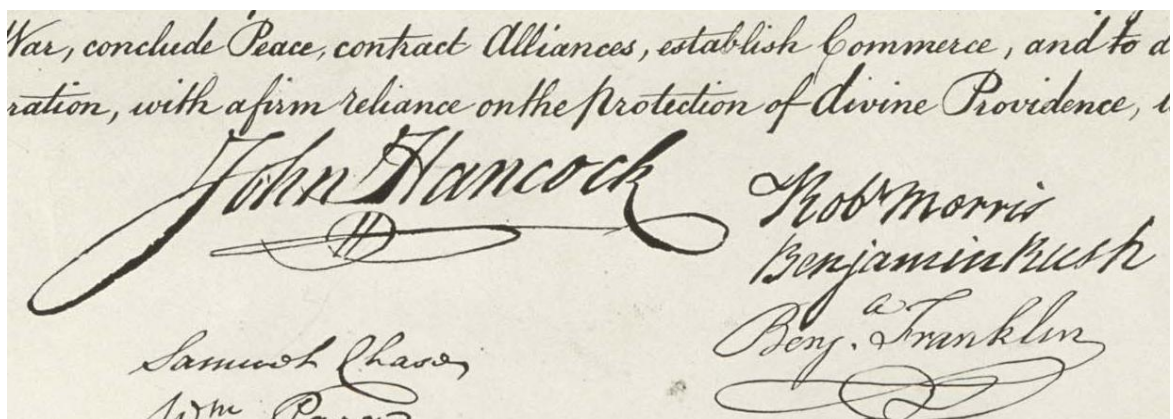


David Barton's biography of Benjamin Rush begins, "Benjamin Rush will be forever immortalized in American history as one of the fifty-six individuals who signed our national birth certificate: the Declaration of Independence."<sup>1</sup>

If you look at a copy of the Declaration of Independence and zoom in on the famous signature of John Hancock, just below Hancock's signature and to the right you will find the signature of Dr. Benjamin Rush. Benjamin Franklin signed just below Rush. Rush married Julia Stockton, the daughter of Richard Stockton, another signer of the Declaration of Independence. Most of us know quite a bit about Benjamin Franklin and

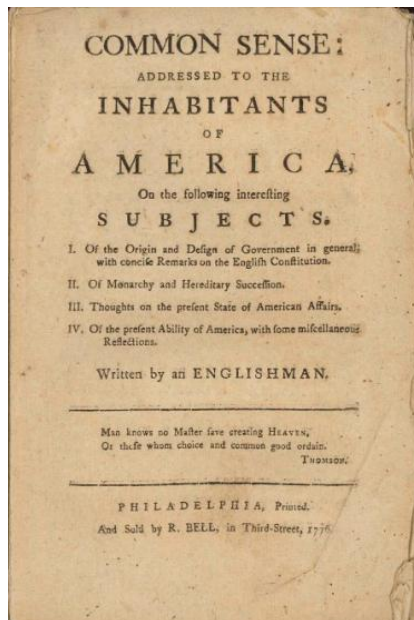
even if we know little about him, John Hancock's name is very familiar to us, but I would guess that few of us know very much about Dr. Benjamin Rush.



Dr. Rush was an outspoken Christian, statesman, and pioneering medical doctor. He was a prolific author, publishing the first American chemistry textbook and textbook on mental illness. In 1797, President John Adams appointed Rush as Treasurer of the U.S. Mint, a position he held until 1813. He founded America's first Bible society, the first ant-slavery movement, a prison reform movement and was called the “Father of American Medicine” At the time of his death in 1813, he was heralded as one of the three most notable figures in America, the other two being George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. I call Benjamin Rush the most famous founding father most people have never heard of.

Let me take a moment and explain why I am doing a message about Benjamin Rush. For the past seven years, on or around Reformation Sunday, I share a message like this in the spirit of Hebrews 12:1. *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.* The “great cloud of witnesses” is made up of the men and women listed in Hebrews chapter eleven—Noah, Abraham, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, David and many others. These were true men and women of faith and we study them throughout Scripture, but these are not the only people who belong in the “great cloud of witnesses.” This cloud has grown over the past two thousand years and continues to grow in our lifetime.

Here are the subjects of my past messages: William Tyndale, Ulrich Zwingli, David Brainerd, George Whitefield, Amy Carmichael and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. All six of these men and women would fit under the category of pastor and missionary but in the case of Benjamin Rush I intentionally chose someone who does not fit into these categories. Even though Rush was not a pastor or missionary by vocation—he was a medical doctor—everything he did in his life was infused with ministry for the Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason, he is most like all of you. You are not pastors and missionaries by vocation, but every day of your life can be filled with ministry for the Lord. I hope you will be inspired by the life of Benjamin Rush, as I know I have been.



The other reason I present these biographies is to inspire you to do your own reading. I prepared this message by reading one modest biography about Benjamin Rush and a little research on the web. You can do this just as easily as I did. Furthermore, I want you to know about a new resource we have in the church library. We have just added this three volume set called hero Tales. Many of you are quite familiar with this series which contains a total of 45 short biographies. These are ideal for using in family devotions so you and your children can be inspired by these men and women of faith.

Let me get back to where we left off with Benjamin Rush and his status as a founding father. If historians put him into the same category as Benjamin Franklin and George Washington, why has history obscured him so? I think one of the reasons we aren't familiar with his life is because so much of his work was

done behind the scenes. The famous Revolutionary War pamphlet, *Common Sense*, is a good example.

One author sums up the importance of this pamphlet. “Significantly, *Common Sense*—perhaps the single work most responsible for turning the tide of American public opinion toward independence—was initiated and brought to fruition with Benjamin Rush’s leadership.”<sup>2</sup> It was published in January of 1776 and even though the war had already begun, the majority of the people were not sold on the idea of rebellion against the King. Before the Declaration of Independence was signed in July of that year, the *Common Sense* had already sold over a quarter million copies and surpassed a half million within one year. That may not sound like an impressive number to you, but when you consider that the entire population of the country was 2.5 million, this is an enormous number. This would be comparable to a book selling 62 million copies in one year! And since *Common Sense* was read aloud in taverns, churches and town squares, we could estimate that more than half the population of the country knew its content.<sup>3</sup>

Here is one famous section. “Society in every state is a blessing, but Government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one: for when we suffer, or are exposed to the same miseries BY A GOVERNMENT, which we might expect in a country WITHOUT GOVERNMENT, our calamity is heightened by reflecting that we furnish the means by which we suffer.”<sup>4</sup> Isn’t that a powerful quote?! And just remember—when we cast our vote on election day, “our calamity is heightened by reflecting that we furnish the means by which we suffer.” ☺

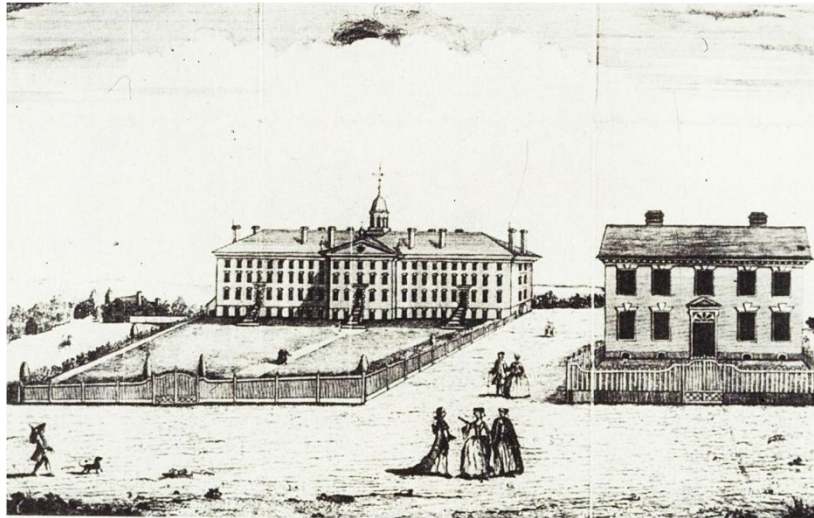
In a personal letter, Rush detailed his role in the process. “He [Thomas Paine] read the sheets to me at my house as he composed them...A title only was wanted for this pamphlet before it was committed to the press. Mr. Paine proposed to call it “Plain Truth.” I objected to it and suggested the title of “Common Sense.” This was instantly adopted...and *Common Sense* burst from the press...in a few days.”<sup>5</sup>

The application for us is that even if we never discover the cure for cancer, we might encourage or impact the person who does. You may not plant a church among an unreached people group or lead a national revival, but you might lead someone to faith in Christ who will do these things. Every one of our relationships matter. A life lived in daily service to the Lord matters, even if it may not seem like it at the time. You never know who you might influence in the workplace. The diapers that you change, the daily grind at the office and everything else in between matters.

In addition to his sacrifice as a patriot and founding father of the nation, Rush made many friends in high places and was deeply influential in the political sphere. In 1790 became the co-author of the Pennsylvania State Constitution. In 1797 he was appointed Treasurer of the U.S. Mint by President John Adams, a position he held for the remainder of his life. He served under three different president who all came from different political parties. Rush stubbornly refused to associate himself with any one political party. His views would serve us all well in our day of divisive and endless political debate. “I have been alternatively called an aristocrat and a democrat. I am now neither. I am a Christocrat. I believe all power...will always fail of producing order and happiness in the hands of man. He alone who created and redeemed man is qualified to govern him.”<sup>6</sup> Don’t you love that title—Christocrat? In our ever divisive world of



politics, may we all be Christocrats before anything else—our allegiance to Jesus Christ and our democratic vote submitted to him.



**Princeton University, 1764 (College of New Jersey)**

Rush graduated from College of New Jersey which we now know as Princeton University at the age of 15. Lest you think he started at Princeton at age 11, understand that his degree only took one year, so he didn't begin his studies until age 14. ☺ It would seem that such a degree served as a preparatory program before he chose his final career path. Rush was extremely intelligent and demonstrated abilities in multiple areas of study and had to choose between the ministry,

law or medicine, although he entered Princeton with the intent to pursue the ministry. His uncle, the Rev. Dr Samuel Finley, who later became president of Princeton, offered this sage advice. "Before you determine on anything, set apart a day for fasting and prayer, and ask God to direct you in the choice of a profession."<sup>7</sup> Rush followed his uncle's advice and changed his career choice from the ministry to medicine. He spent eight years on his medical studies on two continents and graduated in 1768.

To the young people in our church I offer Rush as a "cloud of witness" to you. Most college students struggle with their career choice and end up changing their major multiple times but at the tender age of fifteen Rush had to decide upon his life's direction. Whether you are college bound or not is not the point. Are you willing to submit your career, your life, the decision about your future to the sovereign will of God? Have you set aside a time of prayer for guidance? Are you willing to change your plans if God reveals a different plan?

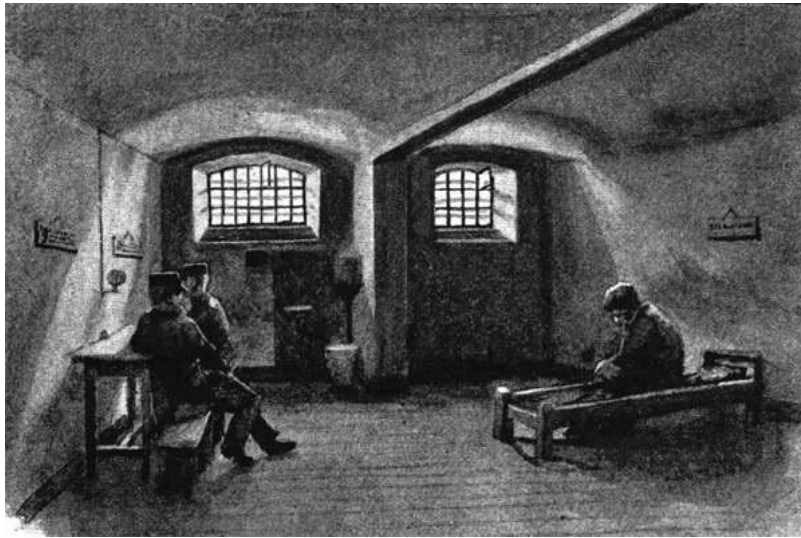
Benjamin Rush was a man of many important passions and more importantly, he always put his passions into practice. In 1774, with Benjamin Franklin, he re-established America's first anti-slavery. In 1780, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts became the first two states to outlaw slavery.

Rush left no question about his opinion on the matter. "Domestic slavery is repugnant to the principles of Christianity. It prostrates every



benevolent and just principle of action in the human heart. It is rebellion against the authority of a common Father. It is a practical denial of the extent and efficacy of the death of a common Savior. It is an usurpation of the prerogative of the Great Sovereign of the universe, who has solemnly claimed an exclusive property in the souls of men”<sup>8</sup>

Rush was chiefly responsible for bringing about massive prison reforms which improved the quality of the accommodations, provided meaningful labor, worship services and a small library for the prisoners. He also managed to convince the Pennsylvania Attorney General to make a radical change in the penal code which limited capital punishment to what we might call today, first degree murder. He referred to the prisoners as his “other friends.” One Christmas, he provided the entire prison with turkey dinners.

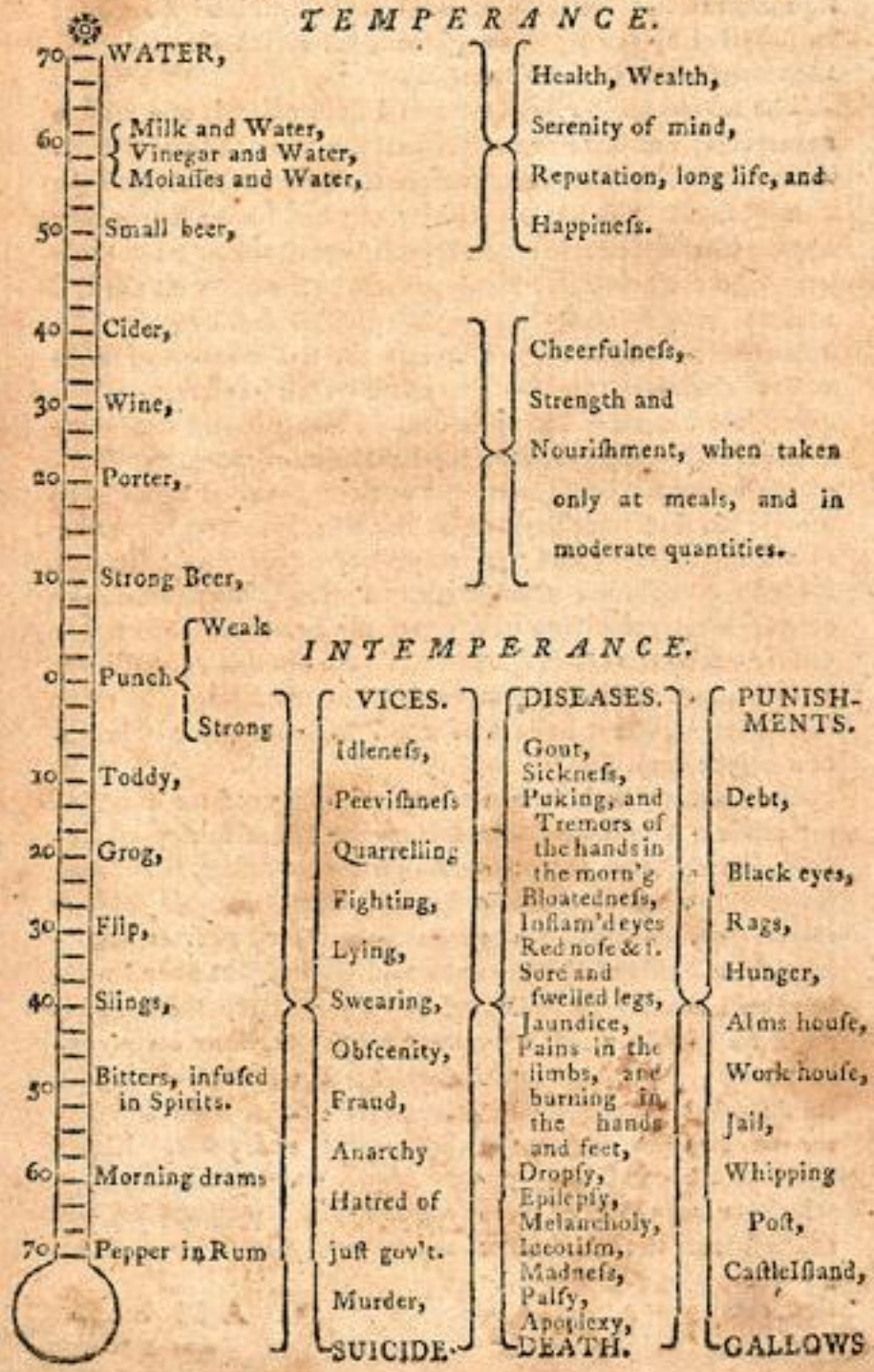


“[I]...request the prisoners in the new jail, under the sentence of confinement and labor, to accept a dinner of turkeys as a proof that they are still remembered in their present suffering condition by some of their fellow creatures. They hope they will be led by this small present on this anniversary day of the birth of their Savior to consider the infinite love of God to their souls in sending his Son into the world to redeem them from all evil and to introduce them, when penitent, into a state of everlasting rest and happiness.”<sup>9</sup>

He not only brought about prison reform but he also fought to keep men out of prison. He viewed alcohol as a chief degrader of morals which led to illness, prison and death. He created this fascinating chart that he called a “A MORAL and PHYSICAL Thermometer.” The top section detailed the wisdom of temperance. Rush agreed that beer and wine in great moderation actually carried some benefits. But the lower two thirds of his moral thermometer meticulously laid out the dangers of intemperance and included a long list of vices, diseases and punishments that accompany strong drink. Please don’t get the impression that he was an angry moralist who stood on his soap box and preached about the awful drunks carousing in the taverns. He hated alcohol because he loved people. He hated what it did to the people he loved and Rush seemed to have a love for all people—people of every race, class and station in life.



**A MORAL and PHYSICAL THERMOMETER :**  
*Or, a Scale of the Progress of TEMPERANCE and INTEMPERANCE.*  
**LIQUORS, with their EFFECTS, in their usual Order.**



Not only was he not a moralist but neither was his passion driven by humanitarian beliefs. He was a born again, on fire believer who infused his faith into everything he touched. This was evident from his autobiography.

“My only hope of salvation is in the infinite transcendent love of God manifested to the world by the death of his Son upon the Cross. Nothing but His blood will wash away my sins. I rely exclusively upon it. Come Lord Jesus! Come quickly! And take home thy lost but redeemed Creature. I will believe and I will hope in Thy salvation. Amen and amen!”<sup>10</sup>

In a letter to a friend, he wrote the following about his parents. “I have acquired and received nothing from the world which I prize so highly as the religious principles I inherited from them; and I possess nothing I value so much as the innocence and purity of their characters.”<sup>11</sup>

He also said that the following sentence should be inscribed in letters of gold over the door of every State and Court house in the United States: "The Son of Man Came into the World, Not To Destroy Men's Lives, But To Save Them."<sup>12</sup>

In his famous essay, A Defence of the Use of the Bible in Schools, he penned, “If moral precepts alone could have reformed mankind, the mission of the Son of God into our world would have been unnecessary. He came to promulgate a system of doctrines, as well as a system of morals. The perfect morality of the Gospel rests upon a doctrine which, though often controverted, has never been refuted; I mean the vicarious life and death of the Son of God.”

This is similar to something I have articulated in the past. It is increasingly common in Christian circles to want to emphasize good Christian behavior but downplay doctrine. Some say that we need to work on our “deeds” and not worry so much about our “creeds.” I agree that we need both deeds and creeds, but creeds must always come first. As Rush has said, our morality—our deeds and good actions, rests upon the doctrine of the atonement.

Rush was trained as a physician at the Pennsylvania Hospital and the field of medicine is where he made his most important mark in history. Rush University Medical Center<sup>13</sup> was founded in 1837 in honor of Benjamin Rush. Rush would turn over in his grave if he knew this prestigious medical center bore his name. He founded Dickinson College and gave and after giving a substantial donation, issued the following warning.

“The trustees of our college are at liberty to apply my donation to it to the finishing of the hall or to any other purpose they may judge proper. I request only—nay, I insist upon—no notice, public or private, being taken of it. Should I hear of my unworthy name being stained upon any of your walls, I shall employ a person to deface it. The dread of seeing a record so calculated to feed vanity will forever keep me from fulfilling my promise to pay one more visit to [the College].”<sup>14</sup>



Rush was a very humble man who loathed notoriety but history proves that he was worthy of such an honor. Nowhere was this evidenced more than in the yellow fever epidemic of 1793. This plague hit Philadelphia and killed ten percent of the population in a few months. Rush was one of very few doctors who did not flee the city and whom took care of patients night and day.

“As for myself, I am determined to remain. I may fall a victim to the epidemic, and so may you, gentleman. But I prefer, since I am placed here by Divine Providence, to fall in performing my duty, if such must be the consequence of staying upon the ground than to secure my life by fleeing from the post of duty allotted in the Providence of God. I will remain, if I remain alone.”<sup>15</sup>

Three of his students who remained to help with the plague succumbed to the disease. He was sick with it two or three times but was able to recover and kept seeing patients even while sick himself. One historian gushed praise for his sacrifice. “Many faithful practitioners of the medical art have justly borne the honorable title given St. Luke of ‘beloved physician,’ but none have better deserved it than Dr. Rush.”<sup>16</sup>

In 1777 he was appointed Surgeon General and then Physician General of the Continental Army but these fancy titles did not keep him from caring for the sick and dying often without any payment at the risk of his own life.

Despite his love for his patients, Rush was limited to the medical practices of his day. In his report on the Philadelphia yellow fever epidemic, he wrote: “I have found bleeding to be useful, not only in cases where the pulse was full and quick, but where it was slow and tense. I have bled twice in many, and in one acute case four times, with the happiest effect. I consider intrepidity in the use of the lancet, at present, to be necessary, as it is in the use of mercury and jalap, in this insidious and ferocious disease.”<sup>17</sup>

In 1803, Thomas Jefferson sent Meriwether Lewis to Philadelphia to prepare for the Lewis and Clark Expedition under the tutelage of Rush, who taught Lewis about frontier illnesses and the performance of bloodletting. Rush provided the corps with a medical kit that included fifty dozen of *Dr. Rush's Bilious Pills*, laxatives containing more than 50% mercury, which the corps called “thunderclappers”. Though their efficacy is questionable, their high mercury content provided an excellent tracer by which archaeologists have been able to track the corps' actual route to the Pacific.<sup>18</sup>

“Dr. Rush thought these pills would cure any number of ills. The pills were composed of calomel (a mixture of six parts mercury to one part chlorine), and jalap (jalapeno is a form of jalap). Each portion of the concoction was a purgative of explosive power...the combination was awesome.”<sup>19</sup> Dr. Rush suggested that if one pill didn't do the trick, you could take two or three.



We must remember that Rush lived in a day when bloodletting was the leading treatment option for disease. The prestigious British medical journal, *The Lancet*, was named after this instrument of bloodletting.

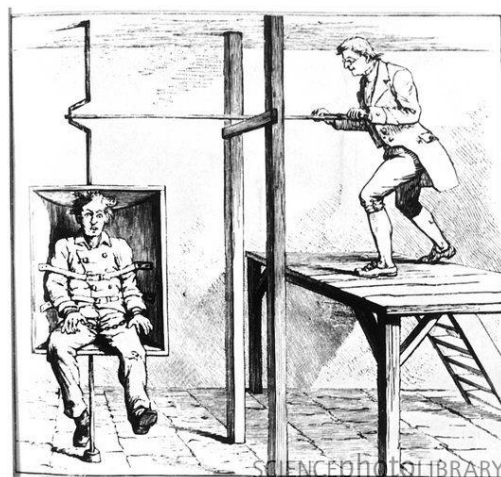
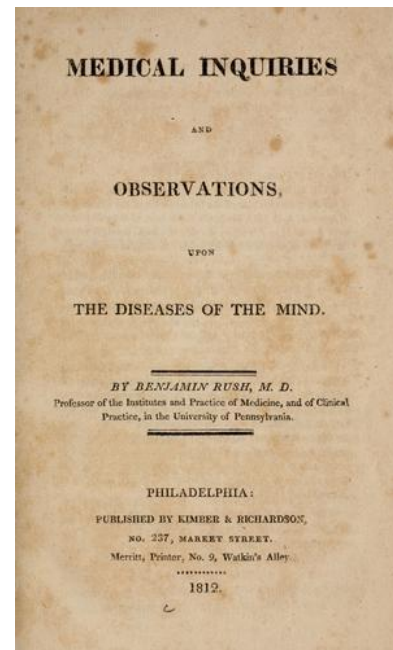


Rush was a champion for the inoculation of smallpox, which incidentally killed the famous preacher and leader in the First Great Awakening, Jonathan Edwards. Rush attended Princeton University a mere two years after Edwards died of a smallpox vaccine after having just assumed the presidency of Princeton.

Because of his commitment to the field of medicine and especially to his patients, he has been called the “Hippocrates of Pennsylvania”, the “Prince of American Physicians” and “The Father of American Medicine.”<sup>20</sup> He hated to see his patients suffer and he agonized over them every time one passed away. Of this internal pain, he recorded, “Upon my complaining of my inability to save life where I was most anxious to do it, he [a minister friend] said, “Oh, Doctor, there is an awful decree against the certainty of your profession, ‘It is appointed for all men to die once.’ (Hebrews 9:27).”<sup>21</sup>

Rush is sometimes considered a pioneer of occupational therapy particularly as it pertains to the institutionalized and mentally ill.<sup>22</sup> In his book, *Diseases of the Mind*, Rush wrote: "It has been remarked, that the maniacs of the male sex in all hospitals, who assist in cutting wood, making fires, and digging in a garden, and the females who are employed in washing, ironing, and scrubbing floors, often recover, while persons, whose rank exempts them from performing such services, languish away their lives within the walls of the hospital".<sup>23</sup>

His book, *Diseases of the Mind*, was the standard textbook on mental illness for the next seventy years. “It remains one of the most significant books every written by an American on the subject...[It] was a standard reference work by physicians and medical students...Not until 1883 did another systematic work on insanity, a successor to Rush’s volume, appear...To his efforts can be attributed more advancement in the hospitalization and treatment of the insane than to any other physician of his time.”<sup>24</sup>

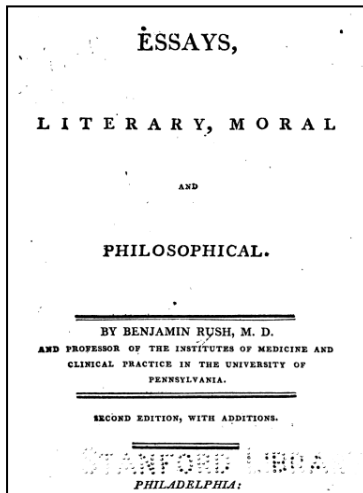


He invented the “gyrating chair” for patients in insane asylums. Rush thought that the chair would increase blood flow to the brain. Again, this seems so archaic and laughable, but all of it was done out of a love for suffering people. He took meticulous notes with all of his treatments and he dropped many of the ones that did not seem to have a positive effect. We all know that even today the field of medicine is far from perfect and doctors still “practice” on patients today. Many of the cancer treatments are termed “experimental” and will sound just as archaic to future generations.

He continually sought to improve the standards in the mental hospitals, or insane asylums. He wanted them

warmer in the winter, cooler in the summer, more fresh air, productive work available, etc. He detailed his suggestions to the point of requesting that additional staff be hired to maintain the fireplace during the night. In a twist of ironic tragedy, Rush's son, John, was admitted to the mental hospital just three years before Rush died.<sup>25</sup> Rush was no stranger to other forms of suffering as four of his nine children preceded him in death. Furthermore, his first fiancé died two weeks before their wedding date.

If all of this were not amazing enough, in 1802 he founded the first ever Bible society in America—The Pennsylvania Bible Society. Its purpose was to “furnish...Bibles gratuitously [which] will have a happy tendency to induce many to appreciate the sacred Scriptures more highly than they have been wont to do; and may dispose those who possess Bibles, but have suffered them to lie neglected in their houses, to peruse them with serious attention.”<sup>26</sup> Three years later their annual report rejoiced at the news of 121 more Bible societies started throughout America. In 1812 they printed 17,375 Bibles and New Testaments and also began using a new form of printing press that revolutionized printing.<sup>27</sup>



One of his best known books bore the title of *Essays, Literary, Moral and Philosophical*. A quick perusal of the table of contents will show the breadth of his scholarship and influence.

- Observations upon the study of the Latin and Greek languages
  - Thoughts upon the amusements and punishments, which are proper for schools
- “Let him treat the name of the Supreme Being with reverence as often as it occurs in books or in conversations with his scholars.”

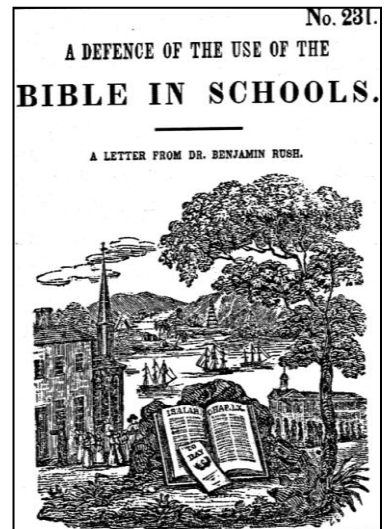
- An inquiry into the Effects of Public Punishments upon Criminals and Society
- Thoughts on Common Sense
- Observations upon the influence of the Habitual use of

Tobacco upon Health, Morals, and Property

- An Account of the Sugar Maple Tree of the United States
- Paradise of Negro Slaves—a dream, 305
- An Inquiry into the causes of Premature Deaths, 310



My favorite section of this book was the chapter called A Defence of the Use of the Bible in Schools which was written in the late 1790s and was published by American Tract in the late 1820s.<sup>28</sup> Today, we are familiar with American Tract Society as one of the main producers of gospel tracts. One of their most recent tracts is about Texas Rangers superstar, Josh Hamilton, titled, Josh Hamilton: Proof that Hope is Never Lost. This was a very popular tract but would not be so today.



The Essay contained five presuppositions.

1. That Christianity is the only true and perfect religion; and that in proportion as mankind adopt its principles and obey its precepts they will be wise and happy.
2. That a better knowledge of this religion is to be acquired by reading the Bible than in any other way.
3. That the Bible contains more knowledge necessary to man in his present state than any other book in the world.
4. That knowledge is most durable, and religious instruction most useful, when imparted in early life.
5. That the Bible, when not read in schools, is seldom read in any subsequent period of life.

It is worth our time to read this quote from his book.

It is also said that a great part of the Old Testament is no way interesting to mankind under the present dispensation of the Gospel. But I deny that any of the books of the Old Testament are not interesting to mankind under the Gospel dispensation. Most of the characters, events, and ceremonies mentioned in them are personal, providential, or instituted types of the Messiah, all of which have been, or remain yet, to be fulfilled by Him. It is from an ignorance or neglect of these types that we have so many Deists in Christendom, for so irrefragably do they prove the truth of Christianity that I am sure a young man who had been regularly instructed in their meaning could never doubt afterwards of the truth of any of its principles.

But passing by all other considerations, and contemplating merely the political institutions of the United States, I lament that we waste so much time and money in punishing crimes and take so little pains to prevent them. We profess to be republicans, and yet we neglect the only means of establishing and perpetuating our republican forms of government; that is, the universal education of our youth in the principles of Christianity by means of the Bible; for this divine book, above all others, favors that equality among mankind, that respect for just laws, and all those sober and frugal virtues which constitute the soul of republicanism.

You can learn a lot about a man by what they say at his funeral. In addition to other accolades,





Benjamin Rush was eulogized this way. “The loss of no individual of this country, excepting that of Washington or Franklin, has been lamented with more universal and pathetic demonstrations of sorrow.”<sup>29</sup> Rush is buried at Christ Church, Philadelphia, which was his home church.

Benjamin Rush did not preach the gospel in India like William Carey or stir up a Holy Spirit revival like Jonathan Edwards, but he did infuse the gospel in every area of his life. Because he loved Jesus and depended on him for salvation and sovereign guidance, he loved people deeply. And because he loved people, he spent his life on them and with them. You don’t have to be a pastor or a missionary to likewise infuse the gospel into every facet of your life. You can glorify the Lord as a doctor, an engineer, a carpenter, a mother, a nurse and every other career and passion in your life. Benjamin Rush is now part of the “great cloud of witnesses” and it is my hope and prayer that each of us join him.

Rich Maurer  
November 13, 2011

### **Bonus Material**

I benefited from so many facts, stories and personal writings of Benjamin Rush that I could not fit into this message. Please take time to finish reading some of these jewels.

*Paradise of, Negro Slaves—a dream, page 305*<sup>30</sup>

SOON after reading Mr. Clarkson's ingenious and pathetic essay on the slavery and commerce of the human species, the subject made so deep an impression upon my mind, that it followed me in my sleep, and produced a dream of so extraordinary a nature, that I have yielded to the importunities of some of my friends, by communicating it to the public, I thought I was conducted to a country, which in point of cultivation and scenery, far surpassed any thing I had ever heard, or read of in my life. This country, I found, was inhabited only by negroes. They appeared, cheerful and happy. Upon my approaching a beautiful grove, where a number of them were assembled for religious purposes, I perceived at once a pause in their exercises, and an appearance of general perturbation. They fixed their eyes upon me—while one of them, a venerable looking man, came forward, and in the name of the whole assembly, addressed me in the following language:

"Excuse the panic which you have spread through this peaceful and happy company: we perceive that you are a *white man*. That colour which is the emblem of innocence in every other creature of God, is to us a sign of guilt in man. The persons whom you see here, were once dragged by the men of your colour from their native country, and consigned by them to labour—punishment—and death."

“We are here collected together, and enjoy an ample compensation in our present employments for all the miseries we endured on earth. We know that we are secured by the Being whom we worship, from injury and oppression. Our appearance of terror, therefore, was entirely the sudden effect of habits which have not yet been eradicated from our minds.”

“Your apprehensions of danger from the sight of a white man, said I, are natural. But in me—you behold a friend. I have been your advocate—and.” Here, he interrupted me, and said, “Is not your name \_\_\_?” I answered in the affirmative. Upon this he ran up and embraced me in his arms, and afterwards conducted me into the midst of the assembly, where after being introduced to the principal characters, I was seated upon a bank of moss; and the following account was delivered to me by the venerable person who first accosted me.

“The place we now occupy, is called the *paradise of negro slaves*. It is destined to be our place of residence 'till the general judgement; after which time, we expect to be admitted into higher and more perfect degrees of happiness. Here we derive great pleasure from contemplating the infinite goodness of God, in allotting to us our full proportion of misery on earth; by which means we have escaped the punishments, to which the free and happy part of mankind too often expose themselves after death. Here we have learned to thank God, for all the afflictions our task-masters heaped on us; inasmuch, as they were the means of our present happiness. Pain and distress are the unavoidable portions of all mankind. They are the only possible avenues that can conduct them to peace and felicity. Happy are they, who partake of their proportion of both upon the earth.” Here he ended.

After a silence of a few minutes, a young man, who bore on his head the mark of a wound, came up to me and asked

“If I knew anything of Mr. \_\_\_\_, of the Island of \_\_\_\_ I told him I did not. Mr.—— said he, was my master. One day, I mistook his orders, and saddled his mare instead of his horse, which provoked him so much, that he took up an axe which laid in his yard, and with a stroke on my head dismissed me from life.

I long to hear, whether he has repented of this unkind action. Do, sir, write to him, and tell him, his sin is not too great to be forgiven, tell him, his once miserable slave, Scipio, is not angry at him, he longs to bear his prayers to the offended majesty of heaven and, when he dies, Scipio will apply to be one of the convoy, that shall conduct his spirit to the regions of bliss appointed for those who repent of their iniquities.”

Before I could reply to this speech, an old man came and sat down by my side. His wool was white as snow. With a low, but gentle voice, he thus addressed me.

“Sir, I was the slave of Mr. \_\_\_\_ in the Island of \_\_\_\_\_. I served him faithfully upwards of sixty years. No rising sun ever caught me in my cabin—no setting sun ever saw me out of the sugar field, except on Sundays and holydays. My whole subsistence never cost my master more than forty shillings a year. Herrings and roots were my only food. One day, in the eightieth year of my age, the overseer saw me stop to rest myself against the side of a tree, where I was at work. He came up to me, and beat me 'till he could endure the fatigue and heat occasioned by the blows he gave me, no longer. Nor was this all—he complained of me to my master, who instantly set me up at public venue, and sold me for two guineas to a tavern keeper, in a distant parish. The distress I felt, in leaving my children, and grand-children (28 of whom I left on my old master's plantation) soon put an end to my existence, and landed me upon these happy shores. I have now no wish to gratify but one—and that is to be permitted to visit my old master's family. I long to

tell my master, that his wealth cannot make him happy. That the sufferings of a single hour in the world of misery, for which he is preparing himself, will overbalance all the pleasures he ever enjoyed in his life—and that for every act of unnecessary severity he inflicts upon his slaves, he shall suffer tenfold in the world to come.”

He had hardly finished his tale, when a decent looking woman came forward, and addressed me in the following language.

“Sir, I was once the slave of Mr. N—, in the state of \_\_\_\_\_. From the healthiness of my constitution, I was called upon to suckle my Master's eldest son. To enable me to perform this office more effectually, my own child was taken from my breast, and soon afterwards died. My affections in the first emotions of my grief, fastened themselves upon my infant master; He thrived under my care and grew up a handsome young man. Upon the death of his father, I became his property. Soon after this event, he lost 100 pounds at cards. To raise this money I was sold to a planter in a neighbouring state. I can never forget the anguish, with which my aged father and mother followed me to the end of the lane, when I left my master's house, and hung upon me, when they bid me farewell.”

"My new master obliged me to work in the field; the consequence of which was, I caught a fever which in a few weeks ended my life. Say, my friend, is my first young master still alive? —If he is—go to him, and tell him, his unkind behaviour to me is upon record against him. The gentle spirits in heaven, whose happiness consists in expressions of gratitude and love, will have no fellowship with him. His soul must be melted with pity, or he can never escape the punishment which awaits the hard-hearted, equally with the impenitent, in the regions of misery.”

As soon as she had finished her story, a middle aged woman approached me, and after a low and respectful curtsy, thus addressed me.

“Sir I was born and educated in a christian family in one of the southern states of America. In the thirty-third year of my age, I applied to my master to purchase my freedom. Instead of granting my request, he conveyed me by force on board of a vessel and sold me to a planter in the island of Hispaniola. Here it pleased God.”

Upon pronouncing these words, she paused, and a general silence ensued. All at once, the eyes of the whole assembly were turned from me, and directed towards a little white man who advanced towards them, on the opposite side of the grove, in which we were seated. His face was grave, placid, and full of benignity. In one hand he carried a subscription paper and a petition—in the other, he carried a small pamphlet, on the unlawfulness of the African slave-trade, and a letter directed to the King of Prussia, upon the unlawfulness of war. While I was employed in contemplating this venerable figure—suddenly I beheld the whole assembly running to meet him—the air resounded with the clapping of hands—and *I* awoke from my dream, by the noise of a general acclamation of—ANTHONY BENEZET!

(Anthony Benezet was a French Huguenot who moved to Philadelphia in 1742 to teach. He started a night school for negroes. In 1770, he founded the Negro School at Philadelphia. Benezet also founded the first anti-slavery society, the Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully



Held in Bondage. Benjamin Franklin and Dr. Benjamin Rush reconstituted this association after Benezet's death as the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery.<sup>31)</sup>

An address to the ministers of the Gospel of every denomination in the United States upon subjects interesting to morals<sup>32)</sup>

*Under the great diversity of opinions, you entertain in religion, you are all united in inculcating the necessity of morals. In this business you are neither catholics nor protestants—churchmen nor dissenters. One spirit actuates you all. From the success, or failure, of your exertions in the cause of virtue, we anticipate the freedom or slavery of our country. Even the new government of the united states, from which so many advantages are expected, will neither restore order, nor establish justice among us, unless it be accompanied and supported by morality, among all classes of people.*<sup>33)</sup>



“The Benjamin Rush Society aims to unite medical students, residents, fellows, and doctors across the political spectrum — as well as members of the general public — who believe that the profession of medicine calls its practitioners to

serve their patients, rather than the government. We believe that the physician-patient relationship is a voluntary and mutually beneficial one. Both parties have a right to enter this relationship freely. The proper role of government is to protect this freedom, not to diminish it.”<sup>34)</sup>

Another medical faux faux concerned his medical diagnosis of black skin color. Rush reviewed the case of Henry Moss, a slave who lost his dark skin color. He proposed that being black was a hereditary skin disease, which he called "negroidism," and that it might be cured. Rush drew the conclusion that "Whites should not tyrannize over [blacks], for their disease should entitle them to a double portion of humanity. However, by the same token, whites should not intermarry with them, for this would tend to infect posterity with the 'disorder'... attempts must be made to cure the disease."<sup>35)</sup>

Rush’s conclusion that Africans carry a skin disease strikes our modern sensibilities as racist and perhaps even disgusting. We must not forget that Rush was a leading abolitionist of his day and tirelessly fought for the freedom of slaves. Moreover, he rallied for employment for freed slaves so that they could provide for their families. I believe that his diagnosis of a “skin disease” was motivated out of a desire to help blacks in any way that he could. Even if it smacks of condescension, Rush was light years ahead of his contemporaries in the abolition movement and possessed genuine love for these oppressed people.

This is an abbreviated list from Benjamin Rush to the Lewis and Clark expedition of some of the signs of disease and his recommended treatment.

- Unusual costiveness is often a sign of an approaching disease. When you feel it, take one or more of the purging pills.
- Want of appetite is otherwise a sign of approaching indisposition. It should be banished by the same method.
- Flannel should be worn constantly next to the skin, especially in wet weather.
- The less spirits you use, the better.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> David Barton, *Benjamin Rush: Signer of the Declaration of Independence*, WallBuilder, Aledo, Texas, © 1999, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Barton, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Paine donated all of his royalties to George Washington's Continental Army. "As my wish was to serve an oppressed people, and assist in a just and good cause, I conceived that the honor of it would be promoted by my declining to make even the usual profits of an author." Craig Nelson, *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of Modern Nations* (New York: Penguin, 2007), 90.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, Of the origin and design of government in general, with concise remarks on the English Constitution, January 1776.

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin Rush, Letters of Benjamin Rush, L.H. Butterfield, editor (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), Vol. II, p. 1008, to James Cheatham, July 17, 1809.

<sup>6</sup> Ramsay, Eulogium, p. 109.

<sup>7</sup> Barton, p. 10-11.

<sup>8</sup> Minutes of the Proceedings of a Convention of delegates from the Abolition Societies established in Different Parts of the United States, Assembled in Philadelphia, on the First Day of January, One Thousand, Seven Hundred and Ninety Four, and Continued, by Adjournments, Until the Seventh Day of the Same Month, Inclusive (Philadelphia: Zachariah Poulson, Jr., 1794), p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> Rush, *Autobiography*, pp. 238-239, December 22, 1797.

<sup>10</sup> Benjamin Rush, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Rush*, George Corner, editor, Princeton: Princeton University Press, © 1948, p. 166.

<sup>11</sup> Dr. David Hosack, "Eulogium on the Late Dr. Rush," *The Analectic Magazine, Containing Selection from Foreign Reviews and Magazines, of such Articles as are Most Valuable, Curious, or Entertaining* (Philadelphia: Moses Thomas, 1814), Vol. III, p. 46.

<sup>12</sup> Rush, Benjamin, M.D. (1806). "A plan of a Peace-Office for the United States". *Essays, Literary, Moral and Philosophical*. (2nd ed.). Thomas and William Bradford, Philadelphia. pp. 183–188, downloaded PDF on 9/26/11.

<sup>13</sup> formerly Rush Presbyterian Hospital

<sup>14</sup> Rush, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 1053, to James Hamilton, June 27, 1810.

<sup>15</sup> Benson J. Lossing, *Biographical Sketches of the Signers of the Declaration of American Independence* (New York: George F. Coledge & Brother, 1848), p. 102.

<sup>16</sup> Benson J. Lossing, *Eminent Americans* (New York: American Book Exchange, 1881), p. 78.

<sup>17</sup> *The British Critic, A New Review*, Volume VI, 1895.

<sup>18</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin\\_Rush](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Rush)

<sup>19</sup> Steven Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis Thomas Jefferson and the Opening of the American West*, Simon & Schuster, 1997.

<sup>20</sup> Barton, p. 29.

<sup>21</sup> Willard Thorp, *The Lives of Eighteen from Princeton*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, © 1946, p. 67.

<sup>22</sup> Brodsky, Alyn (2004). *Benjamin Rush: Patriot and Physician*.

<sup>23</sup> Benjamin Rush, *Medical inquiries and observations upon the diseases of the mind*, John Grigg: Philadelphia, 1830, p. 224.

<sup>24</sup> Nathan G. Goudman, *Benjamin Rush: Physician and Citizen, 1746-1813* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1934), pp. 259,271.

---

<sup>25</sup> John, Rush's eldest son, initially followed his father into medicine, then joined the navy. During his tour, a friend and fellow officer challenged him to a duel. John shot and killed the challenger and was soon consumed by feelings of guilt. When he returned home unable to care for himself, Rush placed him in the mental ward at the Pennsylvania Hospital, where he died 30 years later without having recovered. Landsman, Ned C. (2001). *Nation and Province in the First British Empire*. Bucknell University Press.

<sup>26</sup> *The First Report of the Bible Society Established at Philadelphia; Read before the Society at the Annual Meeting, May 1, 1809* (Philadelphia: Fry and Krammerer, 1809), p. 10.

<sup>27</sup> **Barton, PAGE #????**

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.atstracts.org/atshistory.html>

<sup>29</sup> John Sanderson, *Biography of the Signers to the Declaration of Independence*, (Philadelphia: R. W. Pomeroy, 1823), Vol. IV, p. 283.

<sup>30</sup> Rush, Benjamin, M.D. (1806). *Essays, Literary, Moral and Philosophical*.

<sup>31</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthony\\_Benezet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthony_Benezet)

<sup>32</sup> Rush, Benjamin, M.D. (1806). *Essays, Literary, Moral and Philosophical*.

<sup>33</sup> Rush, Benjamin, M.D. (1806). "A plan of a Peace-Office for the United States". *Essays, Literary, Moral and Philosophical*. (2nd ed.). Thomas and William Bradford, Philadelphia. p. 114, downloaded PDF on 9/26/11.

<sup>34</sup> <http://benjaminrushsociety.org/about-top89l>,

<sup>35</sup> Rush, Benjamin (1799). "Observations Intended to Favour a Supposition That the Black Color (As It Is Called) of the Negroes Is Derived from the Leprosy". *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*.

<sup>36</sup> <http://lewisandclarktrail.com/medical.htm>