George Logan, Agrarian Democrat

A Survey of His Writings

Soon after the death of George Logan in 1821, his widow set down some “biographical notices” which The Historical Society of Pennsylvania was to publish three quarters of a century later. With that wealth of intimate detail which only a loving wife could supply, she dwelt on her husband’s early life at Stenton, his friendships with Franklin and Jefferson, his famous peace mission to France in 1798, and his less famous one to England in 1810. “Sacred,” in her own words, “to the virtues of his heart and to his domestic worth,” her memoir is a charming monument of wifely devotion, a historical document of genuine importance, and a minor classic of early American biographical writing. Deborah Logan, its author, was one of the most delightful persons who ever lived—an affectionate wife who preserved a serene detachment in the face of her husband’s political enthusiasms, a tireless preserver of historical materials who, in the manner of her time, consulted her own canons of editorial judgment, a consistent Quaker who indulged an un-Quakerly penchant for literature.

But Deborah had a blind spot: she did not realize that her husband too had been a writer. To be sure, she must have recalled the hours that Dr. Logan—it was thus that she always spoke of him—had spent at his desk in the great library at Stenton, scribbling for the newspapers. Indeed, being a good wife, she undoubtedly read proof for the pamphlets which he had published from time to time. But these screeds dealt with manure and land plaster, with the raising of heifers and the rotation of crops, with excise taxes, funding systems, and banks. This was hardly literature. So there is no reference in Deborah’s Memoir to her husband as a writer.

1 Deborah Norris Logan, Memoir of Dr. George Logan of Stenton, ed. by Frances A. Logan (Philadelphia, 1899).
2 Ibid., 120.

260
More recently, as the social and intellectual historians have fostered a broader interpretation of the term “literature” and a new interest in such aspects of American civilization as agriculture and social thought, the name of George Logan has begun to be heard as a writer of essays and pamphlets. His writings in political economy have been discussed by Charles A. Beard, Joseph S. Davis, and Joseph Dorfman; his contribution to American social thought has been assayed by Chester E. Eisenger; and his work as an agriculturist has been noticed by Stevenson W. Fletcher.3

The time has perhaps come for a tentative roundup of Logan’s known writings, both acknowledged and anonymous. No full analysis or evaluation will be attempted here.4 The purpose is rather to provide a kind of inventory with bibliographical glosses and a modicum of commentary—just enough to set the writings in their context and to hint at their significance. Many of the items to be mentioned have not hitherto been recognized as Logan’s. It is hardly likely that all of his anonymous newspaper contributions have been located; nevertheless, the sum total here represented is impressive both in quantity and quality.

I

George Logan (1753–1821) came of a writing family. His grandfather, James Logan, had produced political tracts, treatises on physics and botany, and translations from the classics, not to mention an ambitious unpublished philosophical disquisition (now lost).5 His less scholarly father, William Logan, had written some unpublished “Memoranda in Husbandry,” now in the Library of the


4 The author has a full-scale study of Logan’s life and work in preparation.

United States Department of Agriculture in Washington, which show him to have been a knowledgeable and progressive farmer.

George Logan's earliest surviving essay in formal writing is a series of fifty monthly letters which he dutifully composed and dispatched to his younger brother between 1775 and 1779, while he was in the British Isles, pursuing medical studies. Written in a rather labored and solemn style, only occasionally enlivened by flashes of humor, these letters form a kind of journal of his student days. Although not as revealing as Benjamin Rush's later reminiscences of his years at Edinburgh, they reflect what a young American found interesting in the England and Scotland of the 1770's—or what he thought his younger brother ought to find interesting.  

The researches of Whitfield J. Bell, Jr., in the archives of the Royal Medical Society of the University of Edinburgh, have uncovered two original essays which Logan read before his fellow students in 1778. They naturally follow the prescribed form for medical dissertations, but they are workmanlike in execution and the second and longer one shows some originality, especially in treating what we now call the psychosomatic aspects of disease. Logan became a doctor of medicine on June 24, 1779, after successfully defending a thesis on poisons. This Latin thesis, duly printed by authority of the University, was Logan's first published work.

Although he was always called Doctor Logan, it was not as a physician that he was to become known, but as a writer on scientific farming and political economy. For in 1783, after nearly two years of medical practice in Philadelphia, he moved out to the family estate at Stenton, took up the life of a farmer, and devoted himself henceforth by word and deed to improving agriculture and vindicating the rights of the American "yeomanry."

6 Logan's own copies of the letters are among the Logan Papers in The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.  
7 Manuscript dissertations of the Royal Medical Society (photostats in the Library of the American Philosophical Society), XI, 42-46 (on confluent smallpox), 173-178 (on gastritis).  
8 Tentamen medicum inaugurale de venenis (Edinburgh, 1779).  
9 He never forgot that he was a physician, however, and the yellow fever epidemic of 1793 found him working in Philadelphia alongside the other hard pressed and heroic doctors. John H. Powell has brought to light two minor contributions by Logan to the bitter medical controversies of the plague year—Federal Gazette, Sept. 18 and Oct. 2, 1793; cf. Powell, Bring Out Your Dead: The Great Plague of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia in 1793 (Philadelphia, 1949), 74, 169-170, 208-209.
II

As an agricultural reformer, Logan helped to domesticate in America the revolution in farming which was transforming the face of England in his time. His favorite sounding board for the projection of his views on farming was the Philadelphia County Society for the Promotion of Agriculture and Domestic Manufactures, an organization restricted in membership to actual farmers, in contrast to the older Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture (of which he was also a charter member) which was dominated by city merchants and professional men. After reading a paper before his audience of farmers he usually published it in Mathew Carey's monthly *American Museum* or in Eleazer Oswald's weekly *Independent Gazetteer*. Not a few of his essays were reprinted in other periodicals, notably the *National Gazette*, the *Pennsylvania Mercury*, and the *Columbian Magazine*.

His earliest paper was highly characteristic in that it united a concern for the moral welfare of the farmer with a double appeal to his patriotism and his self-interest. Addressed in the first instance to the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture, it attacked the prevalent custom of giving strong drink to harvest hands and recommended malt beer as a substitute. The paper was printed at the request of the society in the *American Museum* and the *Pennsylvania Mercury*.10

In this, his first published essay, if we except his Edinburgh dissertation, he followed a path laid out by Quakers like John Woolman and Anthony Benezet and hitherto trodden by only a few reformers like his friend Benjamin Rush, whose *Inquiry into the Effects of Spirituous Liquors on the Human Body and Mind*, first published in 1784, was diligently circulated each year at harvest-time.11 With unconscious humor Logan stressed “the certain destruction of the morals, the liver, and the property of our fellow citizens by the excessive use of rum,” and reported on his own recent experience in conducting an extensive harvest at Stenton without giving

10 *American Museum*, II (1787), 295–297; *Pennsylvania Mercury*, Sept. 7, 1787. The original manuscript is among the archives of the society in the Library of the School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Pennsylvania; it has been reprinted in the *Memoirs of the Philadelphia Society for Improving Agriculture*, VI (1939), 137–139.

his hired help anything stronger than Debby's small beer, the recipe
for which he appended. With this essay, Dr. Logan took his place
alongside Benezet and Rush among the forerunners of Neal Dow and
John B. Gough.

The articles which flowed from his pen during the next few years
placed him also in the select company of men like Chancellor Living-
ston, Richard Peters, John Beale Bordley, and John Taylor of
Caroline, who were working to reform America's backward agricul-
tural practices. In 1789 he published two brief essays on livestock
husbandry, one on the cultivation of clover, and a fourth highly
significant paper on the use of plaster of Paris as a fertilizer. He
dealt in these essays with three of the principal needs of American
agriculture—greater attention to the raising of livestock, more
general sowing of cultivated grasses, and more widespread use of
both animal manures and artificial fertilizers. The essays which fol-
lowed during the next three years treated of equally important topics
—the use of marl (whose praises Edmund Ruffin would presently be
singing to the farmers of Virginia), the domestic production of wool
("a great national object" in Logan's eyes), the rotation of crops,
the more economical use of Indian corn as fodder, beekeeping, the
introduction of new grasses, and the cultivation of flax.

Of these essays two deserve special comment. His "Observations
on Bees"—the most "literary" as well as the most philosophical of
his agricultural pieces—was written in the authentic spirit of Virgil's
fourth Georgic, complete with appropriate aphorisms and allusions to

12 American Museum, VI (1789), 101-103.
13 Ibid., 206.
14 Ibid., 399-401, 461-463.
15 Independent Gazetteer, Jan. 23, 1790.
16 American Museum, IX (1791), 111.
17 Independent Gazetteer, Feb. 26 and Mar. 5, 1791; also in Columbian Magazine, II (1791),
162-168; reprinted in National Gazette, May 3, 1792; published as a pamphlet under the title
Fourteen Agricultural Experiments, to Ascertain the Best Rotation of Crops (Philadelphia, 1797).
I have been unable to locate a copy of the 1791 edition listed by Evans in his American
Bibliography, and I suspect that it never existed.
18 American Museum, IX (1791), 172.
19 Ibid., XII (1792), 22-23.
20 Independent Gazetteer, Apr. 14, 1792.
21 American Museum, XII (1792), 271-272; also Columbian Magazine, VI (1792), 151;
National Gazette, Oct. 24, 1792. Among the Logan Papers is an apparently unpublished essay
on the superiority of oxen to horses as draft animals on the farm.
classical literature, as well as practical advice for intending apiarists. A painful incident no doubt lies behind the account of his unsuccessful attempt, in co-operation with his neighbors Mr. Shoemaker and Mr. Lukens, to extract honey from the hives "according to the new method," without first killing the bees. Being an eighteenth-century man of tender sensibilities, he feels called upon to justify the destruction of the bees by explaining that the life of the insect is brief at best and that the swarm would pass a miserable winter after its communal larder had been rifled. Being also an eighteenth-century moralist, he cannot leave the subject without some final observations on the beehive as a school of "prudence, industry, benevolence, public-spiritedness, economy, neatness, and temperance."

The long essay on crop rotation was Dr. Logan’s major contribution to American agricultural literature. It was much more than a report on his own experiments, although they were enough by themselves to establish him in the front rank of America’s early scientific agriculturists; it was also a summary of all the themes on which he had been dwelling in his writings on husbandry, and moreover it contained, in its references to “wretched principles of fiscality” and “ruinous systems of indirect taxation and commercial regulations,” more than a hint of the new themes that were already beginning to displace purely agricultural problems in his mind.

The new orientation is clearly evident in a series of letters written for the benefit of "some gentlemen from Virginia," which Philip Freneau published in his National Gazette in 1792. After reprinting the constitution of the Philadelphia County agricultural society and recommending it to the Virginians as a model, he adds the revealing comment: "In the present situation of public affairs, it is highly proper that the yeomanry should have stated meetings in every part of the United States, not only for promoting agricultural knowledge . . . but to stimulate and encourage each other to support their rights as men." In other words the farmers should organize for political action. The third letter contains a bitter attack upon the "insidious chicane" of Alexander Hamilton’s financial measures.

22 Feb. 20, Feb. 27, Mar. 15, May 3, and Aug. 1, 1792. The letters are simply signed "A Farmer," but internal evidence and the fact that this was Logan’s regular anonym in this period make it virtually certain that they came from his pen.

23 National Gazette, Feb. 20, 1792.
Others are given over to the moral as well as material superiority of homespun to "the finer but more flimsy productions of Europe" and to the importance of crop rotation—a matter of even greater moment to the distressed tobacco planters of Virginia than to the wheat growers of his own state.

The letters to the Virginia planters marked the definitive transition in Logan's literary career. He was to remain a farmer throughout the rest of his life, keeping abreast of all the latest developments in English husbandry. He wrote no more technical papers on the subject, however, feeling, no doubt, that he had made his contribution to the improvement of American farming practices and that the times now urgently required him to concentrate upon his new role as spokesman for the farmer in the political forum. But he could take satisfaction in reflecting that his contribution to American husbandry had not been inconsiderable. When the Reverend Samuel Miller, in his *Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century* in 1803, came to name over the handful of Americans who had furthered agriculture by their writings, he did not omit the master of Stenton.24

III

Dr. Logan had made his modest debut as a political writer in the spring of 1788 with a series of eight letters to the editor of the *Pennsylvania Mercury* over the signature "Cato."25 They dealt with the basic problems of the nature and purpose of government—which was not unnatural since Pennsylvania had just passed through a period of violent debate over the merits and demerits of the new Federal Constitution. Already in these essays one finds foreshadowings of Logan's later anti-Federalism. For one thing, his philosophical premises are those of the Declaration of Independence. He rejects outright the Hobbesian (he prefers to call it Machiavellian) doctrine that mankind is "naturally inclined to evil" and that the people are "incapable of governing themselves," and takes his stand on the Lockean ground that "with man all is education; by his nature he is

24 New York, 1803, I, 389.
25 Mar. 18, Mar. 22, Apr. 1, Apr. 12, Apr. 24, June 3, June 22, and Sept. 6, 1788. Clippings of several of these articles are found in the Logan Papers with the superscription "By Dr. Logan" in Deborah Logan's hand.
neither good nor evil, but is constantly engaged in seeking his own happiness." 26

His fourth letter, after opening with a reference to the equalitarian philosophy of the Declaration, proceeds to an examination of "the causes which threaten the destruction of our boasted equality," among which he numbers "the sacrifice of agriculture to commerce." 27 Throughout the essays there breathes a spirit of optimistic idealism strangely alien to the temper of those Thermidorean times. His choice of the pen name "Cato" suggests his point of view: living in a period of great social change and dislocation, he is concerned, like the great Roman Censor, to preserve the values of an agrarian society and to restore the lost purity of republican manners.

For all their invocation of revolutionary principles, however, the "Cato" letters were moderate, almost academic in character. As Dr. Logan’s indignation at the financial policies of Alexander Hamilton rose, his writing became sharper in focus and more radical in tenor. Nevertheless, it was always grounded upon a firm faith in immutable laws undergirding the moral and social world as the laws of physics underlay the physical universe.

One spring day in 1790, Senator William Maclay had a caller at his boardinghouse in the nation’s capital at New York. It was the printer Andrew Brown, whose Federal Gazette was the chief pro-administration organ in Philadelphia. The Senator had never seen fright written more plainly on a man’s countenance: "He told us of some man having offered some violent pieces to him for publication, which he said were written well; but he refused to print them, and the author took them away. He said they were addressed to the yeomanry of Pennsylvania. I suspect this may be my friend George Logan." 28

Maclay’s suspicion was correct. The first of Logan’s “Letters to the Yeomanry” (presumably the ones Brown had turned down) had appeared in Eleazer Oswald’s Independent Gazetteer on March 13. It was signed simply “A Farmer,” a pen name made famous before the Revolution by John Dickinson, Deborah’s cousin by marriage, and destined to become familiar once again to Pennsylvanians as George

---

26 Pennsylvania Mercury, Mar. 18, 1788.
27 Ibid., Apr. 12, 1788.
Logan used it to mask his authorship of successive series of "Letters to the Yeomanry."\footnote{29} Printed and reprinted in the periodical press and published in pamphlet form, Logan’s sixteen essays were among the most cogent and thoroughgoing of the anti-Federalist or "Jeffersonian" writings. Taken as a single \textit{œuvre}, they go far to justify Chester E. Eisinger’s claim (somewhat excessive perhaps as applied to the first series alone) that they constitute “the \textit{summa} of agrarian thought.”\footnote{30}

The first group of essays, after running in the \textit{Independent Gazetteer},\footnote{31} was published by Eleazer Oswald in 1791 (with minor textual differences) as \textit{Letters Addressed to the Yeomanry of the United States: Shewing the Necessity of Confining the Public Revenue to a Fixed Proportion of the Net Produce of the Land; and the Bad Policy and Injustice of Every Species of Indirect Taxation and Commercial Regulations}. The basic argument had been anticipated by a communication from Logan to the Philadelphia County Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, printed in Oswald’s newspaper three weeks before the appearance of the first "Letter to the Yeomanry."\footnote{32} This throws his public opposition to Alexander Hamilton’s financial policies back to a date barely five weeks after the release of the “Report on Public Credit,” making Logan one of the earliest as well as most thoroughgoing of the opposition writers.

\footnote{29}Maclay’s quick penetration of the disguise suggests that the secret of Logan’s authorship was fairly transparent to his contemporaries, although it has often puzzled or misled bibliographers and historians. In 1841 Obadiah Rich identified Logan as the author of the 1793 \textit{Letters} (and, by extension, of the 1791 series) on the strength of an inscription reading, “For citizen Adet, with sentiments of great respect from his friend the author,” under which Pierre Auguste Adet (French Minister to the United States from 1795 to 1797) had written, “Dr. Laughan.” \textit{Supplement to the Bibliotheca Americana} (London, 1841), 496. Joseph Sabin in his \textit{Bibliotheca Americana} followed Rich by attributing the 1791 \textit{Letters} and the \textit{Five Letters} of 1792 to “Dr. Laughan,” but unaccountably ascribed the 1793 pamphlet (which he misdated 1792) to, of all people, Alexander Hamilton, \textit{against} whom it was written! Paul Leicester Ford straightened out the tangle by crediting all three tracts correctly to Logan. \textit{Bibliotheca Hamiltoniana} (New York, 1886), 38–39, 41. But Charles A. Beard failed to discover the 1791 \textit{Letters}, although they would have suited his argument in \textit{Economic Origins of Jeffersonian Democracy} even better than the tracts he did use, being earlier in date than any of them. And Joseph Dorfman in his generally exhaustive \textit{Economic Mind in American Civilization} seems to have overlooked the 1793 \textit{Letters}. There can be no question about Logan’s authorship: if internal evidence, buttressed by that cited above, were not enough, copies of the pamphlets are carefully preserved among the Logan Papers along with Logan’s other writings.

\footnote{30}“The Influence of Natural Rights . . . ,” 17.

\footnote{31}Mar. 13, Apr. 24, May 8, and Aug. 14, 1790; Jan. 8, 1791.

\footnote{32}\textit{Independent Gazetteer}, Feb. 20, 1790; see also Mar. 6, 1790.
In addressing his essays to the "American yeomanry," he disclosed his fundamental conviction with regard to democracy—a conviction shared by his two heroes, Franklin and Jefferson, and destined to a long life in American social thought—that the sturdy, independent husbandman, cultivating his own acres, was the cornerstone and indeed the only safe building material of a free republic. Developing his argument out of premises drawn from John Locke, Adam Smith, and, above all, the Physiocrats, he went far beyond the "Cato" letters, far indeed beyond either Franklin or Jefferson, toward a doctrinaire system of political economy.

His answer to Hamilton's proposed excise is nothing else than the favorite fiscal device of the économistes—the impôt unique, the single, direct tax on land. Nor does he balk at accepting the theoretical postulates of the Physiocratic system—the axiom that agriculture is the only source of real wealth and the corollary that merchants and manufacturers are "sterile classes." Fortified by these ideological weapons, he launches his attack on the incipient Federalist system:

How long [he asks the American farmers] will you suffer yourselves to be duped by the low cunning and artifice of half-informed lawyers and mercenary merchants? Are these characters to be the dictators of a free people? Are you to have no laws, no regulations, but through their influence or by their authority? Certainly you have not wrested the power from Great Britain to place it in the hands of these men. As you value your own prosperity and that of your children, look well to the present moment: a dangerous aristocracy is forming, which if not crushed in the bud will destroy your liberties forever.

After paying his respects to the major policies of the administration to date—the Tariff and Tonnage Acts, the proposed excise, the standing army, and the funding of the public debt—he concludes with what can only be construed as a covert incitement to rebellion, as he reminds his readers that "under every government the dernier

---


34 Letters (1791), 32. I agree with Smith that Logan was, on the whole, a "dogmatic Physiocrat" (Smith, 277), as against Eisenger, who apparently gives greater weight to the influence of Locke ("The Influence of Natural Rights . . . ," 15-17). Apart from the internal evidence of the essays themselves, we have Deborah Logan's recollection that his favorite authors at this period were Mercier de la Riviére, Le Trosne, Turgot, and Necker. Memoir, 46. In this he stood closer to Franklin than to Jefferson, whose debt to the Physiocrats was slight.
resort of the people, is an appeal to the sword; whether to defend
themselves against the open attacks of a foreign enemy, or to check
the insidious encroachments of domestic foes. . . ."35

In December, 1791, Hamilton laid before Congress his compre-
hensive “Report on Manufactures,” the preamble of which, disput-
ing the view that agriculture was “the only productive employment,”
might well have been written as an answer to Logan’s first “Letters
to the Yeomanry.” He referred in passing to a heavily capitalized
society in process of formation “for prosecuting on a large scale the
making and printing of cotton goods.”36 This was a reference to the
Society for Useful Manufactures (usually known as the S.U.M.), a
grandiose scheme to create a great industrial plant in Paterson, New
Jersey, under the guiding hand of William Duer, a wealthy entre-
preneur and close associate of the Secretary of the Treasury.

Logan could only regard this venture as a threat to his vision of
America as an agrarian paradise. So he launched in February, 1792,
his second attack upon Hamilton. A new series of “Letters to the
Yeomanry” began appearing in the Independent Gazetteer, whence
they were picked up and reprinted in the National Gazette and the
American Museum. By mid-August the Philadelphia booksellers
were displaying copies of the essays in pamphlet form with the title
Five Letters Addressed to the Yeomanry of the United States: Contain-
ing Some Observations on the Dangerous Scheme of Governor Duer and
Mr. Secretary Hamilton to Establish National Manufactories.

Betraying an enthusiasm for the French Revolution that was to
color his political thought for a decade, he opens the first letter with
a passage from the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the
Citizen. From this high ground he argues that the special privileges
granted to the Paterson corporation by the New Jersey legislature
can only result in the creation of an aristocracy in America. Although
the influences of the Physiocrats and of Adam Smith are plainly
apparent in his plea for laissez faire, it is the authentic voice of native
American radicalism that speaks when Logan declares: “The accu-

35 Letters (1791), 47. Logan was not a consistent Quaker pacifist, as has often been assumed;
he was disowned in January, 1791, for “associating with others in the bearing of arms.”
Manuscript minutes of Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, Department of Records, Philadelphia
Yearly Meeting, XI, 98.
36 The Works of Alexander Hamilton, ed. by H. C. Lodge (New York and London, 1904), IV,
70-86, 182.
mulation of that power which is conferred by wealth in the hands of the few is the perpetual source of oppression and neglect of the mass of mankind. The power of the wealthy is farther concentrated by their tendency to combination, from which number, dispersion, indigence, and ignorance equally preclude the poor."

Just before the Five Letters went on sale in the Philadelphia bookshops, Logan delivered an address before the Germantown Society for Promoting Domestic Manufactures, in which he concentrated all his arguments against the S.U.M. and appealed to the artisans in his audience to relight their revolutionary torches from "the glorious and blessed light of the French Revolution," and oppose every attempt by the government to violate their natural rights. This incendiary address, published in the National Gazette and the American Museum, was even reprinted in the Federalist Gazette of the United States so that conservative Philadelphians could know to what lengths this "traitor to his class" was going.

Early in 1793, Logan rounded out his case against the Hamiltonian program by bringing the funding system and the Bank of the United States under review. The final series of "Letters to the Yeomanry" began appearing in the National Gazette on January 31, 1793; by May 8 it was in the booksellers' shops under the title Letters Addressed to the Yeomanry of the United States, Containing Some Observations on Funding and Bank Systems. It was Logan's most eloquent and cogently argued tract.

The premise of this series of letters was that the Federal Government, whatever the ostensible reason for its adoption, owed its existence to "the influence and artifices of a few men, who had taken advantage of the distresses of the country, and who had largely speculated in the certificates given for services rendered by the most meritorious citizens"—i.e., the farmers and soldiers. From this starting point he went on to the thesis that banks and public credit—the latter a modern invention "by which the property and labor of

37 Five Letters, 11-12.
38 National Gazette, Aug. 25, 1792; American Museum, XII (1792), Appendix II, *22-*23; Gazette of the United States, Aug. 29, 1792. Logan's assaults upon the S.U.M. elicited a flurry of rebuttals and defenses, which filled the columns of the Philadelphia papers for weeks. Joseph S. Davis summarizes and evaluates some of this controversial writing in his Essays, I, 443-453.
39 Letters (1793), 1.
posterity is mortgaged to satisfy debts contracted by the present generation”—could end only in the creation and maintenance of inequality among the American people.\(^4^0\) No full presentation of his argument can be undertaken here. It must suffice to take note of one particular theme which raises the interesting question of Thomas Jefferson’s possible relation to the work.

“The earth and the fruits thereof,” writes Logan, “belong to the living, by the gift of God. . . . The dead have neither power nor right over the earth, nor the property thereon.” This being the case, “we have . . . only to determine what length of time a law made by one generation can continue in force, without violating the rights of their successors.” The calculation can easily be made on the basis of Buffon’s tables of mortality, which show that half the people of twenty-one years and upwards living at one time will be dead in nineteen years. Thus, Logan declares, “19 years is the term beyond which neither the representatives of a nation, nor even the whole nation itself assembled can validly extend a debt.”\(^4^1\)

The most interesting thing about this passage is that it embodies ideas with which Jefferson’s mind had been playing for several years.\(^4^2\) Both the principle that “the earth belongs to the living” and the elaborate calculations based on Buffon almost certainly came from that rich and active mind. Jefferson was a frequent visitor to Stenton in the winter and spring of 1793, when he was uneasily occupying the post of Secretary of State in Philadelphia,\(^4^3\) and it is not difficult to believe that he found Logan a willing listener as he expounded his theory. The hypothesis inevitably suggests itself that Jefferson, unable to speak out publicly because of his position in Washington’s official family, may have “inspired” Logan to adopt this line of argument against Hamilton’s policies. Whether this is true or not, Logan’s essays in political economy made a ponderable contribution to the ideology which a later generation would call “Jeffersonian democracy”; as propaganda, moreover, they were

\(^4^0\) Ibid., 8.
\(^4^1\) Ibid., 9–10.
\(^4^2\) Adrienne Koch has an excellent account of the genesis and development of this doctrine in *Jefferson and Madison: The Great Collaboration* (New York, 1950), Chap. IV.
powerful agents in crystallizing the opposition to the Federalist program into what would presently be known as the Democratic-Republican Party.\textsuperscript{44}

IV

Meanwhile, not satisfied with the wide audience which he reached through the periodical press and the sale of his pamphlets, Dr. Logan turned to more direct methods of arousing public opinion. Award of a ground swell of opposition to the excise tax in Pennsylvania, he boiled down the arguments of his first series of “Letters to the Yeomanry” and composed an inflammatory handbill which, if we can believe a hostile newspaper writer, he distributed through the countryside himself.\textsuperscript{45} The excise on whiskey, shouted the broadside, was “THE FAVORITE SYSTEM OF ARISTOCRATS, BY WHICH UNEQUAL TAXES ARE DRAWN FROM THE LABORIOUS PART OF THE COMMUNITY.” Appealing to the farmers’ self-interest and capitalizing shrewdly upon their hatred of eastern land speculators, he produced an effective piece of propaganda, whose influence on the outbreak of the Whiskey Rebellion can only be conjectured.\textsuperscript{46}

Logan’s hand is also seen in an address “To the Freemen of Pennsylvania,” written at the behest of a meeting of citizens held at the Prince of Wales Tavern on May 17, 1793, to protest against the incorporation of the Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike Company.\textsuperscript{47} The address, written in collaboration with Edward Heston, was a ringing assertion of the popular anticharter doctrine—the conviction, widespread in the rural districts of Pennsylvania, that all

\textsuperscript{44} Logan was not inattentive to local political questions during these years. In the autumn of 1790, for instance, during an exciting campaign for governor, he wrote a letter “To the Yeomanry of Pennsylvania,” reflecting upon the newly adopted state Constitution and upon Gen. Arthur St. Clair, the candidate of the “aristocratic junto” in Philadelphia. \textit{Independent Gazetteer}, Sept. 25, 1790.

\textsuperscript{45} Dunlap’s \textit{American Daily Advertiser}, May 25, 1793.

\textsuperscript{46} A copy of this broadside, endorsed (in Deborah Logan’s hand?) “By Dr. Logan,” is among the Miscellaneous Manuscripts in the Logan Papers. It can tentatively be dated in May, 1793, on the basis of the newspaper reference cited above and its mention of the newly formed Democratic Societies. See Eugene P. Link, \textit{Democratic-Republican Societies} (New York, 1942), 6-13.

\textsuperscript{47} Dunlap’s \textit{American Daily Advertiser}, May 24, 1793; \textit{Independent Gazetteer}, May 25, 1793; \textit{National Gazette}, May 25, 1793.
corporations were "monopolies" or "aristocracies" disruptive of the social compact. This notion, recently described as "less a disciplined set of ideas than a cluster of glamorous symbols indiscriminately utilized," made good propaganda, for it drew its formidable strength direct from the democratic mystique itself; it was destined for a long life in Pennsylvania.48

Logan's next published work draws significance from its surrounding circumstances. Its title was innocuous enough: An Address on the Natural and Social Order of the World. The fact that it was read before the Tammany Society of Philadelphia in 1798, however, sets it in a dramatic context. The Society of the Sons of Saint Tammany had passed through several incarnations since its inception before the Revolution. Originally a benevolent society composed of gentlemen, it had come to be dominated by radical immigrant artisans, some of whom had connections with the revolutionary United Irishmen.49 When George Logan stood before the Tammany Society in May, 1798, he was addressing a "subversive organization"—not strictly so in the eyes of the law, perhaps, since there was no McCarran Act on the statute books, although the Alien and Sedition Acts would soon take care of that. For the XYZ dispatches had just been published; under John Adams' leadership, the Federalists (and many lukewarm anti-Federalists) were girding for war with France; and it was a "reign of terror" for the minority who still dared openly to advocate the principles of the French Revolution.

Logan's speech opened in a familiar vein with some observations upon the order and regularity of nature. But soon he was talking, in phrases whose innuendo escaped no one, about "wars created by ambitious executives . . . [for] their own aggrandizement and power." This was followed by pointed references to the spirit of the American Revolution and to "that brave and generous people the French."50 After uttering these dangerous words, he addressed himself specifically to his hearers as artisans and mechanics, urging them to recognize their community of interest with the great mass of

farmers as against the tiny minority of merchants, who sought to hold wages down and discourage the small independent manufacturer.

It was a shrewd political appeal and, in the face of the current hysteria, a courageous avowal of political faith. Promptly published by Benjamin Franklin Bache, it was widely read in anti-Federalist circles, especially during the following winter when Logan’s dramatic peace mission to France brought his name suddenly into the news.51

A little less than two years after the Tammany speech, Logan found himself in Lancaster attending the Pennsylvania Assembly, to which he had been triumphantly elected upon his return from France. At the suggestion of the Reverend Henry Ernest Muhlenberg he composed an address “to the Citizens of Pennsylvania,” recommending the formation of county agricultural societies. He exhorted Pennsylvania farmers to manufacture as many of the necessities of life as possible on their own farms and, for the rest, to patronize only American artisans. Several paragraphs on this theme were lifted directly from the Tammany speech, but Logan added a new conclusion reasserting his characteristic agrarian nationalism: “Let Pennsylvania not only exhibit flourishing enclosures and harvests, but the comfortable homes of industrious artisans and manufacturers. . . . Proud of the advantages which our country will afford, and which our labor will procure, let us disdain to be the servile imitators of other nations, or to adopt foreign manners inconsistent with our republican form of government.”52

V

Logan’s devotion to the Democratic-Republican cause was rewarded in 1801 by election to the United States Senate. No published writings from this period have come to light, although his more important speeches were, of course, reported in the Annals of

51 The pamphlet was advertised for sale in Bache’s Aurora for months. On Logan’s peace mission, see Frederick B. Tolles, “Unofficial Ambassador: George Logan’s Mission to France, 1798,” William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd Series, VII (1950), 3-25.
Senator Logan was a stalwart supporter of Jefferson's domestic measures, but he broke with his party chief over foreign policy. More particularly he pleaded with Jefferson and with his successor, James Madison, to adopt a less stiff-necked policy toward Great Britain. His concern for peace led him in 1810 to go to England in the hope of helping to prevent war, as he had done in 1798, before it was too late. When this effort failed, he could only watch, sick at heart, while his country moved closer and closer to the verge of hostilities.

In March, 1812, when the "War Hawks" were in full cry and the final break with Britain was imminent, Logan made a last appeal for sanity, publishing in Poulsom's *American Daily Advertiser* "The Plea of Reason, Religion, and Humanity against War" in three essays over the signature "Erasmus." In their emotional impact they were the most powerful essays he ever wrote. They drew upon reservoirs of pacifist or quasi-pacifist sentiment which were part and parcel of America's heritage as they were of his own personal background—the religious peace testimony of the Society of Friends, and the rational and humanitarian pacifism of Benjamin Franklin, John Dickinson, and Thomas Jefferson.

His position is summed up in the Erasmian maxim (which he may have heard from the lips of Franklin at Passy): "There is scarcely any peace so unjust but it is preferable upon the whole to the justest war." What is war, he asks, after a lurid evocation of its horrors, "but murder and theft committed by great numbers on great numbers?" He called upon the Madison administration to reopen negotiations even at that late date to avert an unnecessary and inglorious war. No attention was paid to his plea, although, ironically, historians have generally agreed that the War of 1812 was neither necessary nor glorious. The most remarkable feature of the essays, however, was Logan's acute analysis of the techniques of war propaganda, which the "War Hawks" were assiduously exploiting in

---


[54] The quotation is from Erasmus' *Querela pacis* (1517). Franklin, however, expressed this sentiment in a letter to David Hartley in February, 1780, just at the time when Logan was with him at Passy, *Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. by A. H. Smyth (New York, 1907), VIII, 5.

Congress and in the press. The American peace movement, which sprang into being only in the wake of the War of 1812, had no more clear-sighted pioneer than George Logan.

VI

George Logan’s last published work, a product of his serene old age, was a summary and reaffirmation of everything he had stood for in agriculture and politics. It was an address on “The Errors of Husbandry in the United States,” delivered in 1818 before the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture. Still persuaded of the fixity of natural and spiritual law, he declared that agriculture, like all other arts, was reducible to principles which could be discovered by persistent experimentation. When he lauded the life of the farmer his hearers knew they were listening not to the conventional literary praise of husbandry, but to the sincere feelings of one who had lived that life for a third of a century.

Dressed in his homespun coat, he spoke once more on behalf of domestic manufacturing. Nor could the old opponent of the S.U.M. forbear a last futile thrust at the new industrialism which was ineluctably advancing under the favoring influences of the Embargo, the War, and the Tariff of 1816: “Extensive manufacturing establishments, supported by machinery and the labor of children,” he warned, “have been found too frequently injurious to the morals of the people.” 56 To reinforce this point, the old agrarian, more Jeffersonian than Jefferson himself, quoted a famous passage from Notes on Virginia: “While we have land to labor . . . let us never wish to see our citizens occupied at a work-bench, or twirling a distaff.”

The veteran democrat had lived to see the policies of Hamilton return in triumph under the very aegis of the Jeffersonian party which he himself had helped to shape. He could not let this pass without comment. The poverty of the Pennsylvania yeomanry, he declared, is “attributable to banking and manufacturing establishments, under the protection of government, absorbing a portion of capital that might be employed to better advantage in agricultural improvements.” 57 But he was not bitter. His battles for agrarian

57 Ibid., 6.
democracy were far behind him. His interests had turned in his latter days to religion—he often accompanied Deborah to Friends meeting now—and he rejoiced that mildness, gentleness, forbearance, and unselfish love toward all men—"the blessed effects of religion"—were "observable in the private families of Friends and other denominations of Christians seated on their farms in various parts of our happy country." He closed with an expression of his renewed Quaker conviction that God had given to all His children "a monitor in their own breasts." 58

In this bustling "Era of Good Feelings" Logan's was already like a voice out of a lost world. But his address, with its intransigent Jeffersonianism, its elegiac evocation of an agrarian America, and its final note of religious serenity, was a fitting close to his literary career. It had been a full and fruitful career. Deborah, one feels, could well have mentioned it.

Henry E. Huntington Library

Frederick B. Tolles

58 Ibid., 10.