence upon Rush was demonstrated in the previous chapter of this essay. Indeed, Rush had been active in

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[22]Rush to Thomas Jefferson, January 4, 1791, ibid., II, 784.

[23]Ibid., I, 544n. A readable study of the yellow fever epidemic of 1793 and Rush's role is John H. Powell, Bring out your Dead: The Great Plague of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia in 1793 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949).

securing the Vice-Presidency for Adams. In January, 1789, he wrote Adams: "You will perceive by the Philadelphia papers that your friends here have not been idle in preparing an honorable seat for you in the federal Senate."[24] By February 21, Rush could inform Adams that "few events have . . . afforded me more pleasure than your election to the Vice-Presidents chair. It is the capstone of our labors respecting the new government."[25]

One of the major reasons for which Rush had supported Adams for Vice-President, aside from his respect for Adams' abilities, was that he felt Adams could be persuaded to push "immediately in favor of a motion to bring Congress to Philadelphia." Rush was convinced that Philadelphia with its large Quaker and German population would provide a much more republican environment than New York City.[26] In fact, he was certain that the "funding law would never have passed had Congress sat in Philadelphia."[27] When the question about the national capital arose in Congress, however, Adams did not warmly support removal to Philadelphia.[28]

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[24]Rush to John Adams, January 22, 1789, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 499. William Maclay, Senator from Pennsylvania and associate of Rush, recorded in his diary that he and Rush had "puffed John Adams in the papers and brought him forward for Vice-President." Edgar S. Maclay, ed., Journal of William S. Maclay (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1890), p. 86.

[25]Rush to John Adams, February 21, 1789, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 501.

[26]Ibid., 501-02.

[27]Rush to Thomas Fitzsimons?, August 5, 1790, ibid., 569.

[28]Harry M. Tinkcom, The Republicans and Federalists in Pennsylvania, 1789-1801 (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1950), p. 28.

In addition, more serious clashes came to divide Rush and Adams at this time. These differences were generated by a marked shift in Adams' view of American republicanism. By the late 1780's the "Critical Period" had stripped Adams of his former "faith in the inspirational and ameliorating ideas of republicanism."[29] He had come to feel that education and religion, in which Rush still maintained much confidence for promoting republican virtue, were inadequate to curb human appetites. Consequently, Adams rested his hopes for social control upon his conception of the mixed polity.[30] This idea had long been applied to the government of Great Britain and was based on the supposition that the stability and liberty of the British Constitution resulted from the fact that each level of society--monarchy, aristocracy, and the common people--were represented in the British government. By 1787, however, many Americans had abandoned the idea of the mixed constitution as being the best possible. Instead of seeing the Senate as representing an aristocracy and the executive as the monarchic part of government, they believed that all branches of the government were derived from the people.[31] Adams was, therefore, out of step with the thinking of the times and that of Benjamin Rush. Gordon Wood has noted that "for every statement of conventional republicanism timidly [?] offered by . . . Rush, Adams had a fiery retort that left Rush aghast."[32]

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[29]Wood, Creation of the American Republic, p. 575.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Ibid., pp. 588-92.

[32]Ibid., p. 588.

Adams shocked Rush by praising hereditary institutions and asserting that Americans would find that they would have to turn to them in the not too distant future to preserve an ordered society. In June, 1789, Adams wrote Rush: "You seem determined not to allow a limited monarchy to be a republican system, which it certainly is, and the best that has ever been tryed. . . ."[33]

Rush reacted to Adams' arguments respectfully but firmly. Rejecting the notion of the mixed polity, he insisted that a republic consisted "of three branches, and each derived at different times and for different periods from the PEOPLE. A branch not chosen by the people" will become "an abscess in the body politic which must sooner or later destroy the healthiest state."[34] Rush also opposed the use of titles for government officials (the advocacy of which earned Adams the title of "His Rotundity") except those derived from the name of the office. He informed Adams that "the use of titles begets pride in rulers and baseness in the common people" rather than overawing or restraining "the profligate part of a community." Indeed, titles were "no more necessary to give dignity or energy to a government than swearing is to govern a ships crew. . . ."[35]

Concerning Adams' advocacy of a limited monarchy, Rush replied that a government should be an absolute monarchy or an absolute

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[33]John Adams to Benjamin Rush, June 19, 1789, Alexander Biddle, ed., Old Family Letters (Philadelphia, 1892), p. 57, quoted in Manning J. Dauer, The Adams Federalists (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1953), p. 50.

[34]Rush to John Adams, July 21, 1789, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 523.

[35]Ibid., 524.

republic. It would be absurd, he asserted, to "connect together in one government the living principle of liberty in the people with the deadly principle of tyranny in a hereditary monarch." In the latter instance, he argued, conflict would surely occur and "from a variety of circumstances the victory 99 times in a 100 will be in favor of the monarch and hence will arise the annihilation of liberty."[36] Rush felt that it would be "better to raise our people to a pure and free government by good education" than to accommodate a government to their "present vulgar habits. . . ."[37] He succinctly summarized his differences with Adams by declaring to him: "I am just as much a republican as I was in 1775 and 6 . . . I consider hereditary monarchy and aristocracy as a rebellion against nature."[38]

Rush soon began to draw the logical conclusion that his old friend Adams had become tainted with monarchial sentiments. Indeed, in August, 1790, Rush bluntly notified Adams that he had conversed with Thomas Jefferson a few months earlier and their "principle Subject" had been Adams: "We both deplored your attachment to monarchy and both agreed that you had changed your principles since 1776."[39] By

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[36]Ibid., 522.

[37]Rush to John Adams, June 15, 1789, ibid., 517.

[38]Rush to John Adams, June 4, 1789, ibid., 514. Rush and Adams also clashed over the usefulness of classical languages as an integral part of a person's education. Rush condemned Latin and Greek on a variety of grounds, while Adams tenaciously defended them. Rush once expressed the view that "men use Latin and Greek . . . on purpose to conceal themselves from intercourse with the common people." Rush to John Adams, July 21, 1789, ibid., 524. Goodman has noted that Rush studied Latin for six years during his adolescence and still did not completely master the language. Goodman, Benjamin Rush, p. 7.

[39]Rush to John Adams, August 13, 1790, Butterfield, ed., Letters,

the Presidential election of 1796, Rush could observe that Adams was "devoted to monarchy in all its forms and consequences."[40] Adams also supported Hamilton's funding and assumption schemes, a course of action certainly not designed to cultivate harmonious relations with Rush.[41] Hence Rush was alienated from the leaders of the two major wings of the Federalist party in the 1790's.

In addition to his estrangement from its leaders, Rush eventually changed his view toward the Federalist party itself. He had considered himself a Federalist, since he had deemed that group as consisting of those supporting the new government. In 1788 Rush could describe William Maclay, one of Pennsylvania's new Senators, as being "highly federal. . . . In his manners he is a perfect republican."[42] Writing

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I, 546. See also, Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 181. In August, 1789, Rush recorded a conversation in his Commonplace Book with William Maclay, who quoted John Adams as saying that "the more ignorent the people are, the more easily they will be governed." Ibid., p. 176.

[40]Rush to James Currie, July 26, 1796, Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 779. In 1795 Rush invited Horatio Gates to "come and pass a few weeks in our city. . . ." Rush wished to "feast once more . . . upon the republican principles and maxims which flowed in our bosoms in the years 1774, 1775, and 1776. We will fancy Richd. H. Lee and Saml. Adams are part of our Company." Rush will not include John Adams: "We will respect him for his integrity, while we deplore his apostasy from his first love." Rush to Horatio Gates, December 26, 1795, ibid., 768.

[41]John R. Howe, The Changing Political Thought of John Adams (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 197. Adams was later profuse in his denials of ever having advocated hereditary institutions and limited monarchy. Dauer believes that Adams was sincere in his denegations as "he was never one to check back on his earlier pronouncements or correspondence. He was probably able to believe that he had always merely considered monarchy proper as a way out in the case of certain eventualities." Dauer, The Adams Federalists, p. 54.

[42]Rush to Jeremy Belknap, October 7, 1788, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 490.

to John Dickinson in 1797, Rush asserted: "I consider Federalism and Republicanism as synonymous, but many people mean by Federalism the monarchy of Great Britain." Rush argued in 1805 that the "old tories" had united with the "honest Federalists" in the founding of the Federal Government. The "old tories," he continued, were "patronized by General Washington and Colonel Hamilton, probably from pure motives, and soon acquired a complete ascendancy over the party that had taken them by the hand."[43]

There were positive as well as negative reasons for Rush's Jeffersonianism during the 1790's. One of these was his strong affinity with Jefferson's chief political ally--James Madison. He was likely aware of the key role Madison had played in the Philadelphia Convention of 1787, but it was Madison's motion to modify the funding system which drew Rush close to him. In the ensuing years, they corresponded regularly on humanitarian and political topics and saw "eye-to-eye on nearly every issue."[44] In 1792 it was natural for Rush to refer to "our two illustrious patriots Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Madison."[45]

In addition to his compatibility with Madison, Rush was also much impressed with Thomas Jefferson. He had a meeting with Jefferson on March 17, 1790, a time when he was both upset with the passage of the

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[43]Rush to John Adams, August 14, 1805, ibid., II, 900-01.

[44]Ibid., I, 541n.

[45]Rush to Aaron Burr, September 24, 1792, ibid., 623. Rush's Commonplace Book entry for March 30, 1792, reveals that he had "spent a long and agreeable evening with Mr. Madison. . . . Our conversation was on the evils introduced . . . by the funded debt of the United States and in praise of republican governments." Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 216.

funding system and convinced that John Adams had strayed from true republicanism. He noted that Jefferson "was plain in his dress and unchanged in his manners." Furthermore, "he still professed himself attached to republican forms of government, and deplored the change of opinion upon this subject in John Adams. . . ."[46] On May 13, 1790, Rush recorded that he had "breakfasted this morning with Mr. Jefferson," and had been "charmed" with Jefferson's wide range of interests and talents. His conversation, Rush noted, "was full of instruction upon all subjects." Thus Jefferson's timely personal contacts with Rush played a significant role in Rush's becoming his follower.

Perhaps even more important than their conversations was the fact that the two men held common views on a number of issues. They were in accord (with most men of their time) about the necessity of separation of powers and checks and balances in government.[48] Had Jefferson been a Pennsylvanian, he would likely have joined with Rush in opposing the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776, for he considered the powers granted to the Virginia Assembly under that state's constitution to

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[46]Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 181. Butterfield has asserted that Rush's interview with Jefferson on March 17, 1790, "occuring at a propitious moment," made Rush "an unshakeably loyal follower of Jefferson in politics." Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 548n.

[47]Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 194. Butterfield has recorded that Rush and Jefferson came together often during the decade that Philadelphia was the national capital, "especially at Philosophical Hall, where their common interest in schemes for improving the conditions of life in the United States made them fast friends." Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 548n.

[48]Caleb P. Patterson, The Constitutional Principles of Thomas Jefferson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1953), p. 38. See also, Clinton Rossiter, Conservatism in America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1955), pp. 110-15.

have been despotic.[49] They were in agreement concerning the Federal Constitution, as Jefferson opposed only two major aspects of that document--its lack of a bill of rights and "the perpetual re-eligibility of the President."[50]

In addition to being in accord concerning the proper forms of republican governments, both Rush and Jefferson placed much emphasis upon education to promote republicanism. They exhibited much confidence in the ability of the common people to become good republicans and elect good rulers if properly educated. To accomplish this, both were concerned with erecting an integrated system of educational institutions "from grammar schools to Universities."[51]

Furthermore, both men looked upon agriculture favorably. As early as 1769, Rush had asserted that agriculture was the only valid basis of the riches of any country.[52] He had also looked upon the rural life as being conducive to republican virtue. Moreover, they held common views toward cities. Jefferson asserted in a letter to Rush in September, 1800, that great cities were "pestilential to the morals, the health and the liberties of man."[53] Rush replied by

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[49]In this constitution, the executive branch was completely subordinated to the legislature. Charles S. Sydnor, Gentlemen Freeholders: Political Practices in Washington's Virginia (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1952), p. 95. However, the Virginia Constitution was not so radical as the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776.

[50]Patterson, Constitutional Principles of Jefferson, p. 38.

[51]Wood, Creation of the American Republic, p. 426. They were also in agreement as to much of the subject matter to be taught. Boorstin, Lost World, p. 218.

[52]Rush, "On Manners," in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, p. 392.

[53]Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Rush, September 23, 1800, in Andrew A. Lipscomb, ed., The Writings of Thomas Jefferson (20 vols.;

comparing cities with "abcesses on the human body, viz, as reservoirs of all the impurities of a community."[54]

Another obvious factor which helped bind Rush to Jefferson was their common antipathy toward the aristocratic, pro-British Alexander Hamilton. In addition to differences concerning domestic issues, both Rush and Jefferson differed with Hamilton in their outlook toward Great Britain and France.

Rush's strong dislike of England and English institutions was engendered by the American Revolution and the events preceding it. Referring to the recently signed French Alliance, he declared in May, 1788, that "men should rise now in the estimation of their country in proportion to the cordiality of their hatred to the British nation."[55] By 1781 he felt that "the enemies of Britain anywhere and everywhere should be the friends of every American."[56] Rush still felt that British society was as corrupt in the 1790's as it had been prior to the Revolution, and his antipathy toward that nation was as strong as ever.[57] In 1800 he informed Jefferson that the names of the counties in Virginia (which were named after several British royal families) "are disgraceful remains of your former degraded state as men. . . ."[58]

Washington, D.C.: The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1904), X, 173.

[54]Rush to Thomas Jefferson, October 6, 1800, Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 824.

[55]Rush to James McHenry, May 16, 1778, ibid., I, 215.

[56]Rush to Horatio Gates, September 5, 1781, ibid., 265.

[57]Rush to Thomas Jefferson, March 1, 1796, ibid., II, 772.

[58]Rush to Thomas Jefferson, August 22, 1800, ibid., 820.

Rush viewed France in a much more favorable light than Great Britain. He had been much impressed with France when he traveled there in 1769, proclaiming French scenery, architecture, paintings, and statuary to be superior to Britain's.[59] In addition, he was generous in his praise of the "politeness" and manners of the people, concluding that the French nation was "perhaps the most civilized in the world."[60] Rush was also impressed by the Gallic "preachers" who were "in general . . . much more animated than in any other country,"[61] and with French women, their painted faces notwithstanding.[62]

French aid during the War of the Revolution intensified Rush's affection for France. In 1780 he exclaimed: "The French alliance is not less dear to the true whigs than independence itself. . . ." The first French Minister to the United States, Conrad Alexander Gérard, was "dear to" Americans. "We call him the 'republican minister'."[63] Following the War, Rush maintained his affection for the French people, but held no more love for Bourbon monarchy than he did for the British variety, and during the 1790's he was an ardent defender of the French Revolution.

Rush interpreted the French Revolution as having been inspired by the American Revolution, and as the bearer of reason, humanity, and

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[59]Rush, "On Manners," in Runes, ed., Writings of Rush, pp. 282-83.

[60]Ibid., p. 385.

[61]Ibid., p. 377.

[62]Ibid., p. 380.

[63]Rush to John Adams, April 28, 1780, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 252.

liberty to Europe.[64] By 1793 Rush was aware of the "distressing" state of affairs in France, but he viewed those "commotions" as likely to be only temporary: "Chaos existed before the order and beauty of the Universe." Indeed, Rush continued, "the devil who is the present tenant of our world, will not" depart "till he has done the premises all the mischief that lies in his power, but go he must sooner or later, with all his family of nobles and kings."[65] Again, in 1796 Rush stated that he "deplored the factions which have torn that country [France] to pieces," but "the present distractions are nothing but the seeds of great and universal happiness."[66]

Rush's "conversion" from Federalism to Jeffersonianism cannot be attributed to a marked shift in his basic political outlook as

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[64]Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 202. See also, Rush to John Dickinson, October 4, 1791, Butterfield, ed., Letters, I, 610. In November, 1791, Rush wrote the Universalist minister Elhanan Winchester: "I contemplate with you the progress of reason and liberty in Europe with great pleasure. Republican forms of government are the best repositories of the gospel." Rush to Elhanan Winchester, November 12, 1791, ibid., 612.

[65]Rush to John Coakley Lettsom, April 26, 1793, Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 638. See also, Rush to James Kidd, November 25, 1793, ibid., 746. Rush apparently joined the Philadelphia Democratic-Republican Society in 1794, as his name appears in the minutes of the society. While there was more than one Benjamin Rush in Philadelphia, the doctor was most likely the one that was a member. This seems logical in light of Rush's faith in the eventual fruitful culmination of the French Revolution. Also, the French ambassador Genet reported that Dr. Rush was quite attentive and sympathetic toward him. Eugene P. Link, Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), p. 81. Tinkcom, Republicans and Federalists in Pennsylvania, p. 84. Rush did treat Genet during the yellow fever epidemic of 1793. Rush to Mrs. Rush, September 11, 1793, Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 660.

[66]Rush to Griffith Evans, March 4, 1796, ibid., 772. See also, Rush to James Currie, July 26, 1796, ibid., 780.

Butterfield and Corner intimate, for his major link with the Federalists had been their mutual support of the Federal Constitution. While his differences with Hamilton and Adams facilitated his attachment to Jefferson, Rush and Jefferson held mutual beliefs and attitudes which Rush had exhibited since the early days of the American Revolution. Rush had remained true to his goal of making America a "Christian Sparta." Furthermore, he saw the French Revolution as the apostle of American liberty and republicanism in Europe, and was sure of its eventual success.

The rise of Napoleon dashed Rush's idealistic dream for Europe, and his disappointment was profound. His disillusionment was not to be confined to the European situation, however, for in the later years of his life, he became discouraged with American republicanism. In Rush's view, the United States seemed no closer to becoming a pure republic during the first decade of the nineteenth century than it was in 1776. It was also during these twilight years that Rush and John Adams revived their friendship and correspondence.

CHAPTER VI

A DISILLUSIONED IDEALIST

In February, 1805, Benjamin Rush received a letter from John Adams which began: "It seemeth unto me, that you and I ought not to die without saying Goodby or bidding each other Adieu. Pray how do you do?"[1] Rush soon replied that "I have not forgotten--I cannot forget you."[2] Rush and Adams thus renewed their correspondence and friendship which was to grow ever stronger until Rush's death in 1813.

Indeed, while Rush and Adams had been estranged politically, at no time did they consider themselves enemies. Rush had never lost respect for the character and dignity of his old colleague. Though endorsing Thomas Jefferson for President in 1796, he asserted that "Mr Adams, with monarchial principles, is a republican in his manners and a most upright, worthy man . . . he possesses great knowledge and the most vigorous internal resources of mind."[3]

In addition to respect, Rush also felt gratitude towards Adams, for he had appointed Rush Treasurer of the Mint at Philadelphia in November, 1797--a time when Rush was in dire need of income.[4]

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[1]Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 891n.

[2]Rush to John Adams, February 19, 1805, ibid., 890.

[3]Rush to James Currie, July, 1796, ibid., 779.

[4]Ibid., 1211-12. See also, Rush to John R. B. Rodgers, November 6, 1797, ibid., 795.

A severe yellow fever epidemic had gripped Philadelphia in that year, and his treatments were being criticized severely. His practice suffered accordingly. Moreover, Rush's appointment was made in the face of strong opposition as he was "anathema" to most Federalists at this time.[5] Hence Rush was grateful to Adams for the rest of his life. In 1807 he wrote Adams: "Had it not been for the emoluments of the office you gave me, . . . I must have . . . ended my days upon a farm upon the little capital I had saved from the labors of my former years."[6]

Rush had also been drawn toward Adams as he realized the correctness of his friend's earlier predictions on the outcome of the French Revolution. In 1805 Rush recalled several of Adams' remarks concerning the state of affairs in France. Among these were: "Don't deceive yourself, Doctor, in a belief that a republic can exist in France. The present Revolution will end in the restoration of the Bourbon family or in a military dictatorship."[7] Upon recalling Adams' prophecy, Rush, perhaps thinking of his own idealistic view of the French Revolution, observed that "it is because politicians neglect to form principles from facts that so many mistakes are committed in calculations upon the issue of commotions in human affairs."[8]

In addition to their differences on the French Revolution, Rush was also ready to sweep away other outstanding grievances with Adams.

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[5]Dauer, The Adams-Federalists, pp. 137-38.

[6]Rush to John Adams, August 24, 1808, Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 975. Considering his sizable land investments, Rush, in expressing his appreciation to Adams, may have exaggerated somewhat the plight from which Adams rescued him.

[7]Rush to John Adams, September 21, 1805, ibid., 904.

[8]Ibid., 905.

Thus he expressed pleasure that James Madison, in a recent conversation, had "acquitted" Adams "of ever having had the least unfriendly designs in" his "administration upon the present forms of our American governments."[9] The barrier of monarchist sentiments between the two was finally dissolved. Rush also noted that Madison had praised Adams for his integrity. This meant much to Rush "for what virtue above all others," he exclaimed, "would a good man wish to be generally known by the world and posterity? I should suppose integrity."[10]

Rush's friendship with Adams grew closer as his remaining years passed. In 1810 he absolved Adams "from having any hand in the dirty business of the funding system and in removing Congress to Washington."[11] By 1811 he rated the friendship of John Adams only below those of his wife and mother.[12] Indeed, Rush and Adams communicated so frequently that Mrs. Rush observed in 1812: they correspond "like two young girls about their sweethearts. . . ."[13] It was to John Adams that Rush most emphatically expressed the intense disillusionment he felt in his later years.

The failure of the French Revolution to produce an enduring republican government in France and to reform Europe was certainly a source

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[9]Rush to John Adams, August 14, 1805, ibid., 903.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Rush to John Adams, October 2, 1810, ibid., 1068.

[12]Rush to John Adams, June 13, 1811, ibid., 1083.

[13]Rush to John Adams, June 4, 1812, ibid., 1138. In 1812 Rush wrote of Adams: "Some of his thoughts electrify me. I view him as a mountain with its head clear and reflecting the beams of the sun, while all below is frost and snow." Rush to Thomas Jefferson, March 3, 1812, ibid., 1128.

of disappointment for Rush, but even more important was his belief that his efforts to promote republicanism and improve the quality of life in America had resulted in persecution and rejection. In his autobiography, he advised his sons "to take no public or active part in the disputes of their country beyond a vote at an election." Indeed, Rush would prefer them to be soldiers rather than politicians, for "in battle men kill, without hating each other; in political contests men hate without killing, but in that hatred they commit murder every hour of their lives."[14] He was particularly distressed by the "persecution" he had received because of his controversial use of bleeding and purges in treatment of yellow fever and for his assertion that the malady was of domestic origin.[15] Rush was convinced that his political views had stimulated much of this criticism.

During the epidemic of 1793, Rush's debilitating methods of treating yellow fever were attacked by many of his colleagues, but he resolutely stood by his mode of treatment. He likened his situation to that of the "French Republic, surrounded and invaded by new and old enemies. . . ."[16] A few years later, Rush ascribed the opposition to his "remedies . . . chiefly to an unkind and resentful association of my political principles with my medical career."[17]

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[14]Corner, ed., Autobiography, p. 162. It should be recalled that Rush's withdrawal from participation in politics in the early 1790's had been motivated in part by his being hurt through his involvement in politics.

[15]Rush to John Adams, December 26, 1811, Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 1114-16.

[16]Rush to Mrs. Rush, September 26, 1793, ibid., 685.

[17]Rush to Horatio Gates, December 26, 1795, ibid., 767. Rush at

It was during the latter years of the decade, when Philadelphia was afflicted with an even worse yellow fever outbreak than in 1793, that Rush received the most severe abuse. His chief detractor was William Cobbett, an English immigrant, whom Carl Binger has aptly described as a "passionate monarchist, whose nostalgia and chauvinism led him to glorify everything English."[18] Cobbett, who used the pen name "Peter Porcupine," began publishing Porcupine's Gazette in 1797. He castigated individuals such as Lafayette, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin ("Old Lightning Rod"), Thomas Jefferson, and Tom Paine, but conserved his best efforts for Benjamin Rush.[19]

Cobbett's attacks were indeed venemous. He opened one article, "Medical Puffing," with the following verse:

> The times are ominous indeed,
> when quack to quack cries purge and bleed.

Cobbett also declared that while the Israelite (Samson) slew his thousands "the Rushites have slain their tens of thousands." "Porcupine's" continual invective finally provoked Rush into suing for libel and he was eventually awarded $5,000, although he collected only

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least once referred to the treatments of those physicians opposing him as "Colonel Hamilton's remedies." Rush to Elias Boudinot, October 2, 1793, ibid., 701.

[18] Binger, Revolutionary Doctor, p. 240.

[19] Ibid. Rush apparently drew Cobbett's attention by exhibiting his republicanism in a public eulogy for the astronomer David Rittenhouse. His sympathy for the French Revolution was also known, and his controversial yellow fever treatment made him a particularly appropriate target for Cobbett's vituperation. Rush was also bitterly attacked in the late 1790's by John Fenno, editor of the Gazette of the United States. Rush sued him for libel, but his lawyers advised him to drop the suit, perhaps fearing that Fenno would never be convicted by a jury of his countrymen. Ibid., p. 241.

a part of it. Cobbett retreated to New York and for a time vindictively produced a small periodical entitled the Rush-Light aimed solely at defaming Rush and his supporters. He finally gave up his sport in June, 1800, and sailed for England.[20]

Rush was greatly distressed at this abuse which generated a decline in both his reputation and practice. In 1798 he acknowledged that he had been forced to borrow money to support his family.[21] Indeed, Rush became so discouraged that in 1797 he applied for a professorship at Columbia University and planned to move if accepted.[22] He finally acquired a country villa, "Syndenham," and apparently intended to move there permanently should he be forced to quit Philadelphia.[23]

As with the earlier epidemic, Rush again believed that much of the criticism of him was generated by his political beliefs. Thus he asserted to John Dickinson in 1797: "My remedies for the yellow fever would have met with no opposition this year had I not signed the

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[20]Goodman, Benjamin Rush, p. 221. Rush considered another suit against Cobbett while the latter was in New York. Cobbett heard of this and consulted Alexander Hamilton, who, according to Cobbett, "refused any fee, and . . . told me, that he would think himself honored in defending me. . . . He behaved with great kindness to me and assured me that I had nothing to fear from injustice in New York." William Cobbett to Edward Thornton, March 14, 1800, G. D. H. Cole, ed., Letters from William Cobbett to Edward Thornton . . . . 1797-1800 (London, 1937), p. 72, quoted in Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 818.

[21]Rush to Mathew Carey, April 5, 1798, Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 798.

[22]It will be recalled that Rush's appointment was blocked by Alexander Hamilton. Rush to John R. B. Rodgers, October 16?, 1797, ibid., 794-94n.

[23]He came to use it as a summer residence, commuting to the city to continue his practice. Ibid., 803n-04n.

Declaration of Independence and latterly declared myself a Republican in the Eulogium on Mr. Rittenhouse."[24] Butterfield has observed that Rush's feud with Cobbett "hastened Rush's retreat from public life and humanitarian causes toward the sequestrian of his later years." Following the departure of Cobbett, he continued, Rush "was more tranquil, but he was also more disillusioned. His unbounded optimism had given way to resignation tinged with embitterment."[25] Rush's encounter with Cobbett certainly did play a large role in the disillusionment of his old age, but it was by no means the only factor.

Rush was also disgusted with the politics of the young nation. David H. Fischer has noted that after 1800, as deference declined, politics became "a dirty business in the eyes of the Gentlemen" from which "neither honor nor reputation could be gained."[26] This holds true for Rush to the extent that he reprobated the decline of deference in officeholding. By 1804 he felt that the time was past "in which happiness or even usefulness is to be expected from public stations."[27] Rush demonstrated his feeling toward Congress in 1810, when he declared that he had "long considered . . . John Randolph . . . as a mischievous boy with a squirt in his hands, throwing its dirty contents into the eyes of everybody that looked at him." Congress tolerates his "vulgar parliamentary insolence," Rush continued,

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[24]Rush to John Dickinson, October 11, 1797, ibid., 793.

[25]Ibid., 1218.

[26]David H. Fischer, The Revolution of American Conservatism (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 32.

[27]Rush to Thomas Jefferson, August 29, 1804, Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 886.

because that body "is what it is. . . . In the Congress of 1776 and 1777 he would soon have fallen and perished with his brother insects upon the floor of the house."[28]

Rush was also much discouraged with the political leadership in Pennsylvania. As early as 1790, he noted regretfully that "the present Convention and Assembly of Pennsylvania and the Present Corporation of Philadelphia are all filled chiefly with men who were either unknown in 1776 or known only for timidity and disaffection."[29]

After 1800, a controversy arose in Pennsylvania over the state Constitution of 1790--the one that Rush had played such a major role in establishing. There was much agitation for a new constitution, and support for this movement was founded in the radical wing of the Republican party. Rush described the situation by noting that the "violent Democrats" and "moderate Republicans" had divided over the controversy. "The moderate Republicans are few in number compared with the violent democrats," he declared, "and unless most of the honest federalists join them at the next election, Mr. Snyder[30] will be our governor, and Dr. Franklin's Constitution [the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776] will again be the Constitution of Pennsylvania."[31]

Snyder was defeated by the moderate Thomas McKean. The radicals launched an attempt to impeach McKean which resulted in a bitter

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[28]Rush to John Adams, April 26, 1810, ibid., 1042.

[29]Rush to John Adams, February 24, 1790, ibid., I, 532.

[30]Simon Snyder was Governor of Pennsylvania from 1808 to 1816. Ibid., II, 900n.

[31]Rush to John Adams, August 14, 1805, ibid., 901.

struggle.[32] During the midst of this turmoil, Rush declared that in reflecting upon the years of the American Revolution, "I often wished for those ten thousand hours that I wasted in public pursuits and that I now see did no permanent work for my family nor my country."[33]

It should also be briefly noted that Rush was dissatisfied with what he believed to be Pennsylvania's insignificant role in the national government. He deplored the fact that there were no Pennsylvanians prominent in the Federal government. Albert Gallatin, Secretary of the Treasury from 1801 to 1813, was from Pennsylvania, but Rush agreed with those who said Gallatin "was a 'no state man' and that he belongs to the Union as much as Pennsylvania."[34]

Perhaps the most significant aspect of both state and national politics that disturbed Rush was the rise of intense partisanism. He had believed that with the establishment of proper republican governments there would be no need for political parties. By 1798 he was thoroughly disgusted with the "politicomania" of the Federalists and Democratic-Republicans.[35] Rush's disillusionment with the "sin of party spirit" remained with him until his death in 1813.[36] In 1808

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[32]McKean was eventually exonerated of all charges and retired at the end of his term in 1808. In that year, Simon Snyder was elected Governor by a substantial margin. Rush's prediction that the Constitution of 1790 would be replaced, however, did not become reality. Ibid., 900n.

[33]Rush to John Adams, April 22, 1807, ibid., 941.

[34]Gallatin was a native of Switzerland. Rush to John Adams, December 26, 1811, ibid., 1116. See also, Rush to John Adams, February 8, 1813, ibid., 1182.

[35]Rush to Ashton Alexander, February 20, 1798, ibid., 797.

[36]Fischer has noted that after 1800, "a younger generation of

he illustrated for John Adams the reason for his attitude toward the parties:

> Could the absurdities and contradictions in principle and conduct of our two great parties for the last 12 years be laid before the world in a candid and dispassionate manner, we should be ashamed to call ourselves men. The disputes of children about their nuts and gingerbread have less folly and wickedness in them.
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> From a dozen instances of what I allude to, I shall select but two. When the Spaniards shut the port of New Orleans against our vessels, the cry of the whole Federal party was for war and the acquisition of Louisissiana by force. Its immense resources in West and East India produce were enumerated in long, sensible, and eloquent speeches and pamphlets. When that country was purchased by Mr. Jefferson, the same party condemned his conduct, depreciated the trade, soil, and people of that country, and represented it as a millstone about the neck of the United States. In the year 1798 the Democrats opposed the election of Mr. Ross [James Ross of Pittsburgh--repeatedly an unsuccessful Federalist candidate for Governor of Pennsylvania] upon the grounds of his being a Deist. The Federalists either denied it or said his religious tenets had nothing to do with his qualifications for governor. In 1799 the Federalists opposed the election of Mr. Jefferson upon the ground of his being a Deist. The Democrats denied it, or said his infidel principles had nothing to do with his qualifications for President!!![37]

Rush felt that most of the true Whigs of the Revolution were repelled by the partisan politics of the early national period. He was certain that "the most active men of both parties were brought into life by the sunshine and safety of the peace of 1780 or by the prosperity or poverty which have been produced by it."[38] Indeed, for Rush

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Federalists--the most obscure leaders of a major party . . . deliberately tried to create popularly oriented vote-seeking political organizations which might defeat Jefferson with his own weapons." Fischer, Revolution of American Conservatism, pp. xviii-xix.

[37]Rush to John Adams, September 22, 1808, Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 984.

[38]Rush to John Adams, April 1, 1809, ibid., 1002.

it seemed "as if there was but two vices in the United States--and that is the vice of Federalism and the vice of Democracy."[39] The blame for these vices, he asserted, must rest upon the funding system: "I have seen this spirit pervade and govern our elections ever since the establishment of the funding system. . . ." Hence Rush had "been unable to give a vote for either party since that event so inauspicious! to the morals and liberties of our country."[40]

In addition to his feeling that active partisans were more concerned about securing power than the welfare of the nation, Rush was especially disgusted with the tendency for the two parties to identify with either Great Britain or France. His strong sense of nationalism and patriotism was gravely offended. He therefore declared to John Adams in 1809 that "we are not 'all Federalists and all Republicans,' but we are (with the exception of a few retired and growling neutrals) all Frenchmen or all Englishmen." Men of both groups had advantages over Adams and Rush, for "by not eating of the onions of either of them, we are constantly exposed to the offensive breath of them both."[41]

Rush was greatly concerned about what he viewed as the degeneration of American society in the 1790's and early 1800's. He was especially chagrined with the "old tories" regaining influence in the

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[39]Rush to John Adams, January 13, 1809, ibid., 994.

[40]Rush to John Adams, October 2, 1810, ibid., 1067.

[41]Rush to John Adams, March 13, 1809, ibid., 998. Rush again mourned in 1812 that "we are nearly all British Federalists or French Democrats." Rush to John Adams, August 21, 1812, ibid., 1161. See also, Rush to John Montgomery, July 5, 1808, ibid., 969.

new republic. As early as 1790, he observed that the "tories . . . have come forth in a single column in" Pennsylvania, and "they have been joined by many of the most respectable republican whig characters among us."[42] Within a few years Rush came to feel that former Loyalists dominated the Federalist party, and he soon came to believe that their influence pervaded the entire society. He was particularly shocked when Samuel Seabury, a Loyalist in the Revolution, became the first Protestant Episcopal bishop in the United States.[43]

By 1811, Rush was attributing to the vindictive power of the old tories the fact that "there was scarcely a single deceased person that was active in our Revolution that has not died poor in Pennsylvania. Witness Read, Mifflin, Morris, Wilson, and many others of less note."[44] Thus he could ask John Adams: "Do you think my lancet and mercury would have filled Fenno's and Porcupine's papers with volumes of scandal against me had I not subscribed the instrument which separated our country from Great Britain?" Indeed, in 1811 Rush asserted that he continued to feel the "malice" of the old tories of Philadelphia.[45]

Rush was further discouraged with what he viewed as the decline of republican virtue in the United States. Again he looked to the funding system as the major cause of this moral declension: "it created our cannine appitite for wealth." Furthermore, "it reduced

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[42]Rush to John Adams, February 24, 1790, ibid., I, 532.

[43]Rush to John Adams, April 5, 1808, ibid., II, 962.

[44]Rush to John Adams, August 19, 1811, ibid., 1095.

[45]Rush to John Adams, August 6, 1811, ibid., 1092. See also, Rush to Thomas Jefferson, August 26, 1811, ibid., 1099.

regular industry and virtuous economy to the rank of sniveling virtues, and rendered 'enterprise and successful speculation' the only mark of civic worth in our country."[46]

The lust for money which Rush felt the funding system had engendered was especially repugnant to him. His indignation toward speculators in the 1790's has been discussed above. By 1808 he could gloomily assert that the United States was a "bedollared nation." In walking the streets of Philadelphia, he noted that "not only our streets but our parlors are constantly vocal with the language of a broker's office, and even at convivial dinners 'Dollars' are a standing dish upon which all feed with rapacity and gluttony."[47] For Rush, "a city in flames kindled by the hand of war" was not "so melancholy a sight as a whole nation absorbed in the love of money. . . ."[48]

In generalizing about the society of the entire republic, Rush was relying primarily upon his observations in Philadelphia. He was certain to be disappointed in what he saw, especially in view of the high opinion he had held of his native city. In 1790 Rush strongly advocated moving the national capital from New York to Philadelphia. He was sure that there was "more republicanism" in Philadelphia "than in any other city in the United States." This was, he opined, the result of "the influence of the Quakers and Germans on our manners."[49]

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[46]Rush to John Adams, December 21, 1810, ibid., 1073. See also, Rush to John Adams, January 10, 1811, ibid., 1077.

[47]Rush to John Adams, June 13, 1808, ibid., 966.

[48]Rush to John Adams, August 8, 1812, ibid., 1158.

[49]Rush to James Madison, July 17, 1790, ibid., I, 568. Rush accordingly informed Madison that should the Capital be moved to

Ethel Rasmusson has vividly described the social whirl of Philadelphia in the 1790's. The "conspicuous consumption" of the city's local gentry, headed by the families of Robert Morris and William Bingham, was augmented by "the social eddies created by the federal officers" of the central government.[50] Mrs. John Adams, whose moral outlook was similar to that of Rush, stated bluntly in 1797 that Philadelphia had become "as vile and debauched as the city of London."[51] Rush felt in 1809 that the society of his city had degenerated to the point that men who "outroyal in toryism the British nation, the British ministry, and even the British king himself . . . hold in a degee the balance, if not of power, certainly of fashion and character in our city."[52]

Rush also viewed the "worshiping" of Washington as significant evidence of a corrupted society. In 1798 he complained that "we have not instituted divine honors to certain virtues in imitation of Paris, but we ascribe all the attributes of the Deity to the name of General

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Philadelphia, "the influence of our city will be against the Secretary's system of injustice and corruption." Rush to James Madison, April 10, 1790, ibid., 542. See also, Rush to John Adams, March 19, 1789, ibid., 506-07.

[50]Ethel E. Rasmusson, "Democratic Environment--Aristocratic Aspiration," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, XC (April, 1966), 160.

[51]Mrs. Adams to Mrs. Cranch, May 24, 1794, Stewart Mitchell, ed., New Letters of Abigail Adams, 1788-1801 (Boston, 1947), p. 91, quoted in Rasmusson, "Democratic Environment--Aristocratic Aspiration," p. 158.

[52]Rush to John Adams, May 5, 1809, Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 1005.

Washington."[53] Such adulation was most unrepublican in Rush's eyes. Furthermore, he was perhaps a bit envious of the recognition which Washington had received for his role in the Revolution. Hence Rush declared to John Adams in 1805 that while the French and American Revolutions differed in many ways, "they were alike in one particular--the former gave all its power to a single man, the latter all its fame."[54] In July, 1812, Rush was certain that the worshipping of Washington was one of the provocations of the "wrath of Heaven to inflict us with this war [of 1812]."[55]

Rush also expressed deep disillusionment with the nation's reaction to the international situation in the years prior to the War of 1812, and to the War itself. In 1808, he strongly favored Jefferson's Embargo as a means of protecting the nation's honor while avoiding war. The Embargo, he declared, was "a wise, a just, and a necessary measure. . . ."[56] Indeed, Rush was quite indignant at those who refused to wholeheartedly support the Embargo: "Great clamors are heard everywhere against the Embargo. How different were the feelings and conduct of our citizens in 1774 upon the subject of the . . .

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[53]Rush to William Marshall, September 15, 1798, ibid., 807.

[54]Rush to John Adams, August 14, 1805, ibid., 902. In 1811 Rush observed that "there is not a single Washington among all the heros of the bible. . . . They are true because they are natural. . . ." Events are ascribed to God and "the weaknesses and vices of their characters are always mentioned." Rush to John Adams, August 19, 1811, ibid., 1094.

[55]Rush to John Adams, July 8, 1812, ibid., 1146.

[56]Rush to John Adams, September 16, 1808, ibid., 979.

nonimportation act of that memorable year."[57] Those who violated the Embargo were roundly condemned by Rush.[58]

By March, 1809, Rush's nationalism was overcoming his pacifism. Thus he declared to John Adams that:

> The principal evil of war is death. Now vice I believe to be a greater evil than death, and this is generated more by funding systems, banks, embargoes, and nonintercourse laws than by war. . . . What do you suppose were the number of false oaths produced by our late embargo? And what will be the number of the same crimes from the operation of our present nonintercourse law? Greater probably than the amount in number and in enormity of all the crimes that are perpetrated by the fighting part of an army in twenty years. . . .[59]

Rush considered both George III and Napoleon to be the "scourges of the human race." As they continued to "trample upon the rights of individuals and nations," he became convinced that Americans of the Revolutionary period would have been ready to fight to protect their rights and independence. Rush imagined that he saw the patriots and heroes of that era standing before him, "some of them just emerging from their graves. . . ." He continued:

> They hear of British and French insults and agressions and of our dismantled navy and unprotected commerce. They inquire into the conduct and character of the members of the present Congress. . . . They recover the paleness of death in hearing the details of the degeneracy and depravity of the country for which they toiled and bled. Their looks indicate a mixture of grief and indignation. Behold, they tread back their steps and descend with haste and pleasure to their graves. . . .[60]

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[57]Rush to John Adams, February 18, 1808, ibid., 960. See also, Rush to John Adams, July 13, 1808, ibid., 971.

[58]Rush to John Adams, April 5, 1808, ibid., 964.

[59]Rush to John Adams, March 13, 1809, ibid., 998.

[60]Rush to John Adams, July 4, 1810, ibid., 1054.

By May, 1812, Rush was ready to fight both England and France, for "a declaration of war against France as well as England would probably unite us and fill the treasury of the United States." Furthermore, "it would render a war wholly defensive, . . . make both nations feel our importance, and . . . produce such a reaction in domestic manufactures and internal commerce as would soon make us a great and independent nation."[61] By this time Rush viewed war as virtually inevitable, for it "is the condition by which" nations "navigate the ocean and preserve their territory from incursion." To expect "perpetual peace . . . among beings constituted as we are," he noted, "is as absurd as to expect to discover perpetual motion."[62] Rush was convinced that a "field of battle covered with dead bodies" was not "so awful a spectacle as a nation deliberately prefering slavery to liberty, and peace and commerce to national independence."[63]

Rush soon limited his zeal for war by applying it only to Great Britain instead of both France and England. Perhaps he saw the folly involved in the United States facing conflict with two major powers who were already at war with each other. He also came to view British offenses as more serious than the French: "France takes and burns our property only; Britain robs us of our citizens on the high seas, murders our women and children on our frontiers, as well as robs us of our property."[64]

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[61]Rush to John Adams, May 5, 1812, ibid., 1133-34.

[62]Rush to John Adams, July 18, 1812, ibid., 1154.

[63]Rush to John Adams, August 8, 1812, ibid., 1159.

[64]Rush to John Adams, July 8, 1812, ibid., 1147.

Rush saw many parallels between the War of the American Revolution and the War of 1812. In 1807 he observed that Great Britain was using "exactly" the same arguments to justify her right "to tyrannize over our ships upon the ocean" that she used to "defend her right to tax us. . . ."[65] By 1811 he was wondering if the United States was "upon the eve of a declaration of independence upon G. Britain being repeated. . . . by the mouths of our cannon?"[66] He was soon certain that "the independence of the United States must be defended. . . ."[67]

Rush was appalled at the divisive impact of the question of war with England. He was struck with his observation that "the sentiments and language of a certain class of citizens upon the subject of a war with G. Britain accord with the sentiments of their ancestors in politics in the years 1773 and 1774."[68] In June, 1812, Rush noted that the Declaration of War, passed on the 18th, had "produced . . . no change . . . in the minds of those who were opposed to it."[69] Particularly distressing to him was news of the opposition to the war in New England, especially Massachusetts, for this region had been the bulwark of the Revolution.[70]

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[65]Rush to John Adams, December 15, 1807, ibid., 959.

[66]Rush to Thomas Jefferson, August 26, 1811, ibid., 1100.

[67]Rush to John Adams, January 15, 1812, ibid., 1117.

[68]Rush to John Adams, June 4, 1812, ibid., 1139. He had earlier opined that the "appearance of a resuscitation of the spirit of 1774 at Washington" would end "in speeches, embassies, negotations, and a repetition of insults and injuries." Rush to John Adams, January 15, 1812, ibid., 1117.

[69]Rush to John Adams, June 27, 1812, ibid., 1145.

[70]He also observed that Pennsylvania was badly divided: "Alas! our poor country!" Rush to John Adams, July 8, 1812, ibid., 1146.

Even among those who supported the war, Rush dejectedly observed, it was not the same as during the earlier era: "One of the most necessary ingredients in the apparatus of war is still wanting in our country. I mean war passions. No person appears to feel them as we felt them in 1774, 1775, and 1776."[71] Rush believed it would have been "more in unison with our habits and principles, had Congress instead of declaring war sent an advertisement" as follows to be published in all the European newspapers:

> For Sale
> to the highest bidder
> The United States of America
>
> Terms of Payment--A bank in every village in the country . . . and a dozen in every city; commerce with the whole world; a whiskey distillery on every farm; and a charter conveying to the whole nation and to every individual in it the title of 'Disciples of Washington'. . . .[72]

Although Rush died April 19, 1813, he observed enough of the War of 1812 to become dissatisfied with its conduct. As early as August, 1812, he declared his disapprobation of "the manner in which" the war "has been, is, and will be conducted. . . . Alas! it has none of the properties of the war of 1775."[73] His main grievance was the emphasis placed upon invading Canada. He favored the creation of a strong naval force and carrying the battle with Britain to the seas. Rush was certain that "the finger of Heaven" pointed "to the ocean as the theater on which America must again contend for her independence."[74] Moreover,

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[71]Ibid., 1148.

[72]Rush to John Adams, July 18, 1812, ibid., 1154.

[73]Rush to John Adams, August 8, 1812, ibid., 1157.

[74]Rush to John Adams, January 8, 1813, ibid., 1175.

he argued that a navy "would never be dangerous to liberty."[75]

Rush viewed the agitation for conquering Canada with disfavor on several grounds. "As a republic we cannot hold it as a vassal province," he argued, "and as a member of the Union, what can be expected from a representation composed of Englishmen and Frenchmen?"[76] In addition, the invasion appeared "to involve in it too much of the conquering spirit of the Old World. . . ." Furthermore, he expressed the idea that the perpetuation of republican institutions and the Union might be dependent upon the "circumambient pressure of England on the north and east, and of Spain, France, and Indians on the south and west. . . ."[77]

Despite the disillusionment of his old age, Rush never lost his concern for the well-being of the republic, or his hope for the future. Although he had completely withdrawn from active involvement in politics, and from time to time expressed his disinterest in national and state partisan matters, he was always able to converse intelligently with John Adams on national politics and occasionally informed Adams of the details of Pennsylvania partisan activities.

In addition to keeping his eye on politics, Rush was also intensely interested in bringing about a reconciliation between his estranged friends Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. He began his effort in October, 1809, by relating a "dream" which constituted an eloquent plea

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[75]Rush to Thomas Jefferson, March 15, 1813, ibid., 1188. See also, Rush to John Adams, November 4, 1812, ibid., 1165.

[76]Rush to John Adams, November 17, 1812, ibid., 1167.

[77]Rush to Thomas Jefferson, March 15, 1813, ibid., 1187. See also, Rush to John Adams, November 17, 1812, ibid., 1168.

for Adams to rejuvenate his friendship with Jefferson. Rush was finally successful in this effort in 1811.[78]

Although Rush was discouraged with the condition of the United States during the latter years of his life, he remained hopeful that someday the Revolution would be truly completed with the creation of his ideal republic. In 1803 he declared to Thomas Jefferson that he still continued in his "abstracted situation and private pursuits in life to prefer it [republicanism] . . . as most consistent with the rational nature and the moral and religious obligations of man."[79]

In 1811 Rush's optimism for the future certainly balanced his unfavorable view of the contemporary situation. Thus he asserted to John Adams that "the seeds of truth upon all subjects are imperishable." While some truths "yield their increase suddenly," Rush declared, "others, like the acorn, require centuries to bring them to perfection." A good example of this, he continued, was that "all the seeds of all the liberty that now exists in England and the United States were sowed by Hampden, Ludlow, and others 160 years ago in Great Britain." Indeed, the more "profound" opinions are "and the more interesting they are to human happiness, the more slowly they come to maturity."[80] Obviously Rush felt that his conception of

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[78]Rush to John Adams, October 17, 1809, ibid., 1021-22. See also, Lyman H. Butterfield, "The Dream of Benjamin Rush: Reconciliation of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson," Yale Review, XL (December, 1950), 297-319.

[79]Rush to Thomas Jefferson, March 12, 1803, Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 859.

[80]Rush to John Adams, June 28, 1811, ibid., 1086-87.

true republicanism was a profound truth which would eventually be accepted by posterity.

To promote the eventual realization of his republican dream, Rush proposed to John Adams in 1811 that the former President leave behind a "posthumous address to the citizens of the United States" which was to espouse "all those great national, social, domestic, and religious virtues which alone can make a people free, great, and happy." Adams was ideal for such a work, he felt, because his "integrity had never been called in question or even suspected," and his death would be "an object of universal attention." Rush did not hesitate to mention what he felt Adams should include in this work. His suggestions included stressing: the importance of religion and public worship, "early marriage and fidelity to the marriage bed," the importance of female education, the evils of banks and funding systems, the benefits of free schools ("Suffrage should never be permitted to a man that could not read or write"), and the evils of "ardent spirits." Furthermore, Rush noted that he had only "hinted" at a few things that should be included.[81]

Obviously Rush still felt that Samuel Adams' "Christian Sparta" could be realized on the American continent. In his twilight years he became disillusioned with American society, but not with his revolutionary ideals. He always believed that given the proper mixture of religion, education, reform, and republican governments, a city upon a hill--his republican utopia--could be created.

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[81]Rush to John Adams, August 20, 1811, ibid., 1095-96.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Earlier in this essay it was asserted that Benjamin Rush was consistent in his political thought. Indeed, he was both consistent and complex, maintaining close friendships with both John Adams and Thomas Jefferson even during the years that they were political foes. Rush was closer to Jefferson in his political thought, except for his predilection toward strong central government. He was more akin to Adams, however, in his moral outlook and temperament. Many contemporaries viewed Rush as vacillating in his thought, and some historians have also interpreted him as being inconsistent. A more correct view, however, is to see Rush not as a radical or an arch-conservative, but as occupying a middle ground between these extremes. Rather than declaring him to have been unstable in his political thought, perhaps it would be more correct to assert that Rush's apparent shifting in outlook was a response to the changing political climate from the Revolution of 1776 to the "Revolution of 1800."

Rush was staunchly opposed to those who advocated hereditary institutions, as well as to those who pressed for the establishment of simple democracies. "The principles and claims of monarchists and democrats" appeared to him to "partake of equal absurdity and madness."[1]

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[1]Rush to Mrs. Rush, August 26, 1798, Butterfield, ed., Letters, II, 803.

Rush had his own republican ideal which he hoped would become reality in America. Thus when conservatives stood in the way of his utopian goal, as in Pennsylvania prior to the Declaration of Independence, he would join with moderates or even radicals to combat his foes. When the Pennsylvania Radicals gained the upper hand in that state, Rush again saw his republican ideal threatened and joined with moderates and conservatives to oppose the radical Constitution of 1776. He also strongly supported the Federal Constitution because it created a powerful central government that would bring stability to a land suffering from an excess of liberty. This new government was powerful, but also safe due to its system of separation of powers and checks and balances.

During the 1790's, however, Rush was repulsed by Alexander Hamilton's funding system and by "high toned federal politics." Furthermore, his old colleague, John Adams, changed his outlook toward the common people's ability to support republican governments without hereditary institutions. Rush, however, remained rigid in his rejection of monarchy or hereditary aristocracy--they had no place in his republican scheme--and soon discovered that he had much in common with Thomas Jefferson.

Rush's attention was also directed toward Europe during the 1790's, as he believed that the French Revolution was the harbinger of republicanism for the Old World. Indeed, he felt that it had been inspired by the American Revolution, and like its New World counterpart, the French Revolution also promoted the cause of virtue and heaven. It was during this decade that Rush's idealism reached its peak.

During the later years of his life, Rush became quite disillusioned. The failure of a viable republican government to emerge from

the turmoil of the French Revolution, and the persecution he was subjected to by Cobbett and Fenno played a significant role in his disillusionment; but he was also distraught for another reason--the politics and society of the United States were not what he had hoped they would be.

Rush had never forsaken his Revolutionary vision of an American republican utopia. He had worked to bring his dream into existence by promoting the establishment of proper state and national governments, strongly advocating universal republican education, campaigning against slavery and spirituous liquors, and pressing for penal reform. As he viewed the rise of partisan politics and what he considered to be the degeneration of American society, he began to wonder if his labor had been in vain.

However, the flame of idealism which had motivated Rush throughout his life was not completely extinguished by disappointment in these twilight years. He still hoped that Americans would acquire a truly national character, and virtually all citizens would become pious, hard-working and frugal. Idleness would be a carefully avoided sin. With such productive citizens and abundant resources, the commerce, agriculture and manufacturing of the United States would prosper. Furthermore, nearly all men would be intelligent voters, knowledgeable on local, state and national issues. There would be no need for factions or parties, for Americans would endeavor to serve their country rather than the particular interest of a group or faction.

Hence Rush clung to his utopian republican concept, which he had conceived prior to and during the War of the Revolution, until his death in 1813. The republic that he envisioned seems to have been

beyond human attainment, and one might perhaps be tempted to dismiss Rush as an idealistic dreamer. To do this, however, would be a sad mistake, for he was an important link in an American reform tradition which endured from the Puritan's attempt to establish a city upon a hill until the Civil War. In the decades immediately preceding that tragic confrontation, crusaders such as William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Dorothea Dix, and others not only adopted many of Rush's causes, but resembled him in their idealism and moralistic fervor. Benjamin Rush was indeed certain that his ideal society was favored by God and was the best possible for mankind.

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