

*the points o' Faith,
n pin'
ow wild in wrath
's jumpan!*

h Irish laity loved it, and it became the hallmark
merican—religion from then until the present. It
een the Presbyterian “People of the New Light,”
hemselves, and the intense Protestant revivalism
30s and 1740s, which historians call the Great

ng transformed the culture of colonial America,
s with the spark of promised redemption, and
ge orthodox assumptions and institutions. It set
ican Revolution. The man most often associated
land minister Jonathan Edwards, and his church
achusetts. But in fact Scottish Presbyterians were
movement from the start.

ing's basic notion was that the past had passed,
e with possibilities for celebrating the glory of
ls preached that the coming of Christ's king-
would begin in America. Anyone—not just
rotestant sects, even the hated Episcopalians—
od's grace; all the righteous would eventually
s of denomination or place of origin, to form a
ommonwealth.” Righteousness, not birth or sta-
place in the coming kingdom of God. It was a
echoed the themes of Scottish Calvinism since
sing, then, that Presbyterians became its most
r that the arrival of the Ulster Scots in the mid-
vania, New Jersey, Virginia, and Maryland pro-

explosion were minister William Tennant and
ar has concluded, “The Tennants were probably
ant clerical force in the progress of the Great

Awakening.” William Tennant, Sr., was born in Northern Ireland, edu-
cated in Edinburgh, and in 1704 ordained as a minister in the Anglican
Church. However, the moment he set foot in America, in 1718, he felt
drawn to the faith of his ancestors and his wife's family. By 1720 he was
a Presbyterian minister in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, at the edge of
the frontier, and in the midst of a thronging Scotch-Irish immigrant
community in Neshaminy.

He soon realized that he had far more Ulster Scots parishioners than
he could deal with, and far fewer trained clergy than he had counted on.
So he decided to open his own school of theology in a log cabin (natu-
rally) next to his church, which became known as “Log College.” It was
the first Presbyterian academy in the middle colonies. One of its first
graduates was his son Gilbert. Hard and fearless, Gilbert Tennant would
have made a worthy companion to Andrew Jackson, or perhaps William
Wallace. “Taller than common size,” he was “a man of great Fortitude, a
lover of God, ardently jealous for His glory, and anxious for the salva-
tion of sinners.” He went on to Yale College and returned to
Pennsylvania to cheer the revivalist tour of George Whitefield in 1740,
which ignited the Great Awakening in Protestant congregations all
along the eastern seaboard.

It was a crucial moment. The Pennsylvania synod had decided to
shut down William Tennant's Log College because of his aggressive
assertion that the clergy should inspire, not just rule over, its congrega-
tion. He defied them and set off a split within the Presbyterian Church
in the colony, between the orthodox Old Side, and the New Side, who
recruited their laity into their cause. By 1744, Gilbert Tennant was the
New Side minister for the church in Philadelphia and the Tennant ver-
sion of Presbyterian “New Light” was reaching out to New Jersey and
New England.

To inspire students and future ministers for the New Side, the
Tennants and their allies decided to create a new Presbyterian college in
New Jersey. It opened its doors in 1747, and eventually moved to the
town of Prince Town, or Princeton. It was supposed to be a revivalist
antidote to the “corruption” of institutions such as Harvard and Yale.
The college even chose Jonathan Edwards as its honorary president,

although he died less than three months after moving to Princeton to assume his duties. A new president—Aaron Burr, Sr., father of the future vice president of the United States—was named, and by then the schism between Old Side and New Side Presbyterians was beginning to heal. Princeton became a haven for revivalist religion everywhere, regardless of denomination: even the Baptist leader Isaac Backus encouraged sons of his flock to go there.

One alumnus was a young Philadelphian named Benjamin Rush. Although Rush was English, not Scottish, by origin, he was the first of a succession of Americans for whom a Scottish education was the transforming event of their lives. He spent his childhood surrounded by key figures in the Presbyterian Great Awakening.* When he went to Princeton the college president was Samuel Davies, who had spent years of his life preaching the gospel in the Scotch-Irish backcountry of Virginia. He stressed to Rush's Class of 1760 "the vast importance and absolute Necessity of entering upon Public Life with A NEW HEART and A NEW SPIRIT." After graduation, Rush apprenticed with Philadelphia's leading physician, John Redman, who was also a Log College graduate. Other doctors he met encouraged Rush to travel to Scotland to study medicine, and in 1767 he left for Edinburgh. It was a trip that would change his life—and incidentally change the course of education in America.

He arrived in Liverpool on October 21. Thanks to Benjamin Franklin, who was then living in London, Rush had letters of introduction to various Edinburgh luminaries (during Franklin's visit in 1759, he had been given the keys to the city). He even met David Hume at a dinner party—"his person was rather ungenteel and clumsy," Rush wrote in his diary, "he spoke but little, but what he said was always pertinent and sensible." However, Hume's evident religious skepticism, and the relaxed attitude about religion generally among Hume's Moderate friends, disturbed the young Benjamin Rush, suffused as he was with the ardent afterglow of the Great Awakening.

*When Gilbert Tennant died in 1764, Rush wrote a glowing eulogy in his memory—it was his first published work.

From that point of view, he felt more tradition-minded Popular Party, especially Witherspoon. Witherspoon was forty-three when he came to Princeton, and he was a strong, energetic, squat-faced man with a skilled theologian and a brilliant I ribbed, fire-eating reactionary, however. He was a friend of William Robertson, Hugh Blair, and the others who had received the same humanistic education in Scotland. Witherspoon grasped the strengths of the Scottish Presbyterianism better than most, and he had used this to great effect in his *Ecclesiastical Characterist* that had made him famous and admired, even in America.

It was Witherspoon who had pointed out to the young Benjamin Rush the Presbyterian Church of Scotland and the importance of its role in society, reinforced by their dependence on power as Lord Islay. He took the title "Popular Party" and showed that low Evangelicals were truly preachers to the people, not shopkeepers and apprentices and tenant farmers. He was the backbone of the Scottish Kirk. The people's ministers were, he believed, and in how the

It was the sort of forthright democratic spirit of the New Light, could identify with, and explained to Witherspoon, his visit to Paisley. Rush was there on business. He was there to accept the post he had been offered a year earlier: the new president of Princeton College in 1768.

II

Princeton, or Nassau Hall as it was sometimes called, had had a run of bad luck. It had gone through twenty years—one of whom, Jonathan Edwards, had been president for three months after accepting the post. The college needed someone who could give it continuity and stability

in three months after moving to Princeton to be president—Aaron Burr, Sr., father of the second President of the United States—was named, and by then the Second Great Awakening and New Side Presbyterians was beginning to make a haven for revivalist religion everywhere, and even the Baptist leader Isaac Backus had to go there.

A young Philadelphian named Benjamin Rush, Irish, not Scottish, by origin, he was the first of us for whom a Scottish education was the transference. He spent his childhood surrounded by key figures of the Great Awakening.* When he went to Princeton, his resident was Samuel Davies, who had spent his life preaching the gospel in the Scotch-Irish backcountry of Virginia. Rush's Class of 1760 "the vast importance and bearing upon Public Life with A NEW HEART." After graduation, Rush apprenticed with a physician, John Redman, who was also a Log Cabin doctor; he met encouraged Rush to travel to Europe, and in 1767 he left for Edinburgh. It was a turning point in his life—and incidentally change the course of

the movement on October 21. Thanks to Benjamin Rush, who was in London, Rush had letters of introduction to luminaries (during Franklin's visit in 1759, he was in the city). He even met David Hume at a dinner. "as rather ungenteel and clumsy," Rush wrote Hume, "a little, but what he said was always pertinent." Hume's evident religious skepticism, and the religious elation generally among Hume's Moderate friends, made Benjamin Rush, suffused as he was with the spirit of the Great Awakening.

In 1764, Rush wrote a glowing eulogy in his memoirs.

From that point of view, he felt more comfortable with the Kirk's tradition-minded Popular Party, especially the party's champion, John Witherspoon. Witherspoon was forty-three years old when Rush met him at his fast-growing parish in Paisley, near Glasgow. Witherspoon was a strong, energetic, squat-faced man with thick, bushy eyebrows; he was a skilled theologian and a brilliant preacher. He was no rock-ribbed, fire-eating reactionary, however. He had been the classmate of William Robertson, Hugh Blair, and the other Moderates, and had received the same humanistic education in the classics, philosophy, and science. Witherspoon grasped the strengths and foibles of his Moderate opponents better than most, and he had used his knowledge with devastating effect in his *Ecclesiastical Characteristics*, the anti-Moderate satire that had made him famous and admired, even in Moderate circles.

It was Witherspoon who had pointed out that the new "enlightened" Presbyterian Church of Robertson and the rest was really a kind of elitism, reinforced by their dependence on powerful political patrons such as Lord Islay. He took the title "Popular Party" with pride: he and his fellow Evangelicals were truly preachers to the people, the farmers and shopkeepers and apprentices and tenant laborers who made up the backbone of the Scottish Kirk. The people deserved a say in who their ministers were, he believed, and in how the Gospel would be preached.

It was the sort of forthright democratic attitude Benjamin Rush, son of the New Light, could identify with, and he was not alone. For, as he explained to Witherspoon, his visit to Paisley was not a pleasure trip. Rush was there on business. He was there to persuade Witherspoon to accept the post he had been offered a year ago November, to become the new president of Princeton College in America.

II

Princeton, or Nassau Hall as it was sometimes called after its principal building, had had a run of bad luck. It had gone through five presidents in twenty years—one of whom, Jonathan Edwards, had died less than three months after accepting the post. The college needed a president who could give it continuity and stability, and its trustees believed