

The Diary of John Cuthbertson, Missionary to the Covenanters of Colonial Pennsylvania

THE participation of immigrants from Scotland and the north of Ireland in the settlement of the early American frontier is a familiar aspect of colonial history. Nowhere in the colonies did these hardy people demonstrate their unusual capacity of adaptation to the rigors of pioneer life more generally than in Pennsylvania. In that colony their characteristic Presbyterian churches had begun to mark their numerous settlements in the eastern counties in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. By 1750 they had pushed across the Susquehanna in search of land, and before the Revolution they had occupied many farms in the upper Ohio Valley.¹ In most monographs and historical essays dealing with immigrant groups in America it has been customary to treat the Scotch-Irishman as the typical frontiersman, the vigorous foe of authoritarian tendencies in civil government, and the stern adherent of Calvinistic theology in the religious life of the middle colonies. In the last of these phases of his nature, glimpses are sometimes obtained of his place in the history of the colonial intellect in which, to some extent, he was the counterpart of the Puritan of New England. Besides illuminating the workings of the Calvinist mind, documents of the Scottish and Scotch-Irish immigration often depict also the course of daily life among the Presbyterians whose customs, perhaps,

¹ S. J. and E. H. Buck, *The Planting of Civilization in Western Pennsylvania* (Pittsburgh, 1939), 131; W. F. Dunaway, *The Scotch-Irish in Colonial Pennsylvania* (Chapel Hill, 1944), 33-34. The disagreement of the two authors cited above on the relative numbers of Scottish and Scotch-Irish settlers in western Pennsylvania before the Revolution is indicative of the difficulty to be encountered in distinguishing between the two groups. Cf. Buck, 153, and Dunaway 72-77. For the purposes of this study it has not seemed feasible to distinguish Scotch-Irish immigration from that of Lowlander Scots, the group characteristics under consideration being regarded as common to both.

have been too broadly construed to typify the social structure of the frontier. A document of this type is the diary of the Rev. John Cuthbertson, a record interesting not only for its honest portrayal of some of the quirks and conflicts of a Scottish Presbyterian mind in the eighteenth century, but also for its all-too-sparing commentary upon affairs of the day in the colony of Pennsylvania.

John Cuthbertson was born near Ayr in southwestern Scotland on March 24 (O.S.), 1719.² He studied theology at Glasgow, was ordained at Braehead, May 18, 1747, and later spent a year among the Covenanters of Ireland before coming to America in 1751.³ In the region of moorland and glen where John Cuthbertson spent his youth, the "killing times" of Presbyterian legend were still part of the memory of living men, and it may be conjectured with safety that they had already begun to be clothed with the garb of fiction which has made them a somewhat more colorful than reliable part of the great Whig tradition of English historiography. The most fanatical resistance to civil government in the west of Scotland under the last two Stuarts had been maintained among those devotees of the Scottish covenants who styled themselves Reformed Presbyterians and, in language prophetic of the political theory of John Locke, published resolutions announcing their inability to give allegiance to the government of Charles II to which they had denied their consent. However, the framers of the Queensferry Paper and the Sanquhar Declaration, which contained these doctrines of defiance toward the royal government and the established church, fell short of the theory of Locke, for they only protested a tyranny which thwarted their own religious organization, and they could not have found room in their own tenets—had they been triumphant instead of persecuted—for the quality of tolerance implicit in Locke's *Essays*. At once the Covenanter theory comprehended both the

² After Great Britain adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1752, Cuthbertson celebrated his birthday on April 3. On that date in 1753 he noted his birthday, observing that he was "entering into the thirty-fifth year of my life from 1718." Although his gravestone inscription is calculated from 1718, all references in the diary to his age would make the actual date of his birth 1719. Either the above quotation means that he had completed his thirty-fifth year, or the numeral "8" was inserted into the diary by error. The church register at Ayr records the births of several of his immediate family, but not that of himself.

³ W. M. Glasgow, *History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America* (Baltimore, 1889), 476; S. Helen Fields, *Register of Marriages and Baptisms Performed, by Rev. John Cuthbertson* (Washington, 1934), viii.

genius and the weakness of the Presbyterian mind of that age. To it adhered the freedom that belongs to independent thought and the courage to defend it, but it also wore the shackles of Calvinist theology which set the limits beyond which thought might not explore. It was from this background in which independence and the strictest orthodoxy were intermingled that John Cuthbertson's mind was formed. In 1679, after the crushing of the Covenanters at Bothwell Bridge, the name of John Cuthbertson of Kilmarnock parish appeared among the names of the rebels deported to Virginia and the Barbados.⁴ He may have been a close relative of the man of the same name under consideration here. There is good reason to believe that the issues which preceded the Glorious Revolution must have had their impact upon the thinking of John Cuthbertson, for he brought to America the independent spirit and the personal courage of a free man together with the dark Puritanism of the Scottish Reformation.

From the time of James I's plantation of Ulster, there had been considerable migration to that province of Ireland from the western shires of Scotland where Presbyterianism was most doctrinally severe. Later emigration from both Scotland and Ireland had brought many settlers of the Reformed Presbyterian or Covenanter persuasion to America. It was to these people, scattered over a long frontier and without any ecclesiastical organization or minister, that the Reformed Presbyterian synod in Scotland sent John Cuthbertson. From 1751 until 1773 he labored on the frontier as a missionary, the only representative of the clergy of his church in the colonies. In the latter year the church in Scotland sent him two associates. After this Cuthbertson, although he continued to ride long distances looking after the spiritual interests of his people, had charge of the Reformed Presbyterian congregation at Middle Octorara in Lancaster County. In the early 1780's he was active in making overtures toward church union with the Associate Presbyterian Church, the Seceders, another small dissenting body of the Church of Scotland. He was present at the meeting in Philadelphia, in the autumn of 1782, when the two bodies united to form the Associate Reformed Presbyterian denomination. From that time until his death in 1791, he served as the minister of the Lower Chanceford congregation of the new denomi-

⁴ C. A. Hanna, *The Scotch-Irish* (New York, 1902), II, 253.

nation.⁵ Toward the end of his life he expressed regret at the union of the two churches. In a letter to his nephew he wrote: "The rising generation appears to practice as if they did not believe that there is a God and that he concerned himself with this world—particularly with his first and noblest creature, man. . . . Our coalescence with ye Seceders, I apprehend is almost at an end."⁶

When John Cuthbertson arrived in America, he began the habit of recording his adventures in the new world in a diary. This volume, which he carried with him on his countless journeys through the wilderness, has been preserved and now is in the possession of the Pittsburgh-Xenia Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh.⁷ A little calf-bound volume, four and one-half inches long and three and one-half inches wide and a little over an inch thick, it bears the marks of the wear of the forty years during which its owner almost daily inscribed in an excellent hand the distances he rode on horseback, his sermon texts, the names of the people whom he baptized and whose weddings he solemnized, and occasional comments upon the environment in which he lived. From these entries a variety of information about colonial life is obtainable, although much of it in a disconnected form. With a maddening unconcern for the earthly setting into which he was attempting to bring the promise of the heavenly kingdom, he admitted secular information into the diary only as a grudging recognition of the distraction of the colonial scene. On a trip across the Susquehanna he methodically recorded every sermon text and baptism, and then dismissed what must have been the most absorbing concern of every settler in that region with a brief addendum, "All fly from the Indians, etc."⁸ Much human drama and information about eighteenth-century frontier society is hidden behind any one of a hundred similarly abbreviated entries.

The diary was begun on the day Cuthbertson arrived in America. "After being forty-six days, twenty and six tenths hours at sea from London Derry Loch, landed safely at New Castle, Aug. 5, 1751,

⁵ Glasgow, 477-479; Diary, October 29-November 1, 1783.

⁶ John Cuthbertson to John Bourne, August 19, 1789, in Fields, xiv.

⁷ Several copies of the diary have been made for the purpose of making available its mine of information on Pennsylvania genealogy. The writer is indebted to the kindness of Professor T. M. Taylor and the Pittsburgh-Xenia Theological Seminary for permission to use its copy of the diary over a long number of months in the preparation of this paper.

⁸ April 14, 1756.

about eight in the forenoon; lodged with Griffins, in good health, praise to God." This diligent Scot did not long delay entering upon his duties in the colonies. The following entries record the events of his first week in America:

Aug. 6—At four in the afternoon took a horse and rode 20 miles to Joseph Andrews.

Aug. 7—Rode 15 miles to Jo. Rosses Mannor of New London Derry, weary, etc.

Aug. 8—Met and conversed with many . . . Diff . . . among . . . God.

Aug. 9—At twelve preached Psalm 46: and preached Jon. 2:8, give all praise to God. . . . Rode eight miles to Joseph Walker's in Middle Octorara, weary.

Aug. 11—Sabbath. Rode three miles to the tent, preached Psalm 8. L lectured Luke 12: 22-31 and preached Song of Solomon 3.

In his first week in the new world Cuthbertson had found his own people (evidenced by the place name of New London Derry and the Scottish family names), he had preached on two different occasions, and he had arrived at Middle Octorara in Lancaster County, destined to be the central point from which his work was launched and the final resting place of his earthly remains. In many ways the pattern of the next forty years was laid out in that first week. Although no mention of the fact is made in the diary, Cuthbertson was accompanied to America by his sister, Janet, and her husband, Archibald Bournes, brother of William Bournes of Ayr, the father of the poet, Robert Burns. The Bourneses settled on a farm within the present confines of the Gettysburg battlefield.⁹

The colony of Pennsylvania to which the newly arrived missionary had dedicated his labor was a region which took its toll of man's physical strength. "Tired but safe," a frequent summary of a day's adventures in the diary in those first months, betrays not only the endurance of hardship, but anxiety for unforeseen danger as well. Over a year after his arrival in Pennsylvania he recorded, "Rode 32 miles to Joseph Crooks', York, to a field. Lay 11 hours in the rain and snow." On the next day without further explanation of the circumstances he wrote, "exhausted but well." A week later he was "still unwell of the cold and the leg."¹⁰ Bears and snakes of various species received frequent mention in the pages of the diary. In fact the number of times rattlesnakes and vipers, which must have been

⁹ Fields, xii.

¹⁰ November 6, 7, and 14, 1752.

very numerous in the region of Lancaster County in the eighteenth century, were mentioned might indicate that Cuthbertson felt more than the usual repugnance toward those unpleasant creatures. The confused entry on October 28, 1756, records an anonymous frontier tragedy. "Sister snake . . . bit . . . dead child etc."

Nor were the wild things of the forest the only source of concern to a newly arrived immigrant whose daily duties took him through the forests. The French and Indian War touched the western settlements in the early years of Cuthbertson's ministry. In midsummer of 1755 Braddock suffered ignominious defeat in western Pennsylvania, and in the following spring the Indians, true to their tactics, began to leave their winter encampments to harry the frontier. Cuthbertson reported seeing them along the banks of the Susquehanna early in April. Though he noted later in the same month that at Carlisle all the people were flying, he apparently continued his pastoral duties west of the river without interruption. On May 27 he was in Paxton and made no comment about the threat of Indian raids. Late in that year he wrote, "Rode 21 miles to William Brown's. Family all well but fear of the Indians."¹¹ This was apparently within fifty miles of Lancaster. In the spring of 1757 the Delawares and Shawnees began their annual raids again, and on May 18 of that year four settlers scalped at Sweetara were exhibited in Lancaster for the benefit of any Quakers in town, so that they might see the suffering of the Scotch-Irish caused by the pacifist convictions of the provincial government.¹² Yet no mention of the troubles besetting his people that year is to be found in the diary. So busy with the souls of the settlers whom the savages were driving into his arms in these years was Cuthbertson, that the only reference he made to Horace Walpole's "annus mirabilis," 1759, was a notation on January 12 that he "saw Gen. Forbes and the army" near Paxton. How any informed man in the colonies could have ignored the stirring events of that year is a little difficult to see, but the most remarkable way in which Cuthbertson manifested his preoccupation with things spiritual to the appearance of complete oblivion to secular life was his failure even to note the famous Paxton incident. The deplorable massacre of the Conestoga

¹¹ April 26, 1756; December 11, 1756.

¹² Col. Edward Shippen to James Burd, May 19 and May 22, 1757, in James Balch, *Letters Relating to The Provincial History of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1855), 78-79.

Indians by the "Paxton Boys," maddened by Quaker indifference to depredations by the natives in Pontiac's War, had occurred in December, 1763. The "pamphlet war" between the Quakers and the "Presbyterians," for so the ruling element designated all the Scotch-Irish, began on February 13 of the next year when the Scotch-Irish, foiled in their intention to enter Philadelphia in force to protest the indifference of the authorities to the protection of the frontier against the Indians, drew up and presented their *Declaration and Remonstrance of the distressed and bleeding inhabitants of the province of Pennsylvania*.¹³ When Cuthbertson crossed the Susquehanna in January, he mentioned the familiar phrase, "great confusions."¹⁴ This is the only entry in the diary which might possibly be construed to refer to any of the dramatic events taking place around Paxton. In March he visited York, and on April 7 he was at Paxton. It is difficult to offer any good explanation of how so tumultuous an episode of frontier life could have been so completely sublimated, even by a Scottish Covenanter, to ecclesiastical concerns.

Although John Cuthbertson seldom allowed the cares of this world to crowd heavily into the patently religious nature of his diary, he did convey a variety of interesting data about his private life by way of scattered comment. Five years after his arrival in America he recorded without any introductory remarks: "Rode 14 miles to Walter Moore's. About six o'clock after discoursing near an hour, was married to Sa. Moore in the ancient manner yet as near the direct form." Two years earlier he had been the officiating minister at the baptism of his future bride.¹⁵ This is probably indicative of the stanch devotion of her people to their peculiar splinter of the Presbyterian Church. Apparently they had preferred to forego the administration of the rites of the church to children until they could have them performed by a minister of their own doctrinal persuasion.

Cuthbertson was the father of three children, whose birth records he placed in the back pages of his diary: Sarah in 1762, John in 1764, and Walter in 1769. An unintentional bit of humor was recorded at the birth of his first son. "March 21, 1764. 2 o'clock in A. M. Son born. 31st 2 cows with calf—remember this." At the settlement of his

¹³ Dunaway, 122-124.

¹⁴ January 27, 1764.

¹⁵ February 25, 1756; appendices to the Diary.

father-in-law's estate, he received a watch for his son, John, and four silver spoons for Sally, either his wife or daughter.¹⁶ Except for the mention of entering his eldest son in Mr. Latta's classical school at Chestnut Level and noting the same son's being bitten by a snake from which he recovered, he made no further reference to family affairs in the diary beyond an occasional "family all well" written upon his return from a distant journey.¹⁷

The minister was also a farmer in the rich lands of Lancaster County and occasionally made notations concerning farm business. For example, his real estate transactions are faithfully recorded, although it is difficult to make any estimate of the total amount of land he held at any one time. On March 24, 1757, he paid £230 for 160 acres in Lancaster County. Farm accidents were not infrequent. One Sabbath in a depressed mood he wrote, "Nil Nil, Almost dead the night before from a fall from the hay."¹⁸ On another day he told how a blind horse he had borrowed fell with and on him. The next day he found that he had acquired a broken collar bone in the accident.¹⁹ Almost every September he sowed rye, this being the most consistent reference to any crop, although flax and timothy are mentioned. Hogs and cattle were slaughtered for meat, and sheep were also kept.

Other aspects of his personal life and of colonial society may be gleaned from the diary. The rigors of travel in the middle colonies in the third quarter of the eighteenth century were not confined to unforeseen meetings with bears on forest trails. If space devoted to its discussion is a measure of the degree of annoyance, the animal life Cuthbertson encountered in the homes of his parishioners was at least as irritating as that which he met in the wilderness. "Rode to Jeremiah Murray's. Tortured with fleas," and "Rode 20 miles to George Mitchel's. Slept none, bugs," are typical entries. He was not called upon to attend a funeral until January 4, 1754, over two years after his arrival in America. From his thirty-ninth year he was cursed with ague, and its recurrent attacks added to the torment of exhausting travel over the Pennsylvania roads. One facet of the

¹⁶ April 5, 1773.

¹⁷ July 20, 1775; August 19, 1775.

¹⁸ July 2, 1769.

¹⁹ April 21, 1777.

Cuthbertson personality which even the official church historians have not chosen to ignore was his love of liquor. It was an age in which great quantities of alcohol were consumed, often at ecclesiastical as well as lay functions, and the stand of the churches on the subject was as yet unaffected by the reform movement of the next century. Nevertheless, drunkenness was not condoned.²⁰ Distilling grain was a profitable means of converting it into cash. The diary for February 15, 1779, reads, "Sold my whiskey to H. Rocky, 3 gallons." A week later the entry seems to indicate that he marketed more of the product than he intended, for he wrote, "Rode 15 miles, my saddle bags found, paid qt. of whiskey 1-0-0." Two years later he wrote of having husked corn and of buying one half-gallon of liquor from Nathaniel Coulter.²¹ Apparently Cuthbertson did drink to excess, for in the later years of his life he underwent a rebuke from his presbytery for intemperance and was suspended from the Church for four weeks.²²

From many such unrelated phases of his life it is possible to reconstruct at least a partial picture of the life of a minister in the Pennsylvania back country. From the diary ample evidence may be gathered of the strength of the Scottish heritage of the people among whom John Cuthbertson labored, and much may be inferred as to the Calvinistic tenor of their life. Unmistakably Scottish names leave no doubt as to the national origins of most of Cuthbertson's parishioners. Names like Fullerton, Whitesides, Lochhead, Sinclair, Finney, Walker, Ross, Stewart, Coulter, Patterson, Ramsey, Guthrie, MacMillan, and McClung predominate in the record, but an occasional curiosity in otherwise purely Scottish nomenclature, like Joseph Junkens or Peter January, raises the question of how a few Welshmen and others infiltrated the most clannish group among all the Presbyterians. The Covenanters cherished their own forms of worship so jealously that it must have been seldom that their austere services attracted a non-Scottish settler strongly enough to encourage him to seek membership with them. Is it possible that these are former indentured servants who served in Covenanter families?

²⁰ See J. A. Krout and D. R. Fox, *The Completion of Independence* (New York, 1944), 262-264.

²¹ October 10, 1781.

²² Glasgow, 479.

Cuthbertson had an indentured servant, "Margaret Bell, who was bound with me two years and five months."²³

These Reformed Presbyterians of the eighteenth century, along with their Scottish brethren in the Associate Presbyterian or Seceder Church, another dissenting body which had left the Church of Scotland early in the century in protest to the practice of lay patronage in the established church, were loyal to the Presbyterian tradition of representative democracy in church government by which each local congregation through its session of ruling elders was represented in presbytery, the presbyteries organized into synods, and the synods into a general assembly, the highest governing body of the whole church. In this the dissenting branches followed only the general organization of Presbyterianism, for each clung also to that particular tenet which had motivated it originally to leave the mother church in Scotland, thus making its peculiarity a cornerstone of its own segment of Protestantism. Thus, the Covenanters in the new world continued their seventeenth-century quarrel with the policies of Charles II by a scrupulous disavowal of participation in the affairs of civil government. Likewise, they zealously maintained their distinctive form of worship, shunning the services of other religious bodies and maintaining the exclusive use of the Psalms in church services.

Among the Covenanters, as well as the other early American Presbyterian churches, it was at the infrequent communion seasons that the creed of Calvinism became even more than usual the dynamic ideological force by which their lives were ruled. The celebration of the ancient sacrament called up memories of former sentimental associations in Scotland and Ireland, and the austere Presbyterian representation of the Atonement worked with perhaps as much dramatic force upon the Scotch-Irish mind as did the mass upon the Latin spirit. Well-versed in Calvin's doctrine of election, Presbyterians of all descriptions did not approach the communion table without searching their souls to determine their fitness to partake of the sacrament. If there was anything of notable misconduct in their lives since the last communion, in all probability it would be inquired into by the elders of the church session who might, if necessary, constitute themselves a judicial body to try wayward

²³ March 23, 1759.

members for violation of church discipline. If conviction followed, the session would deny the offender the privilege of participating in the communion service, and if the charge were serious, suspension from church membership would result. To the sincere Calvinist this was tantamount to a manifestation of his removal from the company of the elect. If judged by the frequency of church sessions at which Cuthbertson sat, he appears to have spent a great deal of time administering discipline for violations of the code of sexual morals. The judicial function of the session is one of the distinctive and remarkable aspects of the history of the Presbyterians in America. A highly significant characteristic of the religious and ethnic particularism of the Scottish and Scotch-Irish, especially of those who belonged to the smaller dissenting Presbyterian churches, is revealed in these practices. In conformity with the Scottish tradition drawn from John Knox and his two *Books of Discipline*, these people not only subjected their personal actions to judicial review by the elders of their congregation, but for many generations after their immigration, they preferred to have their disputes settled by the church session rather than by submitting them to civil law courts. Although Cuthbertson never recorded the details of session trials, he frequently mentioned the long hours he had to preside at meetings of the sessions. Once he wrote, "Held session till 12 at night. Got all differences settled."²⁴

The communion season usually began on the Saturday preceding the day appointed for the service itself. On that day and again on the Monday following the service, the session met. These three-day services seldom were held more often than twice a year. Before Cuthbertson came, the Reformed Presbyterians in the colonies had been without any opportunity to take the sacrament in their own church. They would have considered it a dangerous thing to have joined in the communion service of any other branch of Presbyterianism. Therefore, Cuthbertson's first communion in America, celebrated on August 23, 1752, was an event charged with deep emotional meaning for the participants. Not only did it offer a break in the hard and lonely routine of frontier life, but for many the frontier service called up memories of similar occasions in Scotland, and the singing of the old psalm tunes must have been accompanied by strong feel-

²⁴ September 25, 1754.

ings of nostalgia.²⁵ On Saturday the new minister had constituted his session for judicial business, held a preparatory service, and distributed the tokens.²⁶ Two hundred fifty Covenanters attended the service and joined in the communion the following day.²⁷

Between the communion seasons, Cuthbertson maintained a decent solicitude for the adherence of his parishioners to sound doctrine. Good Calvinist that he was, he took particular care in assisting his flock in the solution of vexing doctrinal issues. Shortly after his arrival in America he was to be found conversing with a colonist "concerning the equality of the father and the Son . . .," and again he "conversed with Lawrence concerning, viz, Faith, etc."²⁸ In another entry he told how he rode eight miles to and from the meeting, held session eight hours after examining fifty candidates for church membership—no mere formality, but a rigorous testing of Presbyterian orthodoxy in those days—and after all that, held a conference for three hours with a parishioner in which he "held infallible assurance concerning Christ."²⁹ Again, he was preaching from an Old Testament prophetic text to explain the famous Solemn League and Covenant.³⁰ This was in keeping with the stress which Reformed Presbyterian theology laid upon the keeping of covenants. In broken sentences written only to refresh his own memory, Cuthbertson, one July day in 1754, wrote³¹:

Read R. E.'s sermon; Christ the people's covenant; in which . . . was uncommonly drawn, for its in trying to renew . . . of Christ's own covenant which was essayed by a real conviction of one's original guilt; actual transgressions of childhood; riper years, especially in the great office of the ministry; pride, carnality, indifference, want of true zeal for Christ's cause and the welfare of immortal souls, and my . . . lust etc. etc. O father of mercies, be merciful to me etc.

²⁵ The apparent dramatic quality of the occasion led one church historian to overstep the bounds of accuracy as he described the emotions of the people as they approached the communion tables singing the familiar words of the forty-sixth Psalm. Cuthbertson mentioned using only Psalms 24 and 103 in the course of the service. Cf. J. B. Scouller, *The United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. XI, American Church History, ed. by Philip Schaaf, et al. (New York, 1894), 153, and the Cuthbertson Diary, August 23, 1752.

²⁶ Tokens were small metal discs distributed at preparatory service and collected before communion. Their purpose was to insure that no one should take the sacrament without having given due thought to the meaning of the ritual, at least so far as that might be evidenced by attendance at the preparatory service.

²⁷ August 22-24, 1753. The session met on Monday to conclude its business.

²⁸ October 21, 1751.

²⁹ June 7, 1753.

³⁰ September 9, 1753.

³¹ July 31, 1754.

It would be difficult to find a more succinct statement of the Calvinist vein of introspection. Here was the true Presbyterian, examining his own record to ascertain if it contained evidence of his election, questioning his worthiness of the blood of Christ, which occupied so prominent a place in his theology, revealing the relentlessness of predestinarian dogma. Once on the death of an infant he commented, "God's wrath."³² At no time did Cuthbertson's texts at Christmas-time have any connection with the season of the year. Any observance of the day might have been misunderstood as a pervy of episcopacy and its Saints' days. That this theology was severe is indisputable, but that severity may have been part of the secret of its attraction for the inhabitants of the frontier. A religious creed which taught man to take constant heed to the status of his election to eternal life struck with peculiar force upon a people whose lives on the edge of the wilderness came into daily contact with the struggle for survival. One might neglect neither his earthly nor his heavenly calling without inviting swift and certain disaster. Predestination did not imply fatalism. Rather on the frontier it stood as the theological symbol of human limitation in an environment where on every side man saw reminders of his impotence. In that environment the Scotch-Irish Presbyterian became particularly sensitive to the necessity of obedience to both natural and supernatural law. Perhaps it was through this recognition of human deficiency that the Calvinist learned to cultivate the discipline and devotion to duty as he saw it that were among the finer of his contributions to the growth of American thought.

An especially interesting aspect of colonial social history is to be found in the appendix to the diary in which Cuthbertson recorded the most valuable of the frontier household remedies of which he had learned on his travels. Although he was an informed man of his day and his classical as well as his theological background was evident, the credulity with which he accepted the most outlandish elixirs indicates something of the primitive status of popular scientific knowledge in the Age of the Enlightenment. The remedies which Cuthbertson prized enough to copy in his diary often read like a witches' brew, and it is not illogical to infer that the people whom he served, for all their soundness of faith, must have still held some respect for

³² May 1, 1757.

the efficacy of occult powers in the curing of illness. Though it may have encompassed glimmerings of knowledge later to be employed in modern pharmaceutical science, "the famous American receipt for the rheumatism" makes one thankful for the advances made by medicine in America since the eighteenth century.

Take of garlic two cloves, of gum ammoniac, one drachm; blend them by bruising together. Make them into two or three bolus' with fair water, and swallow one at night and the other in the morning. Drink strong sassafras tea while using these. It banishes also contractions in the joints. 100 pound been given for this.

The blurred prescription for the cure of toothache must have been equally unpleasant. It called for a quart of vinegar put into the red-hot bottom of a thick bottle. The patient was instructed to hold a mouthful until cold, then spit out and repeat. An enigmatic "It makes worse two days" concludes the recipe.

Other remedies were similar. For the scourge of the frontier, ague, a large spoonful of flour of brimstone in a gill of mountain wine was prescribed to be taken "the moment the fit seizeth." A headache might be cured by taking a handful of featherfew and egg fryings laid upon "the hinder part of the head." A violent pain in the bones could be removed by steeping a handful of prickly ash bark in rum, which was recommended for both external and internal use. The frontiersman was irritated by fungus infection, for Cuthbertson had a cure for ringworm consisting of a mixture of gunpowder, green copperas, and hog's lard. To cure the spleen, a colonial complaint which covered a broad range of internal malaise, a more elaborate prescription was offered.

Take of Asso Foedita 3 drahms; castile soap, 3 half drahms; of opium half a drahm. Beat well together with the bulk of a pea of honey or molasses. Form into ninety pills like peas. Take three of them in a sup of warm gruel at bedtime. Drink tea of thyme or motherwort or bayberries. Keep them in a bladder in the cellar.

There is one baffling remedy for a disease with a blurred name, "cou...ais." The name conforms to no known disease. It requires a somewhat strained interpretation to make this either *coup de soleil* or the Indian skin disease of *courap*. The elixir recommended for its cure and valued at thirty guineas by Cuthbertson, is a study in primitive folklore. Whatever the disease, it must not have been much more unpleasant than the remedy.

1 white misselto pulled in January; 2 wood century; of each a small handful. 3 a live dry land toad; and 4th, a small bone about 1 and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long, to be found below the ear of a slain hog. Of the last also a small handful. Prepare all the ingredients as above to be put into a hot oven and dried. Then totally beat into a powder. Thus to be used; Take so much of the above powder as will lie on a penny, and put into a spoonful of woman's milk, who has brought forth or suckles a female (if the patient is male and vice versa), Three mornings before the change of the moon . . . and as many mornings thereafter.

It is possible that this strange concoction is an evidence of the borrowing of folklore by the Scotch-Irish from their Pennsylvania German neighbors. Whatever its origin, it was a potion which should have been equally effective against both physical and supernatural powers.

It is an interesting commentary upon the gulf between the humanistic and scientific advancement of the colonial mind that at the same time that Cuthbertson cherished these fantastic formulas as valuable bits of medical wisdom, he read books in the humanities which kept him abreast of the classical tradition of the eighteenth century even though his work lay along a frontier scarcely able to afford the luxury of intellectual interests. His Scottish education and his native intellectual endowments must have been sound, for, although he might have been forgiven a lapse into the ways of the frontier, considering the hard regimen he pursued as his normal way of life, he kept an alert intellect through a long and demanding life. He had a good enough command of Latin to interject Latin terminology here and there in his diary, sometimes without more reason than a fancy for using the ancient language. He mentioned buying volumes of Justin Martyr and Sallust, both for 18s 9d.³³ He reported having read four volumes of Neal's history of the Reformation in one day.³⁴ Though any good Presbyterian divine would have been expected to keep himself informed on the details of the Protestant Reformation, it is somewhat surprising to find the eighteenth century's interest in natural law appearing in the diary of John Cuthbertson. On May 31, 1767, he "quarreled concerning natural law." This was on communion Sabbath, and the next day in the post-communion service he made natural law the subject of his discourse. The following January he noted the borrowing of two volumes of Locke's works.³⁵

³³ September 28, 1759.

³⁴ January 26, 1761.

³⁵ January 8, 1768.

A few years later when those same teachings of John Locke had been elaborated into the ideological basis of the movement for American independence, John Cuthbertson showed an active interest in the course of the struggle. The Presbyterians were Whigs by temperament and tradition, and although Cuthbertson showed some scruples at swearing oaths to civil government, he determined upon active participation in the Patriot cause. Indeed, Pontiac's War, which had wrought havoc among his people, had seemed to Cuthbertson only a nuisance thrown in the path of the Lord's work, but in the Revolution he was aware of the issues of the day. He first mentioned the war when on October 8, 1775, he preached at Cambridge, New York, and discovered that "there were many Tories there." During the following month he saw companies drilling on two consecutive days, and on December 11 he rode eight miles to and from a mustering.³⁶ There is no further mention of the conflict until midsummer of 1777. At that time he enlisted in a company of militia and swore loyalty to a Captain John Pat. Since the Reformed Presbyterian church strongly opposed the taking of any kind of oath, this step required a strong belief indeed in the colonists' cause. The mental struggle it evoked is evidenced by a footnote in the diary for the same day. "Beswore fidelity to the state with others after speaking of swearing and prayer. J. C."³⁷ Strong as his allegiance to the Whig cause may have been, Cuthbertson did not allow it to sweep away his canny Scot's sense of economic values. On January 10, 1778, at a time when the money of Congress was rapidly depreciating, he sold a black stallion foaled in April for £42, "specie." Later in the year he must have experienced some interference in his pastoral duties, for he expressed the lament, "Wars, wars."³⁸ An interesting side light is thrown upon one favorite legend of American history by the diary. During the week before Christmas, 1776, the entries referred to the severity of the weather, and on Christmas night when Washington crossed the Delaware, Cuthbertson, himself in Lancaster County, mentioned the great snow, corroborating the traditional account of

³⁶ November 17-18, 1775.

³⁷ July 2, 1777. The abbreviation may stand for either Patterson or Patton. The addendum, indicating that Cuthbertson was concerned about the action he had taken, is at the bottom of page 183 of the original manuscript. The date, the first anniversary of the actual adoption of the Declaration of Independence, may be significant.

³⁸ June 25, 1778.

the bitterness of the weather in southeastern Pennsylvania at that time.

Through forty years John Cuthbertson labored vigorously for his church on the American frontier. In 1773 his sole responsibility for the ministry of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America was relieved by the arrival of two ministers from Scotland with whom he divided his duties. However, he still continued his own strenuous schedule. The faithfulness with which he recorded the number of miles he traveled each day indicates how conscious of transportation a man might be in the middle of the eighteenth century. Yet, when Cuthbertson made a journey in the East he traveled very rapidly. On April 28, 1766, he set out from Pequea for New England. On May 14 he crossed the Connecticut River. On May 28 he arrived at Albany on the return journey, and on June 6 he had reached his home in Lancaster County again. In 1779, a year when he must have been somewhat conscious of the uncertainty of the times, he visited the settlements of Scottish and Scotch-Irish Covenanters in western Pennsylvania, taking seven weeks to go from Lancaster to Pittsburgh. The first Covenanters had come into the Monongahela Valley in 1769, and by the time of Cuthbertson's coming ten years later, they were so numerous that he reported that he had received twelve hundred people into the church in the course of his visit.³⁹ The whole journey to and from Pittsburgh, a distance of five hundred and fifty miles, had been completed on horseback. During the course of these many travels Cuthbertson came into contact with other national elements of the mixed Pennsylvania population. There is a reference, on September 20, 1752, to one hundred Welshmen near the Elk. In 1753 Cuthbertson held a conversation with a Jew in Lancaster.⁴⁰ He often mentioned the Dutch tavern at York, and in the course of a journey to New York in 1753, he stopped at Conrad Woesser's tavern where he found "No rest. Cards played." A few days earlier the word "Moravian" appeared in the diary.⁴¹ He also noted having performed the marriage of a negro and a mulatto.⁴²

³⁹ September 5, 1779, *et. seq.*

⁴⁰ May 23, 1753.

⁴¹ June 25 and July 6, 1753. Conrad Woesser, or Weiser, was a captain in Col. Shippen's regiment in 1757. Balch, 78-79.

⁴² October 17, 1780.

Year after year Cuthbertson filled his little journal with notations about his adventures. Always he kept an account of the miles he traveled, his preaching engagements, and the baptisms and weddings at which he officiated. The scanty references to funerals indicate that the frontiersman perforce must have performed the burial rites for his people without ministerial assistance. In the last reckoning, Cuthbertson had traveled 69,055 miles, performed 1,801 baptisms, and over three hundred weddings. His accounts of weddings became confused in his last years, as did the accounts of his preaching engagements. In January, 1781, he changed his accounting of the latter for no apparent reason. He may not have known that on one page he listed 2,526, and 1,743 on the next. A correction of this discrepancy yields a total of 2,952 days on which Cuthbertson preached in the course of his ministry. Until the September before his death in March, 1791, he continued to keep the diary.

Though the record that John Cuthbertson left is a source of information on the social history of colonial Pennsylvania, it was not the intention of the writer to leave only an account of a busy life. Calvinist that he was, he intentionally minimized those of his activities which did not bear upon ecclesiastical matters. Dozens of passages tantalize by their very brevity, hinting at, but not explaining, some intensely human frontier dramas. Even his frequently repeated phrase of gratitude to the God who had brought him through the dangers of a frontier journey, "Give all praise to my gracious God," was often abbreviated to a space- and time-saving formula, "g. a." Certainly, the most exacting Calvinist among his flock should not have taken offense at that short cut, written by an exhausted man after a day spent on horseback on the roads of the colonies. Though the interests of secular history might prefer that Cuthbertson had devoted more of his diary to a description of the society in which he lived, the proportionate emphasis he gave to religious and to secular affairs reflected the cultural values of the Puritan mind. In the person of John Cuthbertson the narrowness sometimes associated with those values was dwarfed by a humanity and a devotion that disregarded the hardships of the frontier and revealed a strength of character not unworthy of the respect of an age with different values.