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John Erskine—

A Scottish Footnote to the American Revolution

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Dr. De Jong has published articles and reviews in a number of journals and papers. He has published his dissertation and contributed thirty articles to The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church. Most recently he has written a chapter on seventeenth and eighteenth century missions for a forthcoming book on church history.

Church history is filled with forgotten, unsung figures. They are the men and women who made significant contributions to church life and religious thought in their own day, but who have since receded into the shadows cast by a few giants. Now, two, four and six, or twenty, forty and sixty generations later—for it actually makes no difference how long ago they lived—they are known only to the historical specialist. Even to him they are

usually little more than nodding acquaintances that pop up sporadically at some church council or as contributors to a theological debate. At such chance encounters even the specialist must usually go out of his way to meet them. For often they are defiantly secretive, and only patient pursuit of their identity and contributions through manuscripts and out of print books is rewarded with anything more than a polite exchange of scholarly

pleasantries. To their ranks undoubtedly belongs John Erskine of late eighteenth century Scotland.

Surveys of Scottish church history have, generally speaking, hurried over Erskine. Gordon Donaldson's slim, topical treatment of sixteen centuries of Christianity in Scotland finds no occasion to squeeze in Erskine.¹ Less focused, more general surveys do mention him, sometimes with high though brief praise. George Grubb calls him one of the most notable examples of Christian leadership in the country during the last half of the eighteenth century.² More recently J. H. S. Burleigh has observed that in his day Erskine was "respected by everyone as scholar, preacher, and saint."³ G. D. Henderson's study of Jonathan Edwards' contact with and influence on Scotland duly recognizes the significant role played by Erskine in keeping alive this trans-Atlantic dialogue.⁴ In an earlier chapter in the same volume this historian discusses him as the highly esteemed leader of the later evangelicals.⁵ Specialized studies on the ecclesiastical parties and struggles of the day and on the rise of missions in late eighteenth century Scotland incorporate John Erskine's ideas and contributions, as well they must. But since his death in 1803 little attention has been attached to Erskine as a subject worthy of study in his own right.⁶ His Theological Dissertations, which went through editions in 1765 and 1809, have long since stopped feeding hungry theological minds. And his occasional pieces and published sermons are virtually forgotten and overlooked by all but the most widely read historians in Scottish church history.

Yet it is this now forgotten man who in the latter decades of the eighteenth century ranked as a leader in Scottish religion and society. From 1767 until his death he was pastor of Old Greyfriars church, one of Edinburgh's most famous places of worship. There he shared the pulpit with the leader of Scotland's theological Moderate party, William

Robertson, who simultaneously functioned as president of the University of Edinburgh. The father of Sir Walter Scott served as one of Erskine's elders. On his excursions into Scotland George Whitefield was careful and wise enough to pay his respects and to spend time in Erskine's home. Almost single-handedly Erskine thwarted the work of John Wesley in Scotland by warning his countrymen of the English preacher's dangerous, Arminian theology. He numbered among his English correspondents and friends such leaders as Philip Doddridge, John Newton, Andrew Fuller and William Warburton. On the floor of General Assembly he boldly contested the likes of "Jupiter" Carlyle. He maintained regular contact with such colonial leaders as Benjamin Coleman, Thomas Prince, Sr. and Jr., and Jonathan Edwards in New England, and with Jonathan Dickinson and Samuel Davies in the Middle Colonies.

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During his lifetime John Erskine ranked among the international leaders of evangelical Christianity. While at home his party was outvoted in the ecclesiastical assemblies, he exercised great influence among the common folk and was treated with respect even by Moderates.

It is the stature of the man during his own lifetime that renders significant three essays written by Erskine on the subject of British-American relations. The first piece was initially published in London

in 1769 and was republished, seemingly in Edinburgh, with an added preface and appendix in May, 1776. Its full title is Shall I Go to War with My American Brethren? A Discourse Addressed to All concerned in determining that Important Question. Although the second publication was not issued until the fall of 1776, in the "Advertisement" Erskine noted that the manuscript had been completed a year earlier, loaned to a friend for perusal and

"One is tempted to minimize these writings of a now overlooked religious leader. Temptation is resisted, however, when the historian considers the state of much bicentennial debate."

reaction, and neglected for a number of months before it was tracked down and returned. He published this one, the lengthiest of the three, anonymously in Edinburgh and called it Reflections on the Rise, Progress, and Probable Consequences of the Present Contentions with the Colonies. The third, though not necessarily in terms of date, was also published sometime in 1776 in Edinburgh. It appeared as The Equity and Wisdom of Administration, In Measures That have unhappily occasioned the American Revolt, Tried by the Sacred Oracles.⁷

One is tempted to minimize these writings of a now overlooked religious leader. Temptation is resisted, however, when the historian considers the state of much bicentennial debate. Sometimes with more heat than light and fueled by generalizations and over-simplifications, academic coffee-table debates have raged between those who view the American

Revolution as the child of the Enlightenment and those who find its spiritual and intellectual roots in the Great Awakening and Puritan traditions. On a more sophisticated level historians more given to emphasize secular aspects of the Revolution have played scholarly tug-of-war with religious historians like Alan Heimert and Sidney Ahlstrom. In Christian circles exponents of the civil religion theory have lamented the naïveté of Christian brothers and sisters who identify the Declaration of Independence with Biblical truth, the American system of government with the will of God, and national prosperity with divine blessing and sanction. Conversely, Christians attempting to live in the spirit of Romans 13 and acknowledging American freedoms and material bounty as God's gifts, wince at accusations that their patriotic sentiments are neo-paganism.

Efforts to sort through the specifics of the Revolutionary era, therefore, are not uncalled for. Going back to the sources and trying to reconstruct and re-evaluate a movement as large and as complex as the birth of American independence in terms of new, fresh data may be the best form of bicentennial celebration. With clear, solid, specific and accurate information on the principal contributors to the Revolutionary drama—information on their motives, sources, positions and influences—a better synthesis of scholarship and a more accurate interpretation of the American Revolution can be hoped for. Towards this goal this paper on John Erskine is offered as a footnote to the American Revolution.

A consideration of Erskine's three tracts on the Revolution ought to be concerned with several questions. The first is, "What was Erskine's position on the revolt of the American colonies against Britain?" This question involves the political, social, economic and theological ingredients in his stance. The second question asks, "Why did he propagandize his position; what did he hope to accomplish by publishing his tracts?" The last

and most difficult to answer of the three questions is, "What effect and results did Erskine's position as circulated by his tracts have?" Important to note are the people whom he hoped to reach and the success he in fact had in appealing to them. It is significant to raise the matter of whether his writings had any other than their intended results. All of these questions come into clearer focus when posed in the context of Erskine's own life. Moreover, these questions need not be addressed in a formal manner or seriatim; they can be best handled in a survey of the content of the three pieces. Our conclusion will consist of summary answers to the questions just posed.

Erskine's Life

The family of Erskine's father was staunchly Presbyterian in religion and Whig in politics. His great-grandfather had sheltered two Presbyterian ministers in "the killing time"⁸ and paid for his conviction by having his estate seized and by being exiled to Holland. His grandfather knew King William personally, was an active participant in the Glorious Revolution of 1688, and resolutely resisted Stuart restoration and trembled at persisting rumors of Jacobite plots. Erskine's father was a distinguished Scottish jurist. His mother likewise came from a family of Whigs and Presbyterians. John Erskine was raised, therefore, with a predilection for the Hanovers and with strong anti-Catholic sentiments. Ecclesiastical patronage went against his Presbyterian grain, and he could always be found closely aligned with the old Reformed, Westminster jus divinum and with the Scottish covenanting position on ecclesiastical life.

Erskine took his theological education at the University of Edinburgh, despite wishes of both his family and his good friends that he pursue a career in law. Licensed by the Presbytery of Dumblane in 1743, Erskine eventually held four pastorates: Kirkintilloch, 1744; Culross,

1753; New Greyfriars, Edinburgh, 1758; and Old Greyfriars, Edinburgh, 1767. Prior to his ordination he expressed himself as opposed to Latitudinarianism, ministerial flirtations with the ideas of Lord Shaftesbury, and the increasingly "paganized clergy" of Scotland.⁹ With the rise of the Moderate party to ecclesiastical dominance, Erskine became their inveterate, if gentlemanly, opponent. With John Witherspoon, whom Erskine succeeded as spokesman for the more orthodox Calvinists when the former left Scotland for New Jersey, he rejected the Deist overtones of the Moderate views of nature, man and history. Erskine undoubtedly concurred with Witherspoon's characterization of the Moderate preacher as one who felt he had to have

the following special marks and signs of a talent for preaching.

1. His subjects must be confined to social duties.
2. He must recommend them only from rational considerations, viz.:--the beauty and comely proportions of virtue and its advantages in the present life without any regard to a future state of more extended self-interest.
3. His authorities must be drawn from heathen writers, none, or as few as possible, from Scripture.
4. He must be very unacceptable to the common people.¹⁰

If Erskine resisted Moderatism, he also rejected the extremism of the Secession movement, led by Ebenezer Erskine, to whom he was not related. Nor did Erskine entertain any fondness for the extremes of the "religious enthusiasm" of the radical revivals. With Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield he argued for a heartfelt religion formed in response to the gospel of God's grace to sinners and manifested in converted lives. He considered himself a thoroughgoing Calvinist in the tradition of Geneva, Knox and Westminster. His theological position he regarded as perfectly consistent with his

involvement in the Cambusland Revival, 1741-1742, in whose defense he wrote a treatise claiming it to be the millennial outpouring of the Spirit.¹¹

During his first charge Erskine began sustained and ever-expanding contact with theologians and pastors of kindred theological convictions. These eighteenth century evangelical Calvinists forged a bond with one another that transcended denominational and political differences. The most significant of Erskine's correspondents have been mentioned above. It is out of this lively exchange of letters and theological writings that Erskine edited and published a number of Jonathan Edwards' works and sent to Andrew Fuller and John Ryland the books that were to stimulate William Carey, the English Baptist, to dedicate his life to missions. Erskine's interest in the broader Calvinistic community motivated him to learn Dutch and German after he had turned sixty. The night he died he had

addresses the imaginations, than the understandings of the people; and which it is easy to separate, both from the business and the duties of human life.¹²

The Three Tracts

Of John Erskine's three tracts on the American Revolution, only the first edition of the first one was written and published at a time when the widening breach between Britain and her American colonies could yet have been bridged by wise British administration and concessions from both sides. When it appeared, colonists still chafed at British restrictions on land development west of the Appalachians, regulation of colonial manufacturing and shipping, and deployment of troops in the colonies. Prime Minister George Grenville had offended colonists by pushing the Navigation Act, the Sugar Act, the Quartering Act and the Stamp Act through

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spent several hours earlier in the evening reading a Dutch theological book he had just received. His contacts abroad are perhaps as good a reflection as any of his general theological position, which Wellwood characterizes in this way,

His general doctrine is Calvinistical. But it is not the vulgar Calvinism, which exhausts itself on intricate and mysterious dogmas; which more frequently

the British Parliament. But by the time Erskine published A Discourse in 1769, the Stamp Act had been repealed, the tax on sugar reduced, and the restrictions on colonial land development loosened. The hated Townshend Acts had been in force for two years, but all of them except the duty on tea would be repealed the following year. There was, therefore, still time for a reconciliation between Britain and her colonies.

Erskine seized the opportunity. But he approached his topic gingerly. Although he admitted that his place was in the pulpit, he also allowed that it was the "right of every free-born Briton" to speak out on politics and the duty of every Christian to be a peacemaker.¹³ He published the piece anonymously and in London, probably so as not to jeopardize his case directed at English politicians by divulging his Scottish identity. He carefully emphasized his deep love and admiration for King George III, the house of Hanover, his country, the liberties he enjoyed and the British emigrants in the New World. Fright for the king and the country compelled him to write! Erskine further noted in his opening paragraphs that, were he able to address his friends and brothers across the Atlantic, he would caution them strongly against rash, doomed opposition of Britain and urge them to make some concessions as a lesser evil than revolt. He admitted, however, that the purpose of this essay was to appeal to those British parliamentarians "whose opinion, or influence may contribute to decide the important question now in agitation...Shall we go to war with our American Brethren, or shall we not?"¹⁴

His own answer was a resounding "No." And the bulk of A Discourse is a series of reasons urging Parliament to take the same position. He argued that a nation ought to go to war only under extreme necessity, for warfare lays desolate man, society and the countryside. Once it has been begun, no one can determine its outcome. It is, therefore, prudent to consider whether the offering of concessions by one or both sides is not the more desirable course. Warfare between kinsmen is particularly shocking. Erskine further reminded his readers that their recent ancestors had supported the Glorious Revolution of 1688 with less cause than the Americans seemed to have. The latter might legitimately fear that taxes once accepted by them would steadily increase and the burden on the

British taxpayer be gradually lessened. He suggested that forcing the colonists to forfeit what they had come to regard as inalienable rights might bring serious consequences. Not only might British commerce, wealth and naval power be greatly reduced. But it was conceivable that colonists would subvert British military leadership to their side with bribes or solicit help from Protestant, European powers. Even victory won after a long, cruel struggle might foster deep animosity that would erupt in later revolt. In a pastoral tone the author reminded his readers,

It is only gaining the heart, that destroys all inclination to revolt. No victories have such irresistible, happy, and abiding effects, as victories gained by clemency and condescension. Princes and states have been taught this by fatal experience, who would not be taught it by reason.¹⁵

Erskine continued his arguments by predicting the drying up of profits from colonial trade and the mounting of huge wartime bills. He saw France's house of Bourbon waiting to benefit from Britain's weakened condition. He found repugnant the prospect of martial law replacing the freedoms currently enjoyed in British dominions. Any tyrant on the British throne might find in Americans out of whom had been squelched the love of liberty willing instruments for repressing the freedoms found in Britain itself. An army used to suppress colonial liberty could just as easily be used to establish a monarch's absolute power at home.

The Whig in John Erskine and his strong admiration for his hearty, independent-minded American friends began to show clearly in his closing arguments. Not only did he recall—with considerable historical absent-mindedness—that until the passage of the Stamp Act Americans had been model subjects and enthusiastically loyal to the crown! But he accused

Grenville of bungling badly by not requesting the colonists to tax themselves as their initiative in helping Britain retire the debts of the French and Indian Wars. With typical Scottish frugality and biting wit he said,

Had Mr. Grenville [Grenville] been as thoroughly acquainted with the genius and temper of the North Americans, as with the state of our finances, probably his demands upon them might have been as lucrative to us, and to them have appeared equitable and constitutional. However, the mother-country has as little reason as the colonies to erect statues to that Gentleman, for sparing the treasures of Britain, at the expence [sic.], at least at the hazard, of her blood.¹⁶

Moreover, it was the height of administrative stupidity to allow consideration of the proposal to send bishops to North America at a time when relations were already severely strained. Erskine regarded this last scheme as not unrelated to various

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indications that there was a new openness to Roman Catholicism developing in England. This he documented. British children, some of them from families in the king's service, were being educated in Catholic schools in Flanders. Jesuits banned in Catholic countries had found

refuge in Britain. Articles in British newspapers had called for full religious toleration of Catholics. Several years before books had been published in London and Oxford denigrating the reformers and extolling Catholicism. Both Roman literature and worship had once again become common in Britain. Fortunately, noted Erskine, the succeeding administration, "as became good Whigs and Protestants, gave a considerable check to the rapid progress of those evils."¹⁷ But even as he wrote, Erskine alerted readers to new Jacobite plots and reports of Canadian papists slinking past dismantled American forts to sow heresy in the Protestant colonies.

Particularly against the background of his latest arguments, Erskine closed with an impassioned plea directed at government officials.

Ye who are now in the administration, guard against the rocks that have proved fatal to some of your predecessors. Beware of a dangerous ill grounded confidence in men, who entertain opinions themselves, or are under the influence or direction of such as entertain opinions, unfriendly to our king, our religion, our liberty. When their words are smoother than oil, war is in their hearts; though, therefore, they speak fair, believe them not; for seven abominations lurk in their breasts.... The happiness of Britain, and her colonies, depends, under God, on their mutual friendship. They can [sic.] gain little by contending. They may lose much.¹⁸

Erskine had begun by quoting Judges 20:28, "Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease?" He closed by citing Judges 21:6, "The children of Israel repented themselves for Benjamin their brother." The implication was clear. As Israel showed Benjamin compassion

after their differences with them had been resolved, Britain ought to forgive her impetuous colonists and restrain herself from military retribution. It would be a mark of God's people!

It is difficult to assess the impact Erskine's essay had on its intended audience. Although many of his fellow Scots, particularly in the established church, did not share his sentiment,¹⁹ Erskine saw his A Discourse echoed by a flood of Non-conformist and even by some Methodist literature in Britain during the next decade.²⁰ Tracts such as Erskine's, and perhaps even the specific one that we have just considered, must have had some moderating influence on Parliament. For after the repeal of all but one of the Townshend Acts in 1770, it showed patience and restraint for the next four years. The battle of wills was resumed with a vengeance after the Boston Tea Party in December, 1773, and with Parliament's retaliatory Intolerable Acts in 1774. From the new escalation of hostilities there could be no turning back. In the meanwhile Erskine's tract may have helped stave off the inevitable conflict.

By the time Erskine reissued A Discourse, however, the clashes between minutemen and redcoats at Lexington and Concord were a year gone. The previous summer the Continental Congress had commissioned George Washington as commander of its army. The same body was less than two months away from issuing the Declaration of Independence. In the light of the new situation it is necessary to ask why Erskine published a Scottish edition of the tract.

He answered that question in the preface. There he pointed out that few in Scotland had seen the piece when it was issued seven years earlier. Further, some had questioned his patriotism and he thought it advisable to give them his long-standing sentiments on war with the colonies. In this connection he stated that in correspondence with American friends during the years separating the two editions

he had warned them that war would bring their ruin, then Britain's. "If this was exciting them to take up arms, then, and not otherwise, I plead guilty," he said.²¹ More crucially, Erskine now found the hypothetical threats to Protestant Britain to be much more actual and immanent. He saw France, Spain and Catholicism waiting to engulf a Britain sapped of strength to resist by a protracted war. His reissue of A Discourse seems very much to have been done in an "I-told-you-so" spirit. Because of the changed situation, the tract had become a jeremiad. He appealed for reconciliation. But it was a feeble appeal. He seemed to be preparing Britons for the worst.

When the second edition appeared, it included an appendix first printed as a letter in the Caledonian Mercury on October 4, 1775. Though unsigned, the letter is obviously Erskine's. It employs most of the arguments against war with America that are found in A Discourse and assails the policies of the administrations which had precipitated the difficulties. The original occasion for the letter was an appeal by another Mercury reader to the Edinburgh magistrates asking that they adopt a resolution supporting the King and Parliament in their colonial policy. The appendix's author objected. The city's support was not in question, and a resolution would only further alienate the Americans, he argued.

The longest and most carefully researched of John Erskine's three tracts on the American Revolution is Reflections. It consists of twenty numbered sections which either refute British arguments against the colonials or set forth the patriots' case. The treatise is blatantly Whig and pro-American. Erskine sent it to press in the fall of 1776, signing it only "By a Freeholder." Its "Advertisement" indicates that by the time it appeared Erskine's chief concern had become the promotion of a compassionate policy pursuant on a British victory. It was important to him that Britain make every

effort to regain American loyalty. He apparently felt he could best promote that attitude by a detailed, careful presentation of the American side of the story. A summary of his twenty points follows.

1. Wisdom and justice have not characterized British policy.

2. British fear of colonial independence, not the longing for such by a group of isolated, unrelated colonies, prompted the breach. Britain reacted harshly to an imagined, not a real, situation.

3. If refusal to pay taxes equals sedition, then the English and Irish parliaments are guilty of anarchy every time they refuse a royal request for funds.

4. In 1764 the British violated the one-hundred-fifty year principle of Colonial regulation of internal affairs. In reaction the colonials violated the old right of Parliament to levy external duties and customs.

5. Parliamentary adjustments and concessions are in order, therefore.

6. Charter agreements, American opinion and economic impact all should determine taxation policies.

7. In July 1774 the Pennsylvania provincial congress cited legitimate areas needing British redress.

8. As the example of West Jersey shows, the colonies have always maintained the right to tax themselves.

9. Some Englishmen did not teach colonists to oppose the Stamp Act, for Pennsylvania did so before it learned of English opposition.

10. Two million pounds sterling trading profits are sufficient compensation for British defense of the colonies.

11. The British ought not justify their policy with the argument that America practices slavery, for England introduced her to it.

12. The tea incident is the Massachusetts' governor's fault, for he denied a colonial appeal not to land the tea.

13. The Boston Port Bill is inequitable, for it penalizes an entire city without hearing or trial for the actions of a few.

14. The Regulating Act unfairly deprives Massachusetts of any self-government.

15. The Quebec Act in effect makes Roman Catholicism the established religion.

16. Anglican sermons show Protestantism is in Britain's best interest.

17. The papacy, not Protestant dissent, is England's enemy.

“...the tract is a clear development of colonial arguments. For that reason it has historical significance.”

18. It is understandable that the colonies united in their effort to get the above grievances heard and rectified.

19. Both sides ought to cease hostilities and make concessions.

20. A long war can only benefit papal France.

While Erskine's biographer calls Reflections "one of the ablest and most argumentative of all the author's political tracts,"²² it probably was, for the same reason, his least effective. In the polarized atmosphere of late 1776, Erskine's strongly pro-colonial arguments could not have had much persuasive force. And the plea for clemency for defeated colonials was superfluous. Nonetheless, the tract is a clear development of colonial arguments. For that reason it has historical significance.

Equity and Wisdom is considered finally only because it is undated. It differs remarkably from the other two tracts in that it musters one Biblical text and example after another to buttress the author's point. That point is that if the

leaders who had formed and administered colonial policy had been guided by Scriptural wisdom and Christian graces, conflict could have been averted. Erskine was quick to disassociate the king from responsibility, for he suggested that both he and the present prime minister had been misled by colonial governors much as Ahasuerus had by wicked Haman. Erskine combed Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Old Testament historical books for maxims and examples of patient, forgiving but yet firm political leadership. These he lavishly applied to the present crisis.

If Britain and American must contend, let it be for the honour, which shall be the first in confessing a fault, and in offering restitution or compensation: and which shall be the most forward in forgiving and forgetting real or imaginary injuries.²³

The irenic, conciliatory spirit of the piece contrasts sharply with the resignation in the preface to A Discourse and with the blunt, accusing overtones of Reflections. This difference suggests that of all three tracts this one appeared earliest in 1776. When it was written, Erskine still had hope that common recognition of the mutual, Catholic adversary would draw Britain and the colonies back to one another. He was still appealing to Parliament to adopt measures which would avert war.

Mean time, every good man, though his hopes of success may be small, should exert his utmost influence to prevent so dreadful a catastrophe. If from timidity, or mercenary interested motives, thou who canst speak, and hast opportunities of speaking where it may be useful, yet notwithstanding altogether holdest thy peace; national calamities may be averted in some other way: while, in the just vengeance of heaven, thou and thy house perish. And who knoweth,

whether thy influence, thy high office, thy eminent talents, thy seat in Parliament, or at a council table, were not bestowed upon thee for such a time as this?²⁴

The tract is relatively short. It contains little warning such as that in A Discourse and none of the colonial justifications in Reflections. It was a straightforward, pastoral appeal to follow the Scriptures and aspire toward a reconciliation of the two parties.

Conclusion

Given John Erskine's influence it is safe to assume that his three tracts on the American Revolution were rather widely known and read. They probably confirmed the convictions and clarified the thought of many who, like himself, were Whigs by political conviction and colonial sympathizers by choice. It is doubtful that they swayed many who had already taken a position on colonial issues. The tracts likely influenced members of Parliament, to whom they were consciously directed, only as another, important expression of public sentiment. Reflections probably only hardened opposition to the colonies.

All three pieces reflect the complexity of the Revolution. Erskine uses economic, nationalistic, humanitarian, ethnic, religious and theological arguments to make his appeals. All of them had some basis in the actual situation. It can be said with some certainty that the fear of Catholicism, usually expressed at length in his closing paragraphs, was a particularly weighty consideration in the author's judgment. Behind this religious consideration lay an eschatology that included a dread of the final assault of papal Anti-christ on Protestantism.

One of the most interesting developments in the three pieces is the manner in which Erskine adjusted his purpose for writing as British-American relations deteriorated. His purpose shifted from an appeal for reconciliation to a plea

for clemency on vanquished colonists.

Although today Erskine is largely a forgotten man, and although many of the arguments he used seem archaic to us, we in America are the beneficiaries of the cause which he so vigorously defended.

Footnotes

1. Gordon Donaldson, Scotland: Church and Nation through Sixteen Centuries (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1972).

2. George Grubb, An Ecclesiastical History of Scotland, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1861), IV, 85.

3. J. H. S. Burleigh, A Church History of Scotland (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 292.

4. G. D. Henderson, "Jonathan Edwards and Scotland," in The Burning Bush; Studies in Scottish Church History (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1957), 151-162.

5. Ibid., 140-150.

6. There are several exceptions. The first is an early biography done by Erskine's long-time friend Sir Henry Moncreiff Wellwood, Account of the Life and Writings of John Erskine, D.D. (Edinburgh: George Ramsay and Company, 1818). A second is a section entitled "Dr. John Erskine and His Friends" in the fascinating study by John Macleod, Scottish Theology in Relation to Church History Since the Reformation (Edinburgh: The Publications Committee of the Free Church of Scotland, 1943), 214-221. And the third is the entry in The Dictionary of National Biography, Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, eds. (London: Oxford University Press, 1917ff.), VI, 850-851.

7. I am grateful to Mrs. Emma Vanden Berg of the Dordt College Library staff for her help and correspondence in locating and obtaining copies of these tracts and some of the secondary literature necessary for this paper. I am also grateful to the libraries of Harvard University, Princeton University and the University

of Minnesota for making Erskine's essays available to me. In referring to these pieces I shall use the following respective abbreviations: A Discourse, Reflections and Equity and Wisdom.

8. The phrase refers to the twenty-eight years of severe persecution of Scottish Covenanters between the restoration of Charles II and the coronation of King William. See Alexander Smellie, "The Killing Time," Men of the Covenant (Tenth edition, facsimile of seventh edition; London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), 384-400.

9. Wellwood, 60-61.

10. From Witherspoon's 1753 anti-Moderate tract entitled Ecclesiastical Characteristics, as quoted by Macleod, 206. For a recent characterization of and excerpts from the same piece see Martha Lou Lemmon Stohlman, John Witherspoon: Parson, Politician, Patriot (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), 25-27.

11. The Signs of the Times Considered; or, the High probability, that the present appearances in New England, and the West of Scotland, are a prelude of the glorious things promised to the Church in the latter ages ([n.p.]: 1742).

12. Wellwood, 380.

13. A Discourse, 7.

14. Ibid., 9.

15. Ibid., 16-17.

16. Ibid., 22.

17. Ibid., 24.

18. Ibid., 26.

19. Henderson, op. cit., "Religion and Democracy in Scottish History," 120-139.

20. See Claude L. Howe, Jr., "British Evangelical Response to the American Revolution: the Baptists," and Owen H. Alderfer, "British Evangelical Response to the American Revolution: the Wesleysans," Fides et Historia, VIII/2 (Spring, 1976), 35-49 and 7-34, respectively.

21. A Discourse, v.

22. Wellwood, 275.

23. Equity and Wisdom, 13.

24. Ibid., 15.