

<https://allthingsliberty.com/2022/06/america-begins-how-connecticuts-samuel-johnson-created-america/>

America Begins: How Connecticut's Samuel Johnson Created America - Journal of the American Revolution

Apr 6, 2023 5:30 AM

<https://allthingsliberty.com/2022/06/america-begins-how-connecticuts-samuel-johnson-created-america/>



JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

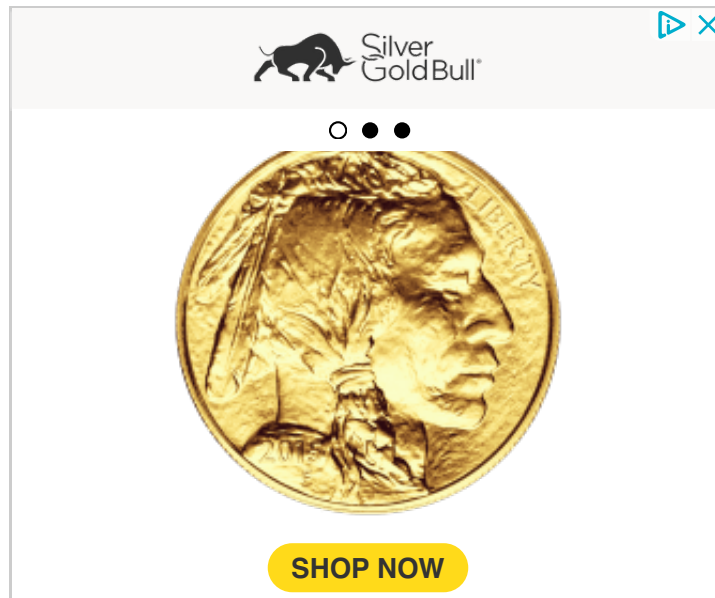
<https://allthingsliberty.com>

/ June 23, 2022

AMERICA BEGINS: HOW CONNECTICUT'S SAMUEL JOHNSON CREATED AMERICA

by Neil C. Olsen(<https://allthingsliberty.com/author/neil-c-olsen/>)





“The great End and Business therefore of Philosophy, is to make us truly happy; and this is the End ultimately pursued through all the Arts and Sciences, they are only so many Means of our Happiness.”—Rev. Dr. Samuel Johnson, *An Introduction to the Study of Philosophy*, 1731.

“ETHICS, which explains & directs the Temper & a right Moral Behavior, in pursuit of Happiness.”—Rev. Dr. Samuel Johnson, subtitle of *Elements of Philosophy*, 1763.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that

they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”— *The Declaration of Independence*, 1776.



JOURNAL OF THE
AMERICAN REVOLUTION

America's most important history
delivered straight to your inbox!

Subscribe today (free)!

(<https://allthingsliberty.com/subscribe/>).

“The influence of philosophy upon politics in America is easily seen in the evolution of such a familiar phrase as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”—Woodbridge Riley, 1915.

Riding to Newport

Though the political organization of the United States began as a declaration of a congress on July 4, 1776, the differentiating idea of America began in 1729 as a philosophical speculation on a horseback ride. That year, the educator, philosopher, and Anglican priest, the Rev. Dr. Samuel Johnson (1696–1772), undertook a three-week springtime journey from his parsonage in Stratford, Connecticut. He traveled five days and one hundred and twenty miles on horseback and ferries to Newport, Rhode Island. He stayed in Newport for about a week before returning home. According to an expense account preserved in his papers he spent £10.15.9.[1] This was a substantial expense at a time when the average salary for a clergyman in Connecticut was £100: the ten pounds in expenses would be about \$10,000 in equivalent-

wage value today.[2]

His goal was to meet the world's greatest living philosopher, George Berkeley, the Dean of Derry, Ireland. Berkeley had come to the New World to establish a college in Bermuda. Berkeley selected Newport for his home base while waiting for funds to arrive. Johnson wrote in his *Autobiography* that he was "received by the Dean with much kindness and condescension and gladly put himself under his instruction." [3] The two teaching philosophers spent a week or so together on this first visit, walking along the roads and shoreline cliff paths of Rhode Island, debating philosophy and the proper way to educate college students. Johnson would make seven or eight such visits over the next three years before Berkeley returned to England.

A Revolution in Education

Johnson's philosophical walking discussions with Berkeley led to him to publish in 1731 the first article by an American in a British intellectual journal, the prestigious *The Republic of Letters*. It was titled "An Introduction to the Study of Philosophy, exhibiting a General view of all the Arts and Sciences." [4] Intended "for the use of young Students" at the universities, it laid out a methodical college curriculum, presented as a walk through a metaphorical garden of learning, followed by a one page "table" categorizing all of philosophy. What is most interesting is Johnson's definition of the goal and means of education as *happiness*. He wrote, "The great End and Business therefore of Philosophy is to make us truly happy; and this is the End ultimately pursued through all the Arts and Sciences, they are only so many Means of our Happiness." [5]

Written to guide the education of two stepsons he sent to Yale, it also was Johnson's American response to the Rev. Dr. Daniel Waterland's popular and influential article "Advice to a Young Student at the University" which had first appeared in 1729 in same *The Republic of Letters* journal. [6] Waterland was the quintessential English theologian and educator, who rose on a ladder of

preference from Cambridge scholar to fellow, to Master of Magdalene College in 1714, then Chaplain to the King in 1717, Chancellor of the Diocese of York in 1722, Prebend of Windsor in 1727, and Archdeacon of Middlesex in 1730. During Johnson's yearlong ordination visit to England in 1722-1723, he had heard the orthodox powerhouse Waterland preach at Gresham College. [7]

Johnson admired Waterland's theological writings, but not his British educational theories. Waterland's essay was designed to lead "the Students of the Universities into a good Method of Improving both their Minds and Manners." [8] Waterland was grooming elite students for success in the class—and preference-based society of Great Britain, where advancement and entitlements were handed down from social superiors—as Waterland's ever upward career demonstrated. Waterland's British educational goal might be called "the pursuit of manners." Johnson introduced instead his differentiating American goal of "the pursuit of happiness." The article heralded a revolution in education that was not just a foreshadow of the famous words from the Declaration of Independence, but the source of the philosophy behind that document. Though this 1731 essay is brief and written in convoluted, comma-ridden, repetitious prose, typical of educators who used Latin as their language while teaching college students, it began the battle between the British pursuit of manners and the American pursuit of happiness that ended in the separation of the two nations nearly five decades later.

The American Enlightenment

The Republic of Letters article was not Johnson's first American educational innovation or his last. Born in Guilford, Connecticut in 1696, at age thirteen in 1710 he entered the Collegiate School at Saybrook (later renamed Yale). Like Harvard, the college then taught a curriculum based on a Puritan version of the curriculum taught at Oxford and Cambridge dating from Elizabethan times. This ancient and narrow curriculum left Johnson bored in his senior year. He decided to sum up all he had learned from his Harvard-educated tutors and their notes and in his college's seventy-book library, by writing in

Latin an *Encyclopedia* of the sum of all knowledge.[9] While a previous encyclopedia had taken a leading Dutch scholar twenty years to write, Johnson figured a year would be enough for him. Indeed, he was almost finished with his *Encyclopedia* when on commencement day in 1714 an announcement arrived. Connecticut's colonial agent in England, Jeremiah Dummer, had collected 800 books not then found in New England and was shipping them to the college.

At about the same time the books arrived, Johnson discovered another book. "Accidentally lighting on Lord [Francis] Bacon's *Instauratio Magna*"—considered the foundation document of empirical philosophy and the scientific revolution—Johnson "immediately bought it and greedily fell to studying it." [10] He tossed aside what he called "the scholastic cobwebs of a few little English and Dutch systems" that he had learned in the last four years, along with his just-finished Latin *Encyclopedia*. After absorbing the empirical methods of Francis Bacon, he started speed-reading the donated books containing what he called "The New Philosophy" or "The New Learning"—what today we call "The Enlightenment." Over the next two years while teaching at the Latin grammar school in his hometown of Guilford, he wrote in English a *Revised Encyclopedia* based on Bacon's inductive method and the Enlightenment books.[11]

In 1716, Yale was suffering from poor tutors and a divisive political debate over a planned move of the college from Saybrook forty miles down the coast to the larger town of New Haven. Two trustees, two tutors, and half the students broke off and formed a rival schismatic college in Wethersfield. Johnson was hired as the sole tutor in New Haven. Throwing caution out the door along with the cobweb Puritan curriculum, he created and taught the first Enlightenment curriculum in America using his *Revised Encyclopedia*. [12] He taught the works of Locke, Bacon, Newton, Boyle, and Copernicus. He taught algebra, trigonometry, and calculus. For two and a half years he basically ran the college almost alone until the Yale board of governors finally hired a new rector, the Rev. Dr. Timothy Cutler. Though Cutler befriended the

young tutor and continued to teach his curriculum, Johnson was essentially fired to pacify the schismatic trustees. In 1720, Johnson took up the position of Congregational minister of the tiny West Haven meeting house so he could be near his friends and Yale's library.

THE 100 BEST AMERICAN REVOLUTION BOOKS OF ALL TIME

(<https://allthingsliberty.com/2017/03/100-best-american-revolution-books-time/>)

Johnson's curriculum continued to be taught at Yale until 1726 when the reactionary Rev. Mr. Elisha Williams took over as Rector and returned Yale to the learning of the late sixteenth century. However, Williams had slammed the Yale house door shut too late. Johnson's Enlightenment curriculum had already been taught to 115 Yale students.[13] Of these, 56 became clergymen and spread the New Learning in their lectures and sermons. Some of these went on to help found, teach, or lead the College of New Jersey, now Princeton University.

The Religion of Nature

Having provoked his first educational revolution, he next started a denominational one. Beginning in 1719, he became the lead translator for a book study group of nine Puritan Yale faculty and Connecticut clergy reading Christian source documents from the first century. What they read caused seven of the nine to doubt their Presbyterian ordination and "declare for the episcopacy" at the Yale Commencement of 1722, an event which has been called "The true epoch from which to date the progress of a genuinely American Episcopal Church." [14] Three of the seven Puritan apostates soon recanted, but four went on to take Anglican orders in England. After his ordination the next year, Johnson was appointed as the sole Anglican minister in Connecticut, working out of the small parish of Stratford, Connecticut as a

missionary, starting with perhaps forty families in the village. He would build twenty-seven Anglican churches and found forty-three parishes in the colony over the next thirty years. Before he died, he trained about one hundred young college graduates for Anglican orders or as teaching laymen. For his missionary successes, he would receive a doctorate from Oxford, and eventually a Feast Day in his honor on the Episcopal Liturgical Calendar.

Though busy with missionary duties, he continued to study. His reading list from 1719 to 1729 included 593 mostly-serious works, including William Wollaston's *The Religion of Nature Delineated* which Johnson read in 1727. [15] Wollaston attempted to build a religion based on math and nature alone without resorting to revelation. He defined the religion of nature as "The pursuit of happiness by the practice of reason and truth." [16] This book was influential in the Deist movement. It intrigued and influenced Johnson, but he believed Wollaston could not create a consistent ethical system on the narrow framework of reason alone. He searched for better answers to his existential questions on morality that might allow God and "the invisible world" back into morality and science. Almost miraculously, he found sailing towards him from England the one philosopher who could guide him to answers: George Berkeley. Johnson got on his horse and rode to meet Berkeley in Newport, keeping track of his expenses on the way. On the way back he began thinking about writing up an American view of education and philosophy based on a synthesis of his *Revised Encyclopedia*, Wollaston's natural religion, and Berkeley's philosophy along with some added ideas of his own.

Philosophy Textbooks in English

In the 1730s, the colonies intellectually were at best a poor reflection of British culture and thought. In fact, they were backward: Yale had dropped its Enlightenment curriculum, and Harvard did not teach it. Moral philosophy (also known as ethics) was taught from antique Latin texts. Considered the most important discipline in the colonial period, teaching moral philosophy was often reserved for the head of a college. To have an influence on

American education Johnson needed a college platform and a more substantial work than his 1731 article. Johnson greatly expanded his short article into a textbook on moral philosophy in 1740. It was used in manuscript form at Yale College by the new Rector, the Rev. Thomas Clap, then it was published in 1743.[17] It was the first college textbook on the subject printed in English.[18] Johnson's philosophy textbook was a best seller. In eleven years, there were four American and two lower-cost larger-run London imprints, beyond the original 1731 journal article and imprints of it ordered by Johnson.[19] At this time in the American colonies the average edition-life was twelve years, and books on philosophy were rarely published, yet Johnson's college textbook went to 3,000 to 5,000 printed copies in eleven years.[20] This is more than one copy for each of the roughly 3,000 students who graduated from American colonial colleges between 1743 and 1776.[21]

In these textbooks Johnson taught what he called in his textbook subtitles "A new system of morality." His new system was based on variations of the phrase that "moral philosophy, or ethics" was "the pursuit of our highest Happiness by the universal practice of Virtue." [22] Historian Woodbridge Riley opened his history of American philosophy with the statement, "The influence of philosophy upon politics in America is easily seen in the evolution of such a familiar phrase as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." [23] If so, America began with Johnson's new system of morality, which he evolved from his 1731 essay to his last philosophy textbook revision in 1763. Taught in American colleges, it eventually led to the Declaration of Independence.

Pursuing happiness as the central moral imperative was not Johnson's only philosophical innovation. Berkeley had replaced Rene Descartes' existential principle "I think therefore I am" with his own Subjective Idealism maximum "to be is to be perceived." Johnson was a student of Berkeley but not a disciple. One reason Johnson had left his heritage Puritan religion was its fatalistic Calvinistic theology of predestination and sin. Johnson instead embraced the notion of free will. He believed that his mentor Berkeley had not left enough room for free will in his philosophy. So he came up with his own very American

maxim, “I perceive and act therefore I am,” bringing a practical action-oriented philosophy as well as happiness into the American mind.[24]

Johnson in all the editions of his philosophy textbooks always made the distinction between speculation and practice. He insisted that “our Happiness” requires pursuing both.[25] Now he would follow this abstract metaphysical speculation on perception with a new type of educational practice. He had perceived and thought, and now he would act.

The New-Model College

Around 1750, like his mentor Berkeley, Johnson decided to establish a new college in America. It would have not only a new curriculum and a new system of morality appropriate to the new world about to be settled, but a new organization. This time Johnson was not alone in his collegiate innovation: he was part of an educational triumvirate that included his old friend Benjamin Franklin and the educator William Smith. Each published their own editions of Johnson’s textbook and consulted with Johnson on the formation of their two proposed colleges. In 1754, Johnson opened King’s College (now Columbia University) in New York City. One year later it was followed by Dr. Benjamin Franklin and Provost Dr. William Smith opening the College of Philadelphia (now the University of Pennsylvania). What set these two colleges apart were their emphasis on science and utilitarian knowledge, instruction in English rather than Latin led by subject matter expert professors instead of tutors, profession-oriented curriculum, and the absence of denominational tests. They soon began to teach Locke’s political notion of “natural rights,” and Johnson’s moral philosophy of “the pursuit of happiness.”

When President James Madison of William and Mary College decided to reform his college during the American Revolution, he labeled the college plan as a “new-model” that would “suit this country best.”[26] Most universities since then have adapted a form of the “new-model” college as proposed by Johnson, Franklin, and Smith. Historian Joseph Ellis has noted that “The most

arresting feature of [Johnson's] proposal was its breadth. . . . The encyclopedic scope of Johnson's own mind undoubtedly encouraged him to offer a collage program that covered everything from inanimate matter to God," and that had Johnson offered a specific course for each field in his advertised proposal, "he would have been presiding, *mutatis mutandis*, over the equivalent of a twentieth-century university." [27]

Legacy

Johnson personally taught over 3,400 students between 1713 and his death in 1772. [28] Johnathan Edwards was one of his Yale students. He had a direct influence on his longtime friend and academic and publishing partner Dr. Benjamin Franklin, and his educational protégée Dr. William Smith, the Provost of the College of Philadelphia. He corresponded with educators at all the colleges in the American colonies and many in England, Ireland, and Scotland, sending them copies of his article and books. Even before he retired after nine and a half years as president of King's College, other colleges began to adapt the New Model college organization and curriculum and still follow it today. As the author of his influential philosophy textbooks, Johnson influenced the Founding Fathers. These included signers such as his wife's nephew Gen. William Floyd, his son's protégée Roger Sherman (<https://allthingsliberty.com/2017/09/roger-sherman-man-signed-four-founding-documents/>), his Yale student and King's trustee William Livingston, as well as King's College students Robert R. Livingston, John Jay, and Alexander Hamilton. And not just college graduates: over half the men who contributed to the deliberations leading to Declaration of Independence at the Continental Congress show evidence of Johnson's philosophical influence. [29] His Berkeley-influenced religion of nature and new morality based on the pursuit of happiness dominated the congress.

If you are looking for his influence on just one student, that would certainly be his eldest son, the politician, lawyer, sons of liberty founder, and statesman Dr. William Samuel Johnson (1727–1819). He was almost as consequential a

figure as his father. He was the Founding Father who lived to the oldest age. He was the only one to attend all four separate congresses: the Stamp Act Congress, the Continental Congress, the Constitutional Convention, and the U.S. Federal Congress. He played a major role in all these bodies, and wrote several seminal documents, including the final drafts of the Stamp Act Declaration and the U.S. Constitution. Indeed, by the convention of the time, as the chairman of the Committee of Style he would be considered the “author” of the Constitution. He became the vector by which his father’s moral philosophy became the political philosophy of the new country.

After the Revolutionary War, the elder Dr. Johnson’s moral philosophy was replaced with variants of the Scottish innate sense “realism” in the halls of academia. However, his “pursuit of Happiness” philosophy lived on, as John Adams wrote, “in the minds and hearts of the people” to become the foundational idea of American politics. Because of critical transitions in theology, education and philosophy initiated in no small part by Johnson, British precedent-based unwritten law was replaced by natural rights codified in a constitution; class rank and entitlement were replaced by equality of opportunity; and a deadening conformance to hierarchical group manners were replaced by an individual’s right to the pursuit of happiness. On his horseback ride back from Newport Johnson created the pursuit of happiness as the new differentiating idea of America that on July 4, 1776, in Abraham Lincoln’s words, “brought forth on this continent, a new nation.”

[1]Samuel Johnson, “An Account of my Expenses on a Journey to Rhode Island”, *Samuel Johnson papers*, MS#0679, Columbia University Rare Book & Manuscript Library, [1729].

[2]Franklin Bowditch Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College*, 6 vols. (New York: Holt, 1896), vol. 1. Salaries were sorted for

Connecticut clergy and dates c. 1729 and averaged. The average U.S. pastor's salary on April 26, 2022, was \$101,807 according to www.salary.com/research/salary/benchmark/pastor-salary(<http://www.salary.com/research/salary/benchmark/pastor-salary>).

[3]Herbert Schneider and Samuel Johnson, *Samuel Johnson, President of King's College; His Career and Writings*, ed. Herbert and Carol Schneider, 4 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929), 1:25.

[4]Samuel Johnson, "An Introduction to the Study of Philosophy, exhibiting A General View of Philosophy," *The Present State of The Republick of Letters*, (May 1731), 18 vols. (London: William Innus, 1731), 7:375-392. The quote is from the cover letter sent by "P. N." This was probably Philip Nicholls, a bookish friend of Johnson's in New York City, and represents Johnson's interpretation of Waterland's essay.

[5]Johnson, "An Introduction to the Study of Philosophy," 380.

[6]Daniel Waterland, "Advice to a Young Student at the University," *The Present State of The Republick of Letters* (December 1729), 4:412-443. The unauthorized 1729 journal article was published in corrected editions in 1730, 1755, 1760, 1761, and in Waterland's collected *Works* in 1843, 1846, 1856, and 1865.

[7]Eben Edwards Beardsley, *Life and correspondence of Samuel Johnson D.D.* (Hurd & Houghton, 1874), 48, 63, 67.

[8]Johnson, "An Introduction to the Study of Philosophy," 376.

[9]Schneider, *Writings*, 2:56–185, "An Encyclopedia of Philosophy."

[10]Schneider, *Writings*, 1:7, "Autobiography."

[11]Schneider, *Writings*, 2:200-216. What Schneider calls “The Revised Encyclopedia,” Johnson titled as *Some General Speculations, Being an Introduction Unto Sophia, or Philosophy*. Schneider suggests that it formed the basis for Johnson’s 1731 *Republik of Letters* article and for forty years of Johnson’s follow-on textbooks and curriculums.

[12]Joseph Ellis, *The New England Mind in Transition: Samuel Johnson of Connecticut, 1696–1772* (Yale University Press, 1973), 45-49. Ellis uses the Yale 1718 Commencement Broadside, Samuel Johnson, *Catalogus eorum qui in Collegio Yalensi, quod est Novi-Porti* (New London: T. Green, 1718) to trace the change from the old Puritan curriculum to what Johnson called the New Learning and what we call the Enlightenment.

[13]Dexter, *Biographical Sketches*, vol. 1, student biographies from 1716 to 1726; Bruce A. Kimball, *The True Professional Ideal in America: A History* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1995), Appendix 2.

[14]Leonard Wollsey Bacon, *A History of American Christianity* (London: James & Co., 1889), 134.

[15]Schneider, *Writings*, 1:495-526.

[16]William Wollaston, *The Religion of Nature Delineated* (United Kingdom: James and John Knapton, 1731), 52.

[17]Samuel Johnson, *An introduction to the study of philosophy exhibiting a general view of all the arts and sciences, for the use of pupils*. (New London: T. Green, 1743).

[18]British Library, *The English Short Title Catalogue*, [estc.bl.uk/\(http://estc.bl.uk/\)](http://estc.bl.uk/), in March of 2017 was searched for variations on “students/pupils/young scholars” and “moral philosophy” in the records. Johnson’s 1743 publication appears to be the first printed textbook on the

subject.

[19] Though he wrote his Latin *Encyclopaedia* in 1714, and his English *Revised Encyclopaedia* in 1716 – which his editor (Schneider, *Writings*, 2:202) considered the basis for Johnson’s college textbooks – Johnson himself stated on the title pages of later works that his 1731 article in the *The Republick of Letters* was the “first edition” of his moral philosophy. It was followed by a 1743 New London imprint of the much-expanded *Introduction to the Study of Philosophy* textbook, a 1744 London imprint, then two revised textbook imprints under the title *Ethices Elementa* in Boston in 1746 and 1748. Benjamin Franklin printed Johnson’s once again revised textbook as *Elementa Philosophia* in Philadelphia in 1752. Franklin also republished the second part as *Ethica: or the first principles of moral philosophy* as a stand-alone imprint later that a year. Johnson’s protégée the Rev. Dr. William Smith printed in England in 1754 a lower cost edition. Johnson prepared a heavily revised manuscript version with the title *Elements of Philosophy: A Short System of the Mind & Morals*, dated January 6, 1764, *Samuel Johnson papers*, Columbia University Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

[20] Hugh Amory and David D. Hall, *A History of the Book in America*, 5 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1:51, 1:106. A search of British Library’s *The English Short Title Catalogue*, estc.bl.uk/ (<http://estc.bl.uk/>), on April 30, 2022, with (Words= philosophy, W-year= 1740->1763, country of publication = United States) found only ten published philosophy imprints and four of these were by Johnson. Quoting the colonial printer Isaiah Thomas, *A History of the Book in America* notes that 500 copies for an American imprint was a reasonable press run for most works, though 600 to 2,000 copies (1:340) were not uncommon for histories and important theological works, while educational works ran as high as 2,000 (1:340) and 2,500 copies (1:344). Larger runs were also possible for protolyzing sermons and controversial pamphlets, and for works printed in London where costs were lower. Five hundred to eight hundred copies are a reasonable range for Johnson’s six textbook imprints. In addition, his original 1731 journal article in the popular

The Republic of Letters had perhaps three thousand printed copies and were also widely shared. E. A. Reitan, "Expanding Horizons: Maps in the Gentleman's Magazine: 1731-1754", *Imago Mundi*, Vol. 37, (1985): 54-62, 54, notes that the *Gentleman's Magazine* started competing with the *Republic of Letters* in 1731 at a circulation of 2,000 to 3,000 and grew by the 1740s to 5,000 to 6,000. Johnson also reprinted his 1731 article in London and sent copies to colonial educators.

[21]Thomas L. Purvis, *Colonial America to 1763* (Infobase Publishing, 1999), gives cumulative total of 1,943 Anglo-American college graduates by 1743, and 4,906 cumulative graduates by 1776, or 2,963 graduates who might have been exposed to Johnson's printed textbooks.

[22]Schneider, *Writings*, 2:372.

[23]Woodbridge Riley, *American Thought: From Puritanism to Pragmatism* (United States: H. Holt, 1915), 1.

[24]Schneider, *Writings*, 2:381.

[25]Johnson, "An Introduction to the Study of Philosophy", 381, 384.

[26]Horace Wemyss Smith, *The Life and Correspondence of the Rev. Wm. Smith, D.D.*, 2 vol. (Philadelphia, 1880), 1:566-567, "Letter from President James Madison of William and Mary College to Provost William Smith, Williamsburg, Virginia, September 25, 1776."

[27]Ellis, *The New England Mind*, 207, quoting Richard Gummere, *The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition* (Harvard University Press, 1963), 65.

[28]This is a rough calculation based on estimates of the students Johnson taught from 1713 to 1772. It includes 205 common school children, 139

grammar school students, 148 college students, an estimated 2,850 adults in religious classes, and ninety-eight post-graduate “student/disciples” in his “Housatonic Seminary” or at King’s College for a total of 3,424 students in fifty-nine years.

[29]Neil C. Olsen, *Pursuing Happiness: The Organizational Culture of the Continental Congress* (Nonagram Publications, 2013), Appendix I, documents Johnson’s influence on the 106 men who contributed to the development of the *Declaration of Independence*. For an illuminating discussion of the possible influence (or not) of Deism on the early Continental Congress see David Otersen “Divine Providence and Deism in The Declaration of Independence”, *Journal of the American Revolution*, July 21, 2021, allthingsliberty.com/2021/07/divine-providence-and-deism-in-the-declaration-of-independence(<https://allthingsliberty.com/2021/07/divine-providence-and-deism-in-the-declaration-of-independence>).