A Literary Quaker:
John Smith of Burlington and Philadelphia

Historians of literary culture in pre-Revolutionary America have passed rather lightly over the Middle Colonies, focusing their attention for the most part upon the colonies to the north and south, upon New England and Virginia. The extensive intervening region, diversified in racial characteristics and social patterns, highly developed in its intellectual interests, and extremely important for the future of American culture, remains virtually unexplored from this point of view. An important consequence is that we know relatively little about the cultural climate of colonial Philadelphia, the principal urban center in the Middle Colonies, destined presently to become the literary and intellectual as well as the political capital of the United States.

"By the close of the colonial age," writes Moses Coit Tyler, "Philadelphia had grown to be the centre of a literary activity more vital and more versatile than was to be seen anywhere else upon the continent, except at Boston." Such literary activity presupposes a cultivated and receptive reading public as well as a group of practicing authors. The accepted view of Philadelphia's cultural life at this period has distinguished three major groups: (1) a small, fairly sophisticated circle around Provost William Smith of the

1 Thomas G. Wright, Literary Culture in Early New England (New Haven, 1920) and Louis B. Wright, The First Gentlemen of Virginia (San Marino, 1940) are model studies in these two fields. Chester T. Hallenbeck, ed., "A Colonial Reading List from the Union Library of Hatboro, Pennsylvania," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, LVI. 289-340, is a valuable and almost unique contribution to the study of literary culture in the Middle Colonies. (Carl Bridenbaugh, "The Press and the Book in Eighteenth Century Philadelphia," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, LXV. 1-30, appeared after this article was completed.)

2 A History of American Literature During the Colonial Time (New York, 1897), II. 228.
College of Philadelphia, cosmopolitan in interests, and mainly Anglican in religion; (2) a large but relatively inarticulate group of Quakers, hostile to worldly culture, and preoccupied with money-making and philanthropy; and (3) Benjamin Franklin. This essay deals with the literate background of a prominent Quaker merchant, and suggests that neither Franklin nor the Anglican group had a monopoly of cultural interests and aspirations in colonial Philadelphia.

I

By 1743, the year in which John Smith came to Philadelphia, the Quakers had long been a minority in the city. Nevertheless, their impress upon the physiognomy and the daily life of Philadelphia was strong, out of proportion to their numbers, and their influence in politics was still paramount. Thirteen years of political hegemony remained to them before they were obliged to relinquish their control of the Assembly in the face of the frontier's demand for an adequate provincial defense. The Quaker merchants of Philadelphia occupied a dominant position in the economic life of the community, for the Quakers could teach even Franklin a few lessons in diligence and thrift.

It was, no doubt, the economic opportunities which Philadelphia offered a young man that drew John Smith at the age of twenty-one from Burlington, New Jersey, the home of his fathers. Born

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"In 1744 the population of Philadelphia was placed at 13,000 (Evarts B. Greene and Virginia D. Harrington, American Population before the Federal Census of 1790 [New York, 1932], 117). Estimates of the proportion of Quakers at this period vary, but it is safe to say that they numbered fewer than one-third of the total. Bridenbaugh sets the proportion at one-fourth (Carl Bridenbaugh, Cities in the Wilderness [New York, 1938], 422)."

"The principal source for the life of John Smith is his manuscript diary in eleven volumes (Vol. VI missing), at the Ridgway Library, Philadelphia. Part of this diary has been edited by Albert Cook Myers under the title Hannah Logan's Courtship (Philadelphia, 1904). Many letters to and from John Smith are extant and may be found in the Smith MSS, also at the Ridgway Library, the Pemberton Papers and the Cox-Parrish-Wharton Papers at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Gulielma M. Howland Collection, Roberts Hall, Haverford College, and elsewhere. Of the secondary materials, the following are the most important: R. Morris Smith, The Burlington Smiths (Philadelphia, 1877); a brief biographical sketch by William Nelson in New Jersey Archives, 1st Series (Newark, 1886), X. 231n; and John Jay Smith, Letter to Horace Binney, Esq. (Philadelphia, 1852)."
in 1722, he came of a substantial Quaker family. His father, whom Richard Peters referred to as “the head of the Quaquors [sic]” in the New Jersey Assembly, was a prosperous merchant, carrying on a thriving trade with the West Indies. In 1741, two years before he removed to Philadelphia, John Smith made a voyage to Barbados as supercargo on one of his father’s vessels. After this youthful excursion he scarcely strayed from the banks of the Delaware. He knew little of the great world, therefore, from personal experience, and this fact may in part explain his later avidity for travel books. His formal schooling was undoubtedly meager, for Burlington offered few educational facilities, and the Quakers had no interest in education above the elementary grades. Nevertheless, he had some knowledge of Latin, for we find him at the age of sixteen translating the Colloquies of Corderius, the book which served generations of schoolboys as a pathway to mastery of the Latin tongue. He evidently had at least a smattering of French, for he owned a French grammar, and the only copy of Barclay’s Apology (the indispensable nucleus of every Quaker library) which appears in the list of his books was a French translation.

Arriving in Philadelphia in 1743, he opened a “dry goods” store, and commenced selling a bewildering variety of wares, including pork, beef, rum, molasses, and flaxseed. The chief source of profits for the enterprising Philadelphian of that period, however, was the exchange of goods with the West Indies, and John Smith was not slow in entering this lucrative trade. He was successful in his mercantile ventures from the outset; his net profit for the year 1746 was £800, and by 1748, when he was barely twenty-eight, he was able to tell James Logan, his prospective father-in-law, that he was

6 Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, XXIII. 531.
6 None of the authorities listed in note 4 throws any light on John Smith’s education, and the educational history of Burlington is so fragmentary that it is impossible to form even a satisfactory conjecture. Normally a Quaker youth would be sent to a school maintained by the local Monthly Meeting, but information about such a school in Burlington is disappointingly scanty. See Thomas Woody, Quaker Education in the Colony and State of New Jersey (Philadelphia, 1923), 57.
7 Several years later he records copying passages from “Desiderius” into his commonplace book. Perhaps this refers to Erasmus, whose Colloquia was another popular Latin text. Among the Smith MSS (V. 253), in John Smith’s hand, is an undated translation of a Latin prayer by John Rusbrochius (Jan van Ruysbroek, 14th-century Flemish mystical writer). The translation may be by John Smith himself.
worth about £3000. As the years passed, and he came to be one of the leading citizens of Philadelphia, there were many demands upon his time, which he cheerfully met, but he did not neglect his material advancement. His diary contains many entries like the following: “Was up early in the morning, & stuck very close to opening, marking, and selling Goods all day.”

He owned a handsome dwelling in the city, and a country estate or “plantation” at Point-no-point on the Delaware. He entertained liberally at both establishments, for he was on good terms with the leading families in Philadelphia society, both Quaker and non-Quaker. In 1748 he married the daughter of the most distinguished man in the province, James Logan. He was the founder, in 1752, of the Philadelphia Contributionship for the Insurance of Houses from Loss by Fire, one of the first insurance companies in North America, and he acted as its treasurer and main executive officer during its infancy. He is also credited by his descendants with establishing the first line of regular packets between Philadelphia and Liverpool.

Like most of the other prominent Quaker merchants of his day, he was active in civic affairs. He was a member of one of the early Philadelphia fire companies. Elected for three successive years (1750, 1751, and 1752) to the Pennsylvania Assembly, he served on several important committees with Isaac Norris, Israel Pember-ton, Benjamin Franklin, and the other great men of the day. When Dr. Thomas Bond, with Franklin’s help, established the Pennsylvania Hospital, John Smith became one of the first man-aged, and acted for a time as its secretary. He was a member of the Library Company of Philadelphia and of the American Philosophical Society.

Despite the pressure of all this worldly activity, he remained a faithful and devoted Friend. His diary differs markedly from most Quaker journals in that it records many of the day-by-day events of his life in the world, but it is also a chronicle of his inner life, and reveals him as a man of deep spiritual convictions. “His attachment to the religion of his education,” wrote his brother, the historian

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*Pennsylvania Archives, 8th Series, Vol. IV. passim.*
Samuel Smith, “was strong, but not blind. Having examined it, as its importance required, it became the religion of his judgment, and he bore his testimony to it in all its branches with exemplary perseverance and fidelity.” 10 He attended meetings for worship diligently, at least three times a week, and he seldom missed a Monthly, Quarterly, or Yearly Meeting for business. He was an Overseer of Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, an Overseer of Friends’ School, and for several years Clerk of the Monthly Meeting. The fact that he was intrusted with these important offices indicates beyond question that despite his comparative youth he was respected by his co-religionists as a “solid” and “weighty” Friend. The testimony of William Reckitt, a visiting English minister, is clear on this point: he describes Smith as “a substantial friend, and a very serviceable man in the society.” 11

All this multifarious activity was crowded into the brief period of thirteen years, for in 1756, his health failing, John Smith retired from business, and returned to the family residence in Burlington to pass the rest of his days in gentlemanly ease. 12 Although only thirty-four years old when he retired, he had acquired a handsome fortune, which was considerably increased by the property which his wife brought him. He purchased Franklin Park, the estate of Governor William Franklin, with its herd of a hundred deer, as a country seat, and until his death in 1771 he lived in Burlington the life of a typical eighteenth-century provincial gentleman, devoting his time to public services, philanthropies, and literary pursuits. In 1758 he was appointed by mandamus from the King a member of the New Jersey Council. He was a justice of the peace, and served on several state commissions. He was one of the founders of the Library Company of Burlington and a principal donor to it. With other Friends he helped form the “New Jersey Association for Helping the Indians,” a society which in 1757 proposed to establish

12 For a brief period in 1761 he was in Philadelphia again, but after his wife’s death in childbirth at the end of that year he returned with his family to Burlington. (See the record of certificates granted and received by Burlington and Philadelphia Monthly Meetings in William W. Hinshaw, Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy [Richmond, Indiana, 1938], II. 261, 654.
a reservation for the dispossessed Delaware Indians. The quiet town
of Burlington was only eighteen miles up the river from Philadel-
phia, and John Smith, though living in comparative retirement, kept
himself in contact, by means of frequent visits and an extensive
correspondence, with the wider issues of American colonial life as
they made themselves felt in the growing metropolis.

From this brief sketch of John Smith's life a few salient facts
emerge: he was an enterprising and successful merchant, a public-
spirited citizen, a faithful and respected Friend, and a man of gen-
tlemanly tastes and aspirations.

II

In January, 1767, in the second number of the newly estab-
lished Pennsylvania Chronicle, there appeared the first of a long
series of essays of the Spectator-Idler type, signed "Atticus." The
author of these papers was John Smith, now in retirement at
Burlington, and he later boasted: "Though I cannot claim the
honour of being the first attempter of this method of writing in this
place, having seen a paper called The Busy Body, printed many
years ago in the Mercury . . . and a few papers in the different
Magazines, which have been compiled and published in this city.
Yet I believe I have continued to a greater length of numbers, than
any other. . . ." 13

This was not John Smith's first venture into print. Twenty years
earlier, he had published a defense of Quaker pacifism in answer to
a sermon by the Reverend Gilbert Tennent. Tennent was, after
George Whitefield, the leading spokesman of the Great Awakening
in the Middle Colonies. He had lent the weight of his authority in
1748 to the newly formed Association for the defense of the prov-
ince with a sermon on "The Lawfulness of Defensive War." John
Smith was "so moved at the deceit and Quirks in it" that he forth-
with composed an answer which, after being approved by the Quaker
Overseers of the Press, was published by Franklin and Hall in
1748 under the title The Doctrine of Christianity as Held by the

13 Pennsylvania Chronicle, May 29-June 5, 1769. The letters of Atticus ran to seventy
numbers, the last appearing in August, 1770, six months before the author's death. The
Busy-Body papers by Franklin and Joseph Breintnall ran to thirty-two numbers.
People Called Quakers, Vindicated. An edition of 1000 copies was printed, followed by a second edition; and the author records with gratification that on the day of publication "the printer's house & indeed my own was like a fair—people came so thick to get them. D. Hall told me that he never saw a pamphlet in so much Request at first coming out in London." Since Tennent had justified war on a Scriptural basis, Smith undertook to refute him on his own grounds; consequently much of the pamphlet consists of the citation of contrary texts, together with some exegetical comment from Matthew Poole's Annotations upon the Holy Bible, and quotations from Church Fathers and Quaker writers. This copious citing of authorities, dictated by the terms on which the controversy was waged, undoubtedly enhanced the effectiveness of Smith's reply in the minds of contemporaries, although the method seems sufficiently barren and futile today. Nevertheless, through the thicket of proof-texts and authorities, comes the clear voice of a conscientious pacifist, bearing his testimony to the Quaker ideal of peace.

In the answer to Tennent John Smith spoke semiofficially for the Society of Friends. A later literary undertaking was in the form of a private act of faith, involving an immense amount of research. This was his monumental Lives of the Ministers of the Gospel among the People Called Quakers in three folio volumes, which remains in manuscript. From every available source—from unpublished memorials, from printed works, from personal recollections—he gathered materials about the obscure labors and travels of hundreds of Quaker ministers who might otherwise have been nameless. He devoted countless hours, towards the end of his life to this labor of love, but wrote to his friend James Pemberton: "I would not have thee understand that I propose any publication from what I can collect. I aim only to compile the most authentic acco\^{15} I can get at with such notes as occur and when that is done, perhaps some friend may be spirited to make something useful out of it."  

\^{14} All quotations not otherwise footnoted are from the manuscript diary. Permission to quote material from the diary of John Smith and from the Smith manuscripts at the Ridgway Library has been granted by The Library Company of Philadelphia.  
\^{15} At Roberts Hall, Haverford College.  
\^{16} The number of persons noticed is stated to be 1287—887 men and 400 women. See Bulletin of the Friends' Historical Association, IX. 30.  
\^{17} Cox-Parrish-Wharton Papers, Vol. XI.
The Atticus papers, however, represent John Smith’s major excursion into the realm of letters. Cast in the conventional form of communications to the editor of the Pennsylvania Chronicle, they were the ripe fruit of his experience in the world, his reflections in retirement, and his wide reading. In the third number, in a passage obviously reminiscent of Addison’s tenth Spectator, he stated his aims: “I shall take the privilege of treating on any subjects that may excite innocent mirth, or lead to, and promote just and proper reflections on conversation, or more important conduct in life.”

This apologia, continuing, reveals something about his literary admirations. He has not, he admits, “the searching genius into nature and nature’s laws” of Newton, Boyle, Locke, or Franklin, “the various abilities” of Addison and Steele, “the charming sense and elegant ease” of Pope, “the inimitable drollery” of Swift, “the exactness of Johnson, whose polished periods are happily designed to mend our manners, and our language,” “the exquisite humour” of Fielding and the authors of the World, or “the beautiful and excellent manner of developing the human heart” of Richardson. Nevertheless, he concludes, he sees no reason why he should bury his thoughts in perpetual silence; accordingly, at irregular intervals over a period of more than three years, he continued to express his thoughts in public with as much literary polish as his modest abilities permitted.

He had read widely, as we shall see, in the efflorescence of periodical literature which marked his century, and his style was consciously imitative of these English models. He had, of course, read the Tatler and the Spectator, but he had also read the Rambler and the Idler, and though his style has not quite the ponderousness of Johnsonese, neither has it quite the deftness and grace of Addisonian English. He was becomingly modest about his literary attainments, pleading in extenuation of any incorrectness in his style that “my other concerns in life, necessarily engross much of my time and attention.” Nevertheless, he took his writing seriously, and

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20 Ibid.

21 Ibid., February 22-February 29, 1768.
even envisaged publication of his essays in book form, for he wrote: “I am very fond of that kind of writing, wherein a subject must be treated concisely, and this is one reason of my making some modest attempts in that way, which rise (in numbers at least) under my hand, in such a manner that I begin to imagine they may in a while form a volume or two in twelves. . . .”

In common with the contemporary English practitioners of the periodical essay, he touches upon a wide variety of topics. The first paper, for instance, “On reason & the deceptions it is liable to,” is heavily moralistic in tone. The second essay, “On Country fairs,” is in quite a different vein: he gives an engaging description of scenes at the fair, and observes that the number and variety of English manufactures on sale demonstrates the utility of the colonies to the mother country. Among the later papers are essays on such subjects as frugality, surnames, superstition, last wills and testaments, “Libertinism & Buckism,” “Kissing & Beards,” and “the Law of Kindness.”

If, on the whole, there is more morality than wit in these essays, they are not entirely lacking in lighter touches. The seventh paper, for example, treats of marriage, a favorite topic of Atticus, and endeavors to dispose of the reasons commonly given by young men for not marrying. In the course of the discussion he remarks that “natural imbecility and impotency to do the duties of a husband” is a cause for pity, not for blame, and he suggests that it might be well to conclude that all bachelors over twenty-five are thus incapacitated unless they assign other adequate causes. In accordance with a convention of the periodical essay, he frequently introduces characters to illustrate and enliven his arguments. For example, in the eighth essay, “On Conversation,” he draws the characters of Hilarius, whose invention is too strong for his memory; Indolus, who will speak only on his favorite topic, and on that talks too much; Evander, who, having traveled, will expatiate at length on the superiority of everything abroad to anything at home; and Timoleus, who, thinking too much cunning and falsehood are con-
sealed under a mask of politeness, chooses to be "plain and honest" in his discourse; i.e., rough and unmannerly. 25

The letters of Atticus were evidently popular, for they often appeared on the first page of the Chronicle. But the early numbers had to share the limelight with no mean rival—John Dickinson's "Farmer's Letters." As time went on, and the popular sentiment against Great Britain rose, the calm, refined tones of Atticus were all but lost amid the clamor of sundry Catos, Brutuses, and Publicolas, who loudly called for stringent measures against the mother country. Atticus, however, chose to leave "the discussion of politics to other pens." 26 "I do not meddle with controversy," he wrote, "I aim solely at the discouragement of folly and vice, and to promote virtue and good nature." 27 Our only hint of John Smith's own attitude with regard to the approaching political crisis comes indirectly through the character of his barber Trim, who has for some time been "vastly concerned about the opposition which North-America makes, to the injudicious designs of weak men, at the helm in our mother country." But from Trim's remarks and significant shrugs Atticus concludes that "he had rather live quietly, even under what we generally would be clear from if we could, than to be engaged in what are called civil broils and wars." 28 This, substantially, was the attitude of most Quakers, mindful of George Fox's warning to keep clear of "commotions," and there is every reason to suppose that this was the position which John Smith took as the Revolution approached.

Such, then, in brief review, was the character of John Smith's literary output. Although it is not greatly significant in the history of American literature, 29 it has its importance in providing some of the outlines for our picture of the literary interests of a cultivated Quaker gentleman. And since our primary concern is with literary culture, it is appropriate to quote from Atticus' essay on reading. "To read for delight and profit," he says, "is a most rational way of employing a part of our time, and is what in this happy age and

26 Ibid., November 7-November 14, 1768.
27 Ibid., November 28-December 5, 1768.
28 Ibid., February 20-February 27, 1769.
29 Mathew Carey thought highly enough of the Atticus papers, however, to reprint the first five numbers in 1788 in the American Museum.
country, people of all classes, that can read at all, may do, in greater or less variety." As a Quaker he is concerned, naturally, with the relation of reading to morality, but he takes a fairly liberal view. Many novels, he allows, have a tendency to corrupt the minds of the young, but by no means all: "Those of Fenelon, Fielding, and Richardson, ought unquestionably to be considered as excellent in their kind, and cannot be read to any bad purpose, unless there are minds, like some sorts of spiders, which are supposed to increase their venom by sucking the sweetest flowers." His views on the selection of books are notably catholic: "there ought to be, in every family, some good books to be always at hand, not merely systematic treatises, to support the particular tenets of any sect or party; these are, I believe, common enough, but such as are designed to enlarge the understanding, and mend the heart. . . ."

III

John Smith himself was an omnivorous reader. The opportunities which he enjoyed for obtaining books were almost unsurpassed in the American colonies. He owned a respectable number of books himself, purchased from Franklin, Bradford, Dunlap, and Rivington in Philadelphia, and from Thomas Osborne, the famous London bookseller. Furthermore, he was a member of the Library Company, and frequently drew books from its excellent collection. Most important of all, he had access to one of the two or three finest collections of books in the colonies—the library of his father-in-law James Logan—and we know from the diary that he spent many hours among the books at Stenton.

Naturally, at this distance, it is impossible to recover a complete record of John Smith's reading. Nevertheless, we can reconstruct a portion of it comprehensive enough to provide an indication of the range and character of his literate interests. It is possible to point to a total of two hundred and forty titles which we can be reasonably certain that he read. For purposes of discussion and analysis

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30 Penna. Chron., October 17-October 24, 1768.
31 This fragmentary picture of John Smith's reading has been pieced together from a number of sources. The nucleus is a "List of John Smith's Books" in the Smith MSS (VIII. 60). This list comprises 116 titles. Some of these volumes, and a few not on the list but bearing his signature, have been located and consulted. From the
I have ranged these books under six general classifications: (1) Religion, (2) Philosophy and Conduct, (3) Politics and Law, (4) Science, Medicine, and Practical Arts, (5) History, Biography, and Travel, and (6) Belles Lettres.32

Religious books form the most numerous single group, but, considering John Smith’s religious background, it is surprising to find that they constitute only thirty-one per cent of the total number of titles. It is even more surprising, in view of the familiar notion that sound Quakers read only the Bible and Friends’ books, to discover that Quaker literature (of all kinds, including journals, sermons, tracts, biography, and Quaker history33) comprises only half the total number of religious works, and less than one-sixth of the whole number of books read.

It would be a mistake, however, to underestimate the importance of John Smith’s reading in the literature of Quakerism. He was, we remember, a conscientious Friend, and an apologist and historian manuscript diary, in which he often comments on the books he is reading, 74 additional titles have been gleaned. The remaining items come from John Smith’s correspondence, from other papers among the Smith MSS, and from his published writings. In using the Atticus papers as a source of information about his reading I have been circumspect, and have avoided assuming, when he merely quotes a passage as an epigraph, that he has necessarily read the book from which the passage is taken. Another possible source of information I have thought best to reject; namely, Smith’s donations to the library companies of Philadelphia and Burlington. From the published catalogues of these libraries it appears that John Smith presented six books to The Library Company of Philadelphia and over one hundred and fifty to the Library Company of Burlington. (See A Catalogue of the Books Belonging to the Library Company of Philadelphia [Philadelphia, 1789] and The Charter, Laws, and Catalogue of Books of the Library Company of Burlington [Philadelphia, 1758]). It is tempting but, on the whole, unsafe to assume that he read all these books.

It will be noted that I have advisedly used the term title instead of volume. Thus “14 Vol: of the Gentlemans Magazine” is counted as one title. “Warburtons Edition of Popes works 9 Vol:” is likewise reckoned as one title, and references in the diary to Smith’s reading “Windsor forrest” or other individual works of Pope are disregarded in arriving at the total number of works read. Contrariwise, two separate works bound together count as two titles.

These categories are admittedly arbitrary, but they will serve as convenient guideposts. In some instances it has been difficult to assign a book to its proper group. One is puzzled, for example, as to how to classify Télémaque. Is it a religious tract? a moral guide? a political treatise? a romance? One can only select the aspect of the book which seems most important and classify it accordingly.

I have lumped together under the heading of Religion all books by Quaker authors on the ground that whatever the method—whether directly hortatory or ostensibly historical—the purpose is generally edification.
of Quakerism. His own diary, as we have noticed, only partially conforms to the standard pattern of the Quaker journal, but he was well acquainted with the spiritual autobiographies of the early Friends. First and foremost, of course, was the Journal of George Fox, the founder of Quakerism—one of the master documents in the history of mystical religion. By way of contrast to the rapt enthusiasm of Fox, he read the pedestrian Journal of the respectable George Whitehead, the leader of the sect after Fox's death. The Journal of William Edmundson, the apostle of Irish Quakerism, and the racy Journal of the Welsh hatter Richard Davies, were in his library. The other "First Publishers of Truth" were well represented, for he owned the journals of John Burnyeat, Thomas Wilson, John Banks, John Barcroft, and David Hall. The Journal of John Fothergill, whose preaching he had himself heard at the age of fourteen, was among his books, and he read, shortly after it appeared in 1747, the great folio Journal of Thomas Story, the friend and correspondent of James Logan. We know that he read the salty Journal of Thomas Chalkley, the seafaring Philadelphia Quaker, for he corrected the proofs of Chalkley's Works for the press in 1749.

His library was well stocked with the writings of Quaker preachers and controversialists. He possessed the collected works of William Penn, Isaac Penington, William Smith, John Crooks, and that "son of thunder," the indomitable opponent of Bunyan, Edward Burrough, as well as the Sermons of Stephen Crisp. The Epistles of George Fox, and the annual Epistles of London Yearly Meeting were of especial importance, for they carried great weight among Friends everywhere in matters of faith and conduct. Anthony Pearson's Great Case of Tithes, to which was appended a Defence of Some Principles Held by the People Called Quakers by Josiah Martin, served John Smith as an armory of arguments and authorities when he composed his reply to Tennent. His library contained several Quaker devotional works of a Quietist note like Hugh Turford's Grounds of a Holy Life, as well as books like Alexander

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34 This was a gift from the journalist's son, the famous Dr. John Fothergill. In thanking him for it Smith wrote: "as I personally knew him and had a more than common Esteem for him, it was a very welcome present" (John Smith Correspondence, Historical Society of Pennsylvania).
Arscott's *Some Considerations Relating to the Present State of the Christian Religion*, which attempted to meet deists and rationalists like Matthew Tindal on their own ground. Two interesting books by fellow-Pennsylvanians were on his shelves: Ellis Pugh's *Salutation to the Britons*, translated from the original Welsh and published in Philadelphia in 1727, and Ralph Sandiford's *Mystery of Iniquity*, an early antislavery tract, printed by Franklin in 1730.

John Smith was well-informed on the history of his own sect, having read Willem Sewel's *History of the Rise, Increase, and Progress of the Society of Friends* and John Rutty's *History of the Rise and Progress of the People Called Quakers in Ireland*, both written by Quakers. Much of the early history of Quakerism, unhappily, is made up of the persecutions of Friends for conscience' sake. Records of these "sufferings" were diligently collected and printed for the reproach of contemporaries and the edification of posterity. John Smith had several of these compilations, including Joseph Besse's *Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers* and Fuller and Holmes's *Compendious View* of the sufferings of the Quakers in Ireland. "Piety Promoted in 5 parts," a title which appears in the list of his books, refers to a collection by John Tomkins and John Field of the dying sayings of many Quaker worthies, together with brief accounts of their labors and sufferings. Possibly some residual sense of indignation against New Englanders was kept rankling in John Smith's bosom by his reading of George Bishop's *New England Judged*, an account of the persecution of the Quakers by the Puritans, with a reply to Cotton Mather's abuse of the Quakers in the *Magnalia*. A final work which may properly be mentioned in this context is Thomas Ellwood's *Sacred History*. Ellwood was a Quaker and a friend of John Milton; his *Sacred History* consisted of "the historical parts of the Holy Scriptures, gathered out from the other parts thereof and digested into due method, with respect to order of time and place."

John Smith's reading in religious books by other than Quaker writers is remarkable for its variety and catholicity. Among pre-Reformation writers he knew St. Macarius, a fourth-century Egyptian mystic, whose homilies had been translated in 1721 under the title *Primitive Morality*; and Athenagoras's *Apologeticks*, two treatises (on the Christian religion and on the Resurrection) by an
obscure Greek writer of the second century, translated into English in 1714. His copy of Thomas à Kempis may well have been the edition published in 1749 in Germantown by Christopher Sauer under the title *The Christian Pattern*. His Quakerism undoubtedly led him to find congenial spirits among the mystical writers of every faith. He owned the sermons of John Everard (perhaps *Some Gospel Treasures; or, The Holiest of All Unvailing*, also published by Sauer in 1757), and he read much in the works of the Anglican mystic William Law.

He was apparently acquainted with the issues involved in the so-called “Bangorian controversy” between the High- and Low-Church parties in England, for the diary tells of his reading “Law’s answer to Hoadley” (*William Law, Three Letters to the Bishop of Bangor*), the most important document in the controversy. He also read some of the other High-Church divines, including Bishop Atterbury, William Sherlock (*A Practical Discourse Concerning Death*), and Robert South. Outsider though he was, his own sympathies appear quite clearly in his reactions to the sermons of South. At first, he was favorably impressed, attracted perhaps by the homely style of the sermons, for he remarks in his diary that he is “well pleased with them.” His later comments, however, are revelatory. After reading a little further he observes: “The more I read him The less I like him”; and finally, giving him up with obvious disrelish: “find he was a Rigid Tory.” He seems, on the whole, to have preferred the more liberal Anglicans like Archbishop Tillotson and Samuel Clarke. At the age of eighteen, indeed, he was concerned to vindicate Tillotson from Jonathan Edwards’ charge that he denied the eternity of Hell torments. After searching Tillotson’s *Works* “to See whether D’ Edwards Charges against him were True or not,” he concluded: “Although I Think there are Several Errors and Imperfections In Tillotson’s Works Yet I Think Edwards has not done him Justice. . . .”

His interest in theological controversy extended to the disputes occasioned in Philadelphia by the preaching of Whitefield, Tennent, and the other evangelists. He was a curious, though detached spectator of the Great Awakening, and within a few weeks of Whitefield’s first arrival in Philadelphia, he commissioned a friend to
buy him a copy of Whitefield's *Journal*, then being published in installments by Benjamin Franklin. "Whitefield's Journal & Sermons" appears in the inventory of his books.

The variety of devotional books which he read bears witness to his tolerance and broad sympathies. "D' Jer: Taylor's imitation of Christ," mentioned in the diary, may refer to Jeremy Taylor's *The Great Exemplar*, a life of Christ, of particular interest to a Quaker on account of its notable description of the Quietist state of mystical "contemplation." *Grace Abounding*, the spiritual autobiography of John Bunyan, was among the books which he left at his death. Other works of edification which he read at various periods of his life include the scientist Robert Boyle's early discourse, *Seraphic Love*, John Scott's Anglican manual of devotion, *The Christian Life*, Sir Matthew Hale's popular *Contemplations, Divine and Moral*, and Richard Steele's *Christian Hero*, in which the future author of the *Tatler* utters a plea for dependence on the Bible rather than the example of classical heroes as a guide in life. Indicative of his sympathy with contemporary emotional currents in English religious life and writing is his reading in such a book as James Hervey's *Meditations and Contemplations*, a popular work containing "Meditations among the Tombs" and similar pieces, written in an inflated style. Shortly before reading this book he remarks in his diary: "having a design of writing some Grave Yard meditations I began them this Even". One is doubtful whether to connect this with his reading in the current mortuary literature or with the fact, recorded in the previous entry, that he was suffering from a severe toothache! That he was susceptible to religious poetry is evidenced by his possession of "Wesleys Poems" and "Isaac Watts's works." Fénelon was one of John Smith's favorite authors: his library contained "Cambrays Letters" (*Letters upon Divers Subjects Concerning Religion and Metaphysics*), "Characters of Charity" (*The Characters and Properties of True Charity Display'd*), and the *Dissertation on Pure Love*, translated by the

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35 Whether these were the poems of Samuel, Charles, or John Wesley there is no means of telling. In any event they represented an evangelical emphasis not entirely foreign to the Quakerism of this period as it slowly hardened into orthodoxy. Smith undoubtedly read John Wesley's *Journal*, for he quoted from it in *The Doctrine of Christianity*. 
Quaker Josiah Martin, as well as *Télémaque*, which is discussed elsewhere.  

To the early Quakers the Bible had been entirely subsidiary to the Inner Light as a rule of faith and practice, but as orthodoxy gradually supervened upon the ardors of primitive Quakerism, the Scriptures assumed increased importance. It is not surprising, therefore, that Smith found a use for such books as Thomas Wilson's *Christian Dictionary*, an early attempt at a concordance; Daniel Whitby's *Paraphrase and Commentary on the New Testament*; and Richard Blome's *History of the Old and New Testaments*.

IV

The titles which I have grouped under the heading of Philosophy and Conduct number twenty, and constitute eight per cent of the total number of books which Smith is known to have read. In the field of ancient philosophy he knew Plato's dialogues (in an English translation of André Dacier's French version), and the Stoic moralists Seneca and Epictetus. The latter writers also he read in English translations: Seneca in the version of Sir Roger L'Estrange, and Epictetus in George Stanhope's translation. There can be little doubt that Smith read James Logan's translation of the *De Senectute* of Cicero, described by Franklin as "equal at least, if not far preferable to any other Translation of the same Piece extant in our Language"; and hailed by him as "a happy omen, that Philadelphia shall become the seat of the American Muses."  

Among the modern philosophers whom he read perhaps the most significant were Shaftesbury and his disciple Francis Hutcheson. The diary shows him reading Shaftesbury's *Characteristics* in 1746, a few years after he moved to Philadelphia, where he first became acquainted with the larger world of letters and philosophical specu-

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37 Soon after its publication in 1744 he sent a copy to a friend in Barbados (see letter of Joseph Gamble to John Smith, September 24, 1744, Smith MSS, II. 52), and he later presented a copy to the Library Company of Burlington.

The two treatises of Hutcheson which he read later are works of great importance in the history of American thought; they have, it may be, a special significance in relation to Smith's Quaker habits of thinking and acting. The Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue held that virtue is to be pursued not because it is useful but because it is beautiful, not as a means but as an end in itself; and the Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections maintained that men have natural impulses towards benevolence. These works, in other words, supplied a rationale for that philanthropic impulse—Hutcheson's "moral sense" in action—which was second nature to the concerned Quaker. Unlike his older contemporary Jonathan Edwards, who also read Hutcheson, John Smith was not dogged by a theory of human depravity which denied the existence in natural man of any principle higher than self-love, but was able to assert that the following of the Inner Light would lead men into a life of disinterested benevolence, whose fruits would appear in works of unsolicited charity.

John Smith's interest in French philosophy is represented by his reading of Pascal's Thoughts and "Port Royal's Moral Essays," largely the work of the Jansenist Pierre Nicole. Perhaps the inadequacy of his own schooling led him to take an interest in current discussions of educational problems, for in 1748 he records reading "a treatise on Learning wrote by one Baker which pleased me," and a year later he borrows from the Library Company David Fordyce's Dialogues Concerning Education. The former work, Thomas Baker's Reflections upon Learning, was devoted to the thesis that science and the human understanding were unfit guides for the proper conduct of life; the latter book was a series of essays in which the author, a professor at the University of Aberdeen, approached his subject through sketches of the model classroom, and characters of the ideal schoolmaster, the educated man, and the like.

Being a citizen of the eighteenth century as well as a pious

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90 The character of Atticus in Fordyce's seventh dialogue may have suggested to Smith his later pseudonym. Atticus, as Fordyce presents him, is "a Gentleman of fine parts, highly improved by reading," and "a Lover of Retirement and philosophic Ease." "Books," we are told, "are his peculiar Delight" (Dialogues Concerning Education [London, 1745], 143-145.)
Quaker, he read a number of practical guides to conduct in this world. The earliest of these in point of publication (though perhaps not read by Smith until he took up the life of a retired gentleman in Burlington) was *The Gentleman's Calling*, published in 1660. This volume was a staple item in the private libraries of colonial Virginia. Its presence in John Smith’s library is suggestive of his social attitudes, for its Anglican author Richard Allestree laid great stress upon the responsibilities of the gentleman as an example to the lower orders. Early in his career as a merchant Smith read a little book called *A Present for an Apprentice*, the subtitle of which was *A Sure Guide to Gain Both Esteem and Estate*. This curious medley of Christianity and commerce, published in 1740, had been written by a Lord Mayor of London, Sir John Barnard. John Smith described it as “A piece wrote with so much Judgement & persuasion to Industry & Virtue that 'tis a pity but they were more Common.” Another of Smith’s books, whose purpose was much the same, was William de Britaine’s *Human Prudence; or, The Art by Which a Man May Raise Himself and His Fortune to Grandeur*. Two collections of Polonian precepts, tending to inculcate practical wisdom in the management of worldly affairs, were Dr. Thomas Fuller’s *Introductio ad Prudentiam* and *Introductio ad Sapientiam*; John Smith read both of these volumes as a young man in Philadelphia just embarking upon a career in business. Whatever he may have owed to such manuals of prudent conduct, their influence was, no doubt, only supplementary, for the Quaker ethic of frugality and industry was sufficient by itself to promote success in business.

John Smith’s reading in Politics and Law was not extensive as compared, for instance, with that of Robert Carter in Virginia, but it is revealing as a reflection of his political views and his conception of his duties as a member of the Assembly and as a justice.

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42 Over one-third of the books in Carter’s library at Corotoman, or approximately one hundred titles, were lawbooks, and seven more dealt with affairs of state. See Louis B. Wright, “The ‘Gentleman’s Library’ in Early Virginia: The Literary Interests of the First Carters,” *Huntington Library Quarterly*, I. 20–26. Of the two hundred and forty known books that John Smith read, seventeen, or approximately seven per cent, fell into these categories.
of the peace. The position of the Quakers with respect to the American Revolution has been much misunderstood. In the face of actual armed conflict consistent Quakers adopted an attitude of strict neutrality. This is not to say that they were necessarily Tories in the normal sense of the term, and indeed in the early non-violent stages of the movement of protest against the British government, most Quakers were Whig in sympathies. That John Smith shared this viewpoint may be inferred from the fact that his favorite political writers were those indefatigable Whig propagandists John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon. His library contained two collections of their partisan papers, The Independent Whig and Cato's Letters, both in four volumes. The Independent Whig dealt mainly with ecclesiastical subjects and their repercussions upon politics; the authors took a firm stand against the High-Church party in the "Bangorian controversy" already mentioned. The letters of Cato, which were enormously popular in the colonies, developed the theory of representation which later found expression in the Declaration of Independence. The influence of Cato's Letters in popularizing the Whig philosophy of liberty and representative government was incalculable; a man who had formed his political opinions on these essays was hardly open to the suspicion of being a Tory.

Of the earlier political classics he knew More's Utopia, a favorite book among the Quakers since the time of William Penn on account of its advocacy of the principle of religious toleration; and Sir John Fortescue's Learned Commendation of the Politic Laws of England. An English translation of Télémaque was also among his books. It has been suggested that Fénelon's discussion of the qualities of the good ruler had considerable influence upon colonial political thinking; coming from a writer whose authority among Quakers was great, it may well have helped to confirm John Smith in his mistrust of the designs of the British ruling house. He was appar-


\[44\] He also owned Gordon's edition of Tacitus, the standard eighteenth-century translation. Gordon's prefatory discourses, proclaiming straight Whig doctrine, made this work as much a party document as the frankly political essays.

\[45\] H. M. Jones, op. cit., 160. Professor Jones finds Télémaque one of the most consistently popular books in Philadelphia in this period.
ently familiar with Montesquieu's *Spirit of Laws*, for he quotes directly from it in the thirty-ninth letter of Atticus. Other eighteenth-century treatises on the law of nature and of nations which John Smith read include Burlamaqui's *Principles of Politic Law* (sequel to his influential *Principles of Natural Law*), Baron de Bielfeld's *Institutions Politiques* in translation, and Heineccius' *Methodical System of Universal Law*.

These titles suggest that he had some grasp of the underlying philosophy of politics and law as it was conceived in his time. His concern, as Pennsylvania Assemblyman and New Jersey Councilor, with the practical phases of government is indicated by the presence in his library of the *Votes of the Pennsylvania Assembly*, the *Constitution of New Jersey*, and the *Laws of New Jersey*. As justice of the peace he needed some smattering of legal knowledge; this he got from such works as Thomas Wood's *Institute of the Laws of England* and Peere Williams' *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the High Court of Chancery*, which his London bookseller sent him within a few months of its publication in 1749.

The smallest group of books—only sixteen titles—is that which I have assembled under the heading of Science, Medicine, and Practical Arts. John Smith's interest in science is attested, however, by his membership in both the American Society Held at Philadelphia for Promoting Useful Knowledge and the American Philosophical Society before their union. His diary supplies the titles of two works of a scientific nature which he read: "D' B's Philosophical Acco' of the Works of Nature," and "D' Sloane's Hist: of Jamaica." The first of these has so far eluded identification; the second, which Smith read at Stenton, was probably Hans Sloane's *Voyage to the Islands of Madeira, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers, and Jamaica, with the Natural History ... of the Last of Those Islands*, the work of a distinguished botanist, the correspondent of the Quaker scientists James Logan and John Bartram. The inventory

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47 Letter of Thomas Osborne to John Smith, December 8, 1749 (Smith MSS, III. 129).

of Smith's library reveals three more scientific titles: Andrew Baxter's *Matho; or, Cosmotheoria Puerilis*, a simple exposition of the first principles of astronomy; Patrick Gordon's *Geography Anatomiz'd*; and a work of pre-Linnaean natural history in four volumes, the *Spectacle de la Nature; or, Nature Display'd*.

Medical books did not occupy so large a place in John Smith's library as they did in those of contemporary Virginians. The reason, quite obviously, was that Philadelphia, especially after the foundation of the Pennsylvania Hospital, was a medical center of some prominence; hence there were plenty of competent physicians to take the care of health out of the hands of amateurs. Nevertheless, John Smith had a compendium of medical advice in *Etmulerus Abridg'd; or, A Compleat System of the Theory and Practice of Physic*, which contained, according to the title-page, "a description of all diseases incident to men, women, and children, with an account of their causes, symptoms, and most approved methods of cure, both physical and chirurgical." He also owned *The Method and Means of Enjoying Health, Vigour, and Long Life* by Everard Maynwaring, an interesting figure of the previous century, regarded in his day as an empiric, who was ahead of his time in condemning violent purgatives and indiscriminate blood-letting. Of the other medical books which Smith read two were by the English writer Dr. George Cheyne: his *Essay of Health and Long Life*, in which he preached the doctrines of temperance and vegetarianism, and his *English Malady*, a treatise on nervous diseases—spleen, vapors, and lowness of spirits, or what we should now call hypochondria.

Inevitably there were a number of purely utilitarian works in Smith's library. Ephraim Chambers' giant *Cyclopedia; or, An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* was a widely used work of reference, consisting of thousands of alphabetical entries covering such subjects as meteorology, metaphysics, geometry, ethics, theology, painting, military arts, commerce, and poetry. It is rather surprising to find that Smith was in the habit of reading consecutively in this work, but his diary for January 7, 1747 relates that he "Spent most of the day in Looking over Chambers's Dictionary," and the following entries show that he devoted much of his spare time during the next two weeks to the same occupation. Intellectual

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49 Cf. G. K. Smart, *op. cit.*, 40–42.
curiosity could hardly go further! Indicative of his interest in gardening, which he had opportunity to indulge at his Delaware River “plantation” and at Franklin Park is his reading of “[Richard] Bradley’s Improvements in Gardening,” lent him by his brother-in-law William Logan, an early scientific agriculturist.

V

John Smith’s intellectual curiosity led him inevitably to an interest in works of History, Biography, and Travel. His reading in Quaker biography and history has already been noted. Leaving out of account these sectarian works, one finds that forty-two titles, or seventeen per cent of the total number of books which he is known to have read, fall into this general classification.

His possession of Gordon’s Tacitus has been mentioned elsewhere; it is possible that he was attracted more by the Whiggery of Gordon’s prefatory discourses than by the writings of the Roman historian. Nevertheless, Smith’s interest in the history of the ancient world is shown by his reading of Josephus in William Whiston’s translation, and by the presence in his library of Basil Kennett’s *Antiquities of Rome*. The role of Providence in the transactions of ancient times was portrayed for his edification in Bossuet’s *Universal History*. Another work of pretentious scope which he owned was Samuel Pufendorff’s *Introduction to the History of the Principal Kingdoms and States of Europe*. The sole work of purely ecclesiastical history which we find him reading, Quaker histories apart, is Du Pin’s *Ecclesiastical History of the Sixteenth Century*.

He was remarkably well-read in the field of English history. The antiquities of Great Britain he knew from Camden’s *Britannia*; the Atticus papers contain several items of curious lore drawn from that venerable repository. In 1749 he borrowed from his business partner and fellow Quaker, John Reynell, a volume of Nicholas Tindal’s continuation of Rapin’s *History of England*. He apparently undertook to read this multi-volumed work in its entirety, for it continued to engross his attention over a considerable period. Several months later, he writes in his diary: “Read in the Even* as for several Even* past in Rapin”; and a week later: Rapin “Engages my Attention at every leisure opportunity.” Three weeks after this, he notes:
“Read a good deal in the Continuation of Rapin w’th as most other Continuators, I think falls very short of the first Undertaker.” Still in a historical frame of mind after finishing Rapin, he sent immediately to the Library Company for Burnet’s *History of My Own Time*. Burnet’s obvious Whig sympathies were in Smith’s eyes undoubtedly a strong recommendation for his account of the triumph of constitutional government in England. His appetite for history continuing unabated, Smith proceeded next to read five volumes of Bayle—undoubtedly the *Historical and Critical Dictionary*. This early example of the rationalist method in history he seems to have read entire, for the diary records his drawing the successive volumes from the Library Company. An interesting title appearing in the inventory, which would seem to argue an interest in the American West, is the *History of Louisiana* by Le Page du Pratz, whose authoritative account of the Indians was later used by William Bartram in his *Travels*.

Closely allied to his reading in history was his interest in biography. He was acquainted with the careers of two ancient worthies through his reading of André Dacier’s *Life of Pythagoras* and Conyers Middleton’s *History of the Life of M. Tullius Cicero*. A natural interest in the lives of religious figures is reflected in his reading of John Wesley’s *Extract of the Life of Monsieur de Renty* ⁵⁰ and Benjamin Hoadly’s “Essay on the Life, Writings, and Character of Dr. Samuel Clarke,” prefixed to Clarke’s *Sermons*. It is interesting, in view of Cotton Mather’s well-known hostility to the Quakers, to find Smith reading Samuel Mather’s *Life of the Very Reverend and Learned Cotton Mather*; he observes in his diary that children who write the lives of their parents are sure to give “the best part of them,” and that hence they “can scarcely be Impartial Historians.” Among the recent biographies which Smith read were the lives of two figures prominent in the Jacobite uprisings in England: Robert Campbell’s *Life of the Duke of Argyll*, a biography of the general who put down the rebellion of 1715; and James Foster’s *Account of the Behavior of William Boyd, Earl of Kilmarnock*, the story of a Stuart sympathizer who was executed in 1746 for his support of the Young Pretender. Two unexpected

⁵⁰ Based on Jean Baptiste St. Jure’s *Holy Life of Monr. De Renty, a Late Nobleman of France* . . . (London, 1658).
titles appearing in the reading of this serious-minded Quaker are Goldsmith’s recently published life of Beau Nash, which a Quaker correspondent in London sent him, thinking that this “person so eminent amongst the Great Vulgar, and trifling part of Mankind may at least excite thy Curiosity” 51; and Constantia Phillips’ Apology, written by a notorious courtesan in order to blackmail her friends. This discreditable performance put too great a strain upon Smith’s habitual broad-mindedness: “having upon an Extraordinary Character given of the Apology for Con: Phillips’s Life, sent for a sett of them, I having read them & Concluded the general tendency of them to Encourage & Apologize for Vice, I this Even’s burnt them.”

The young merchant who named a newly launched brigantine the Addison, and who was a devoted admirer of that author, naturally read with interest Thomas Tickell’s account of Addison’s life. He was delighted by the Memoirs of a Man of Quality by the author of Manon Lescaut, and copied Prévost’s eulogistic character of the English into his commonplace book. Theophilus Cibber’s Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland, a forerunner of Samuel Johnson’s Lives of the Poets, was in Smith’s library, and he studied with some care Thomas Birch’s Lives and Characters, written to accompany the Heads of Illustrious Persons of Great Britain, a series of engravings by Houbraken and Vertue.

Like many another avid reader before and since his time, John Smith was fascinated by travel books. No doubt they supplied some of those qualities of color and strangeness and excitement in which the quiet life of the Quaker city was notably deficient. At any rate, he was fond of reading books like the Voyage round the World of Lord Anson, admiral of the British fleet, and Thomas Shaw’s Travels; or, Observations Relating to Several Parts of Barbary and the Levant, which was full of notes on the queer flora and fauna of the East. 52 The Grand Tour being denied to this young provincial, he was forced to enjoy it vicariously through such books as De

51 Letter of Isaac Foster to John Smith, April 21, 1763 (Smith MSS, VI. 54).
52 He probably read the Tour to the East of Frederick Calvert, Lord Baltimore, member of a family unpopular in Pennsylvania as a result of years of wrangling over the Maryland boundary. William Logan had a low opinion of this book; upon returning it to John Smith from whom he had borrowed it, he dismissed it as “a meer Catch Penny Affair” (Smith MSS, VII. 146).
Blainville's *Travels through Holland, Germany, Switzerland, and Other Parts of Europe, but Especially Italy* and John Keysler's *Travels through Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and Lorraine*, both written by recent European travelers. Some of the travel books which he read are now unidentifiable, but such entries in the diary as this: "Read in the Evening as usual in the new Collection of Voyages," indicate that his acquaintance with the vast contemporary literature of travel was considerable.

Two of these travel accounts deserve special mention. The first, *A Tour through Great Britain*, was published in 1724–1726 by Daniel Defoe as a systematic survey of social and economic conditions in England and Scotland. Under the hands of subsequent editors, including Samuel Richardson, it had been reduced to the scope of a mere tourist's guide, and it was probably one of these later editions that John Smith read. The Reverend Edward Clarke's *Letters Concerning the Spanish Nation*, the work of a chaplain to the English Embassy at Madrid, provided the author of the Atticus papers on two occasions with ammunition for a spirited attack in almost Voltairean vein upon the Roman Catholic clergy. He charges them with fostering superstition and (a typical Quaker objection) with idleness and wastefulness. He comes close to the spirit of contemporary rationalist critics and exponents of natural religion when he declares that he would have "the true and reasonable religion of Jesus Christ, to be valued in its pure and simple state, when stripped of the mischievous inventions of men which have so long disguised and abused it."  

VI

The final category of John Smith's reading, second only to Religion in number of titles, is Belles Lettres. The reckoning shows

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53 This particular entry, made in 1749, might refer to such a cyclopedic compilation as John Harris's *Complete Collection of Voyages and Travels, Consisting of About Six Hundred Writers* (1744) or Thomas Astley's *Collection of Voyages and Travels, Comprehending Everything Remarkable in Its Kind in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America* (1745–1747).

54 *Penn. Chron.*, August 31-September 7, 1767. See also *ibid.*, December 26, 1768-January 2, 1769. It should be remembered, however, that anti-clericalism and anti-ritualism had always been an element in the Quaker tradition, ever since the day when the Lord opened to George Fox that "being bred to Oxford or Cambridge was not enough to fit and qualify men to be ministers of Christ."
sixty-eight titles (approximately twenty-nine per cent of the total) falling within this classification, as compared with seventy-five titles (or thirty-one per cent) pertaining to religion. This unexpectedly strong showing should be regarded as a reflection of John Smith's personal tastes rather than as representative of the reading habits of the average American Quaker. The library of Anthony Benezet, for example, reveals a much smaller, though by no means negligible, proportion of purely literary titles; the reading of an extreme or "consistent" Friend like John Woolman in his later period would scarcely be likely to include any such works. Yet the fact that Smith was, throughout his life, regarded as a pillar of the Society of Friends in Philadelphia and Burlington suggests that there was no necessary incompatibility between Quakerism, as exemplified in a wealthy city Friend, and the development of a taste for polite literature.

The great bulk of the literary works which John Smith read were by English authors. Only seven titles have been found which do not belong to English literature. Aside from several works already discussed in other connections, the only representative of the Classics is John Savage's *Select Collection of Letters of the Antients*, containing letters of Socrates, Xenophon, Euripides, Cicero, Seneca, and many others, including some of the discredited Epistles of Phalaris. John Smith shared his century's irrecoverable enthusiasm for such long-winded satirical works as the *Jewish Spy* and the *Chinese Letters* of the Marquis d'Argens, and the earlier *Turkish Spy* of Giovanni Paolo Marana, which had been the prototype for this popular *genre*. These "spy" books purported to be critical observations upon Occidental manners, customs, and institutions, written with naïve detachment by travelers from the Orient; they

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69 A definite and growing cleavage between city and country Friends on matters of this sort must be recognized. Rural Friends were predominantly conservative, perpetuating the anti-mundane tendency of primitive Quakerism. Making allowances for this distinction, however, there is no question of the sincerity or the orthodoxy of John Smith's Quakerism. His high standing, not only within his own Monthly Meeting, but also in the Yearly Meeting which was usually dominated by country Friends, is proof that his way of life was not regarded with disapprobation by his co-religionists.
catered to the current rage for the exotic which affected literature as well as art. Smith also owned the *Travels of Cyrus*, a palpable imitation of *Télémaque*, by the Chevalier de Ramsay, friend and biographer of Fénelon. According to the diary, he read *Don Quixote* in 1746; he later purchased Smollett's edition of 1755 which appears in the inventory of his books.

The earliest work of English literature with which he was acquainted seems to have been the *Mirror for Magistrates*. In the Atticus papers he cites one of the "tragedies" which compose this collection of stories dealing with wickedness and misfortune in high places. In another essay he quotes, rather surprisingly, fourteen lines from Spenser's *Mother Hubbard's Tale*, commencing

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   Full little knowest thou that hast not tried
       What hell it is in suing long to bide.
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Whether he quoted this passage at first hand from Spenser or borrowed it from some miscellany or anthology it is impossible to tell. As to his actual reading of Spenser's greater contemporary, however, we have his own testimony. A laconic entry in the diary for July 4, 1747 states simply: "Even a Read Shakespeare." One could wish that he had been more explicit. A letter to his friend James Pemberton, however, written more than a year later, throws a little indirect light on what he read in Shakespeare: "Caleb Emlen . . . and several others," he writes, "have since my last, departed to the undiscovered Country from whose Bourn no traveller returns." 67

With regard to his reading in another great English poet, our evidence is happily more definite. He was reading *Paradise Lost* in August, 1746, and again in May, 1747. On this second occasion, he was preoccupied with his courtship of Hannah Logan, and the words of Eve in Book IV (ll. 639-657), beginning

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   With thee conversing I forget all time
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so struck his fancy ("being Apropos to my own Circumstances") that he committed them to memory, and later wrote them out in his diary with only a few trifling errors. The only other seventeenth-century

67 Letter dated December 23, 1748 (Pemberton Papers, V. 7).
poets whom John Smith is known to have read are Edmund Waller, whose *Poems* were in his library, and John Oldham, whose *Satires upon the Jesuits*, written at the time of the Popish Plot, he read in 1746. While on a visit at Stenton he read Owen Felltham's *Resolves, Divine, Moral, and Political*, a series of moral essays not unlike those of Bacon, but without Bacon's pithy condensation. The *Miscellanies* of the urbane Marquis of Halifax, including the famous "Character of a Trimmer," was among the books in Smith's library.

It was in the literature of his own century, however, that John Smith was most at home. He knew the writings of all the great Augustans, and he had a surprisingly wide acquaintance among the major and minor writers of the half-century following the death of Queen Anne. An entry in the diary for 1747, for instance, reveals him reading, "Prior, D. Swift &C." An edition of Swift's *Works* in six volumes (probably the Dublin edition of 1742) appears in the catalogue of his books, along with the *Works* of Matthew Prior, which he had purchased from the widow Bradford in 1743. Warburton's edition of Pope in nine volumes was also in his library, and there is a particular record in the diary of his reading three separate works of Pope: *Windsor Forest*, the translations from Horace, and "Pope's Miscellany." He was familiar not only with the periodical writings of Addison and Steele (which are noticed later), but also with their individual literary productions. The inventory lists "Addisons works 1st & 3rd Vol:" and he was familiar enough with *Cato* to quote from it in a letter (apropos of his recent marriage):

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58 One would like to be sure whether or not Smith read Bacon. He quotes a passage from Bacon as a motto before one of the Atticus papers, but he may well have taken it from one of the collections of maxims and aphorisms in his library. The same possibility must be recognized in the case of the quotations from Denham and Quarles which preface other essays.

59 Smith MSS, I. 235.

60 This edition appeared in 1751. John Smith's knowledge of events in the contemporary publishing world is shown by a letter to a London correspondent in 1750, requesting "Warburton's Edition of Pope's Works if come out" (John Smith to Elias Bland, December 6, 1750, John Smith Correspondence, Historical Society of Pennsylvania).

61 This may refer to *Miscellanies* (1742) by Swift, Dr. Arbuthnot, and Pope. Smith's copy of the second volume of this work is still extant.
When Love’s well tim’d, ’tis not a fault to Love,
The strong, the brave, the virtuous, and the wise,
Sink in the soft Captivity together.⁶²

In view of the well-known scruples of the Quakers against the drama, John Smith’s apparent approval of this and several other plays presently to be mentioned, calls for some comment. The objections of the average Quaker, it may be surmised, were directed not so much to the plays themselves as to the public performance of them. Smith’s attitude towards actual theatrical productions is illustrated by an incident which took place in 1749, on the day when the first professional American company opened in Philadelphia with a performance, as it happened, of Cato. Smith was at a tavern: the daughter of the tavern-keeper, he writes, “being one of the Company who were going to hear the Tragedy of Cato Acted it occasioned some Conversation in which I expressed my sorrow that any thing of the kind was Encouraged &C.” Presumably he perceived no danger in merely reading plays, for the diary reveals that he perused a good many. He read the comedies of Richard Steele—The Conscious Lovers, The Funeral, and The Lying Lover. There was little moral danger to be apprehended from these plays; they represented a deliberate attempt to carry out the stage reforms of Jeremy Collier, and they contained, in the words of Parson Adams, “some things almost solemn enough for a funeral.” Smith also read Ambrose Philips’ tragedy The Distressed Mother, an adaptation of the Andromaque of Racine.

His acquaintance with the literature of his own and the immediately preceding generation was remarkably wide. He was familiar not only with the more important figures like Thomson and Young, but also with many minor poets and prose-writers of the age, authors who have disappeared from the view of all but the specialists. The evidence suggests that he took pains to keep himself abreast of the most recent developments in the English literary scene. He seems to have read Thomson’s Seasons at an early age, for he was familiar enough with it to quote several lines in a letter written in 1743;⁶³

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⁶² Letter of John Smith to James Pemberton, April 28, 1749 (Pemberton Papers, V. 67). The quotation is from Cato, Act iii, Sc. 1.
⁶³ Letter of John Smith to James Pemberton, August 23, 1743 (Pemberton Papers, III. 91).
the diary reveals him reading it again five years later. He also read Thomson’s neoclassical tragedy of Sophonisba. In addition to Young’s universally admired Night Thoughts, his library included The Centaur not Fabulous, a sort of Night Thoughts in prose. A curious didactic poem, The Art of Preserving Health, by the contemporary John Armstrong was among his books, as were the collected works of Henry Needler, a youthful prodigy now forgotten, and of Elizabeth Rowe, a prolific writer of sacred and profane verse, whom Smith called “a beautiful Author.” Other minor poets of the mid-eighteenth century whom he included in his reading were John Banks and Richard Glover, the latter the author of a pompous and turgid epic called Leonidas which Smith read soon after its publication in England. One is tempted to assert also that he read the poems of Dyer and Shenstone, from whom he borrows mottoes for the Atticus papers, but one must await more reliable evidence.

Among the contemporary prose-writers whom he read were several from whom he may have learned something about the art of writing the polite essay. The particular littérature who might be mentioned in this connection are Charles Gildon, who published under the pseudonym of Roger de Whimsey a collection of essays entitled The Post-Man Robb’d of His Mail; or, The Packet Broke Open; William Melmoth the Younger, author of Fitzosborne’s Letters; and Fulke Greville, who collaborated with his wife Mrs. Frances Macartney in a volume of Maxims, Characters, and Reflections, published in 1756.

More important, however, than these writers of fugitive essays in forming Smith’s style and literary taste were the periodical essayists whose contribution to the bulk and to the distinctive quality of eighteenth-century literature was so important. The author of the Atticus papers was an assiduous reader of these literary periodicals; with the co-operation of his friends he formed a remarkable collection of them, comprising nearly complete files of at least twelve of the leading magazines. The Tatler, the Spectator, and the

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64 See the letters of Anthony Benezet, who acted as his agent in purchasing magazines from Philadelphia and New York booksellers (George S. Brookes, Friend Anthony Benezet [Philadelphia, 1937], 235–236, 256–262). William Logan, in a letter dated April 27, 1750, states that he is sending some magazines to complete Smith’s sets, and adds that he has promised, when Smith has taken the numbers he wants, to do the same for Richard Peters, later Rector of Christ Church, Philadelphia. This is an inter-
Guardian, with which Addison and Steele established the tradition of literary journalism naturally led the list. The number of references in the diary to his reading in them suggests that they were among his favorite books. He owned fourteen volumes of the Gentleman's Magazine, the most successful of the mid-century literary miscellanies. The London Magazine, which he also read, was a close imitator of the popular Gentleman's. The Universal Magazine, of which he had ten volumes, offered a more varied fare—popular science, antiquarian lore, and practical information for the farmer and the housewife. In the Rambler and the Idler, both of which were on Smith's shelves, Samuel Johnson had renewed the tradition of the Spectator, but with a heavy hand and a greater propensity for moralizing. The World and the Adventurer, which Smith read, were modeled on the Rambler; the second, indeed, contained some papers by Johnson himself. Like the earlier Female Spectator, which found a place in Smith's library, the Court Miscellany, from which he quoted in the Atticus papers, was designed especially for the ladies. Smith's interest in the literary efforts of his own countrymen is reflected in his possession of William Bradford's American Magazine, edited by Provost William Smith. One wonders how much the obvious anti-Quaker bias of this journal obstructed his appreciation of the writings of his fellow-Philadelphians, Francis Hopkinson, Thomas Godfrey, and Joseph Shippen, which appeared in it.

One does not readily associate Quakers with the reading of novels, and indeed the Society of Friends had often testified against the practice. Nevertheless, John Smith, eager to keep up with the

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Smith's copy of the Guardian, now in the author's possession, was bought in Barbados in 1742. It will be recalled that he was on a trading voyage to the West Indies at this time.
literary currents of contemporary England, did not slight even this branch of literature. James Logan, Jr., in a letter dated at Philadelphia, February 5, 1760, states that he has purchased a copy of *Sir Charles Grandison* in accordance with Smith’s request, but adds that “Clarissa is not to be bought.” According to the diary, Smith read *Joseph Andrews* in 1748, and *Tom Jones* in the next year. The latter novel he borrowed from his cousin James Pemberton, just returned from England, in September, 1749; *Tom Jones* had been published in February of that year. He evidently found it to his liking, for he “sat up late” reading it on the day it first came into his hands, and on the next day he read “a pretty deal” in it. He later bought a copy of it for himself, as the list of his books discloses. He knew some of Fielding’s other works appearing in his *Miscellanies*, and may have read the satirical novel *Jonathan Wild* in this volume. The diary also records his reading *The Adventures of David Simple*, a highly improving novel by Sarah Fielding, sister of the author of *Tom Jones*. That a sober Quaker should have been a reader of *Teregrine Tickle* may at first thought occasion surprise, but one remembers that Smith’s younger brother Richard not only read the novels of Smollett but corresponded with him. The presence of *Rasselas* among the books which John Smith read will, on the other hand, cause no surprise, in view of the novel’s solemn tone, and of Smith’s admiration for the other works of Johnson.

This survey of John Smith’s background of reading may be brought to a close with the mention of two American titles. In 1745 he read Nathaniel Ward’s tract against toleration *The Simple Cobler of Aggawam*, and described it as “a book which . . . for Oddness of Similies and Uncouthness of Language hath not its parallel.” And among the books which he himself owned, bound up with several other titles, was Benjamin Franklin’s *Reflections on Courtship and Marriage*, in which Smith’s fellow-townsman offers some practical advice on the means of achieving happiness in marriage, and paints, with Swiftian detail, the picture of a slatternly wife.

66 Smith MSS, V. 137.
VII

The main outlines of John Smith’s literary interests are now before us. What conclusions can we draw from them? It is suggested, in the first place, that the conventional picture of the Quaker as an anti-literary or anti-cultural force may have to be somewhat modified. It is not maintained that John Smith was a typical representative of his sect, but, with some allowances for personal tastes, he may stand as a representative of a class of wealthy town merchants whose Quaker beliefs did not prevent them from sharing in the cultural heritage of their age. We have found that in religious matters his attitude was not narrowly sectarian but, on the contrary, remarkably catholic and tolerant. His reading in political literature suggests that his views were substantially those of an American Whig like John Dickinson. He displayed a large measure of intellectual curiosity which led him to take an interest in both ancient and contemporary works of philosophy, science, history, biography, and travel. The number of French books which he read—thirty-one titles, or thirteen per cent of his total reading—suggests that he was aware of cultural values outside his immediate inheritance as a native American and a British colonial. Most interesting of all, perhaps, is his wide acquaintance with English literature, not only with the older writers of established fame, but also with the contemporary writers. Regarded as a whole, the reading of this colonial Quaker is evidence of a vital and well-rounded culture, the product not merely of books calculated “to support the particular tenets of any sect” but of “such as are designed to enlarge the understanding, and mend the heart.” It may be suggested, finally, that the Quaker merchant class, of which John Smith is a representative, formed an important part of that cultivated reading audience which enabled Philadelphia to become the first cultural center of the new American nation.

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*Not all the books which John Smith read have been mentioned; the aim has been to give a representative selection, at the same time omitting no title to which a special interest attaches.*