

Dickinson College Archives & Special Collections

<http://archives.dickinson.edu/>

Documents Online

Title: "An Address to the First Graduates of Dickinson College," by Charles Nisbet

Date: September 26, 1787

Location: SC Vault Nisbet 37

Contact:

Archives & Special Collections
Waidner-Spahr Library
Dickinson College
P.O. Box 1773
Carlisle, PA 17013

717-245-1399

archives@dickinson.edu

An address to the first Graduates of Dickinson College, by Charles Nisbet D.D. September 26th 1787.

Gentlemen.

You have now performed the exercises required by custom before receiving the first degree in Arts. We could have wished you had had more time for the courses of study through which you have passed, & that you had been able to have read many books on Philosophy, which you have not read. We feel for your loss, & hope that you will endeavour to repair it afterwards as much as in your power. We would be sorry to suppose, that you will think your studies at an end when you leave this seminary; on the contrary, we hope, that you have contracted such an habit of study, & are so far sensible of the excellence & usefulness of knowledge, that you will continue to pursue it as you find opportunity. We are almost sorry, that we shall be able to do more for those, who come after you, than the shortness of the time prescribed has permitted us to do for you. We have not, however, been idle; you are witnesses how closely we applied ourselves to conduct your studies, to exercise your faculties, & to store your minds with a great variety of ideas, to lead you to the knowledge of men & things. You have been led over a pretty large field, & we have endeavoured to point out to your notice every thing, that we apprehended

to be worth your observation, so far as the rapidity with which we ~~proceeded~~ were obliged to proceed, would permit. We endeavoured to make you acquainted with some classic authors, & to excite your curiosity to read such as our time did not permit us to read with you. We endeavoured to warn you against the folly of those, who not being capable of relishing the excellencies of those valuable Authors, endeavour to depreciate them to others, & to discourage them from the study of them to keep their own indolence in countenance. We have set before you the excellencies of these Authors, & shewn you how highly they have been valued by all, who knew them, & that they never have been despised except by the ignorant & barbarous. You have likewise been warned against a superficial & negligent method of studying, if that can be called studying, when the mind is not attentive, & does not endeavour to understand, & retain as much as possible. We have endeavoured to pique your courage & interest your ambition not to be deterred by difficulties from any branches of knowledge, that had ever been mastered by those at your age. It cannot be expected, that those in early youth should entirely renounce the pleasure of their time of life, & become fond of solitude & abstract speculation; but we thought, that by attention to the public lessons, & the use of your faculties, which are fresh & vigorous in youth, you might master the first difficulties, & render the study of philosophy easier to you afterwards.

As Reason is the glory of man, you have been taught its nature & use in investigating, proving & com-

municating truth. The ancients set so great a value on this part of science, that they added an Art to it, & by investigating into the nature & form of propositions, contrived a method of deducing truths from others by artificial rules. The attempt was laudable on account of the excellency of the object, & syllogistic method conducted the reasonings & disputations of the ancients for more than two thousand years. Experience, however, has shewn its futility & insufficiency;

though as most of the treatises on philosophy supposes the knowledge of artificial reasoning, the knowledge of it has become a necessary & indispensable part of education.

We were not willing to waste the short time allotted to us in teaching the practices of wrangling *secundum Artem*, or constructing chains of syllogism in support of true & probable propositions. The pains necessarily accompanying such an exercise, far surpass any profit that can be derived from it. We thought it sufficient to instruct you in the method in which it is conducted by those, who continue to think it of importance. Philosophy comprehends the knowledge of Divine & human things, attained by the exercise of the faculties of the mind, & to the attainment of this knowledge, all rules, exercises, reading & meditation ought to be subservient. To be expert in it, time, talents, study & application are absolutely necessary. The early periods of youth are not fit for this kind of study, & if it is ever expected, that Philosophy should flourish in this Country, the foolish custom of sending young boys to the study of Philosophy must

be abolished, as this study requires a maturity of understanding not to be expected in early years. The knowledge of the mind itself, its nature, origin, properties, faculties & capacities, requires a power of abstract thinking, which the young will find difficulty to attain, without which, however, the whole of philosophy must be dark & inexplicable.

We have endeavoured to vindicate Metaphysics, or the first philosophy, from contempt, & the charge of inutility, which has been cast upon it, by those who are ignorant of it; & have led your thoughts to the consideration of the general properties of Being, as well as the nature of the human mind, & that of the Deity, so far as it is discoverable by reason, & have shewn you that those contemplations are neither so thorny nor disagreeable, as ignorance has feigned, or indolence fondly believed.

The effect of Philosophy on the mind of those, who consider it merely as an Art or system of precepts, & on those who use it to the improvement of their faculties, is very different. To the first, who only desires a superficial knowledge of the subjects of which it treats, & the manner in which its investigations are conducted, it appears a barren & unimproving study. But to the last, who uses it as the exercise of his faculties, & the guide of his life, it is pleasing, luminous & attractive. "*O vitæ philosophia dux virtutis indagatrix*"! To the first the remembrance of it is like that of a country, through which one has ridden post, or under the cloud of night,

that conveys only a few obscure & imperfect images of objects, & of the greater part no images at all. But to the other it is like the remembrance of a country where we have resided a considerable time, formed many valuable connexions, & made many instructive observations.

The most noble application of philosophy is to moral enquiries & investigations. While many thoughtless Infidels, pretending to philosophy, endeavour to overturn the foundations of moral distinctions, & to represent man as on a level with the inferior animals, you have been taught to deduce the duties, the interest & excellency of man, from his nature, faculties, capacities & situation, so far as to be convinced, that his end & consequently his happiness is different from that of other animals, & consequently that those pleasures, to which Sceptics would confine his attachment, are incapable of rendering him happy; but being incommensurable to his nature, must either deliver him up to the pang of disappointment, or expose him to the torment of unsatisfied desire. However desirous some men are of becoming beasts, & endeavouring to

render others so, to the person, who considers the nature & extent of the human faculties, such an attempt must be impracticable; as mankind can never so far forget themselves as to be destitute of a sense of shame, or insensible of the admonitions of conscience. We have endeavoured to set before you the beauty of virtue, as the chief excellence of man & indispensibly necessary to his hap-

piness. We have pointed out the foundations of moral obligation in the faculties & principles of human nature, & the situation in which we are placed in our present state. We have shewn you, that virtue & vice, instead of being local & temporary distinctions, are founded in the eternal & unalterable nature of things, & that they cannot be varied by human opinions.

As authority has been a great cause of error in Philosophy, we have endeavoured to emancipate your minds from prejudice, & point out to you the mistakes of great & good, as well as those of ordinary, men. But while we shewed you to think for yourselves, & not to acquiesce in the greatest names, we likewise have done justice to the merits to the principal writers on philosophy, & recommended to you the study of them, as you have opportunity. The shortness of time allotted you for the study of philosophy, & the little opportunities you have had of consulting a variety of books must render you in a great measure ignorant of those censures, which we have pronounced occasionally on eminent authors. In the progress of your studies, we hope, you will find, that they have not been pronounced without reason. We have encouraged you, so far as we could, to write notes on the Lectures, that have been delivered to you on the several branches of philosophy; a practice, which has been found to be useful in many Seminaries of Europe. We would exhort you to preserve your notes,

in order to retrace the impressions of the Lectures you have heard, & by comparing them with those of the Students of other Seminaries to discover whether your education has been neglected, or not. We would exhort you likewise to look into your notes now & then, as remembrances of what you have been taught concerning life & manners. We hope, we may be confident, that you will never abuse them to the hurt of this infant Seminary. In Europe it is customary for Graduates to take an oath to preserve the honor & private emolument of that College, in which they have been educated, so far as it shall be in their power. We hope, that a sense of gratitude & a regard to justice will compensate for the want of an oath of this nature. We have taken every opportunity, that offered, to convince you of the importance & necessity of a virtuous conduct, in order to preserve your happiness here & hereafter, & have endeavoured to shew you, from the contemplation, the nature, faculties & circumstances of man, that vice is necessarily productive of misery, & that to expect happiness in the practice of it, is a vain & unavailing struggle against the nature of things, which cannot be altered by all our efforts.

“Non illam nostri possunt mutare labores.” As the Christian revelation is perfectly consonant to reason, & contains the most perfect vices of the nature of man, his moral state & the means of his recovery, we

have taken occasion to make you acquainted with the arguments, that prove its authenticity & divine original, & to demonstrate to you the excellencies of its precepts, as well as their suitability to reason & to our happiness. At the same time, which we have been endeavouring

to recommend to you the precepts & maxims of conduct, as well as to enforce them by the best arguments & examples, that you might not be deceived, or rely too much on the mere opus operatum of education, We have carefully shewn you, that neither the best, nor the worst education, has any certain, general or determined effect, that this is only according to the nature of the subject, & the improvement, that is made of instruction. Bad principles & bad examples have corrupted good habits, & destroyed the effects of good instruction; while some men, either without education, or laboring under manifest disadvantages, have attained to respectable characters, & deserved the esteem & affection of mankind.

The unthinking part of parents are apt to imagine, that both learning & virtue may be produced in youth by mechanical operation & the use of external means. Having never tried what success they themselves could attain in this way, they conclude, that a man must not be master of the Art, which he professes, unless he can render any boy, of whatever character, who is committed to him, both learned

& virtuous in a little time. Those parents, who know any thing of human nature, or who have tried the effect of external means on their children, are less sanguine in their hopes, & far more moderate & reasonable in their censures. They know that all, that is in the power of man, is to give good instructions, & to enforce them by argument & example; but that the event is only in the hand of God. The teachers of youth in Colleges cannot be nurses to youth, in superintending natural actions, nor ought it to be expected, that they are to act as their servants or pages, in accompanying them in all their diversions. Those parents, who are foolish enough to expect such services from teachers, ought to be undeceived, & informed, that all they can expect from teachers is good instruction & good example, & that when youth do not profit by these, the fault ought by no means, to be imputed to their masters, as is ordinarily the case.

From foolish notions of this nature, however, we may trace some irrational customs & improper institutions, that still prevail in this country, from an extravagant fondness for the customs of England, & superstitious regard to antiquity. Such is the custom of sending young boys to study philosophy, & of keeping them constantly employed in lessons, exercises, examinations & repetitions, for nine or ten months in the year. The best masters & the best students must, in this manner, fail of success, for the most part, or their success must

be greatly inferior to what might have been expected from their capacity & application.

The knowledge of men, books & things, requires time, leisure & retirement; but this method, so long in vogue, puts it out of the power of the student to acquaint himself with good authors, as his whole time is occupied in preparing his daily task. We hear of the names of many authors; but the pressing necessity of preparing his task does not suffer him to know any more of them, than their names, unless he be of an extraordinary capacity, or use an uncommon degree of application.

You will bear us witness, that we have not accustomed you to consider the preparation of your tasks, the writing of your notes, far less the making of a speech, or the obtaining of a degree, as the chief object of your studies. On the contrary, we have directed you to objects far more solid & estimable, the improvement of your faculties, the direction of your pursuits, & such a knowledge of men, books & things, as might be of use to you in your after-life.

We have endeavoured to train you to indifference about trifles, & a regard to important & worthy objects. Academical degrees have been always most valued in most ignorant ages, & may be had for a little money in many seminaries of Europe at this day. We know not whether this species of corruption has found its way to America; but we have heard, that they can

be obtained by favor, which is nearly the same thing. If a Student has nothing except his Diploma, & his exercises to shew in proof of his learning, it will prove to be of small benefit to him. A cultivated mind, habits of study, investigation & attention, good manners, a virtuous conduct, a steady regard to the rights of others, & to the interests of the public, will be much better evidences, that you have been well taught, than the degree of a Master or Doctor from the most respected literary society.

We have warned you frequently against the folly of pedantry, & have recommended to you to shew your learning rather by its effects on your conduct & carriage, than by endeavouring to retail what you have learned, in common conversation. The ancients have mentioned with honor the conduct of a student, who being asked by his father, who was an illiterate person, what he had learned of his master, declined attempting to give an account of it; so that his father beat him on that account. This is one thing, says he, that I have learned of the philosopher, to bear the anger of a father with patience, even when I am unable to comply with his desires. The talent of observation is not only useful in traveling, but in the whole of the journey of life. The study of natural as well as of moral philosophy may be continued successfully in any profession, if one possesses this talent, & the acquisition of it is

a good recompense for the pains bestowed on our education.

The book of nature is continually open before us, & if we are only attentive, we will be daily gaining new information, both with regard to the natural & moral world. Solon boasted, that even in his old age, he was always learning something. In the course of our Lectures, we have endeavoured to illustrate the doctrines we have taught you by solid arguments & instances drawn from history & real life, & have uniformly condemned the futility of those, who compose theories of human nature, from mere imagination, instead of drawing from real life. Such theories do not describe men, but Creatures of the authors imagination. The rule, which Horace lays down to a poet, to direct him in the describing of nature, is no less proper for a philosopher, & proves that Horace was both the one & the other in an eminent degree.

“Respicere exemplar vitæ morumque jubeo,

“Doctum imitatore et versa hinc ducere voces.

The theories, that consider man only as a rational creature, without taking into account his passions, his weaknesses & his present situation, were those we had chiefly in view in this censure, & against which we took occasion to warn you. Whatever belongs to human nature is the object of the attention of the philosopher. *“Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto.”*

In delivering the doctrine of Morals, we have been particularly attentive to practice, & endeavoured to recommend as well as point out to you those virtues, that are most proper to youth, & most useful to society, as well as to yourselves. Modesty, diligence, meekness, temperance, moderation of your passions, obedience to reason, submission & respect to your

parents, love to your country, & its laws, & above all a supreme love to the Deity, as due in justice to his perfections, & the love of mankind, as the excellence of our nature, are those, which we have most frequently insisted on, in the course of our prelections.

We have likewise recommended a just sense of honor & shame, & an attention to the suggestions of our Moral faculty, as highly perfective of our nature, & preservative of our peace & happiness. It was a maxim of Pythagoras, that one ought to urge himself to consider the excellence of his nature, & to endeavour never to do any thing unworthy of the rank he possesses in the creation, or the noble ends for which he was formed. A man, who is not to be restrained by shame, is equiped & prepared for every kind of villainy, & incapable of profiting by moral discipline. Such a man needs to be taught by briars & thorns of the wilderness, we mean, by harsh corporal punishments, having lost that sensibility of soul, that might have led him

to his duty by choice.

The sacred regard due to truth, the divine authority of justice, & the eternal & indispensable obligation of all lawful promises & contracts, we have taken every opportunity to inculcate upon you, & the rather as this is supposed to be the prevailing vice of this country, for the reputation of which, we suffer so much among the nations of Europe. We have taken many opportunities to shew you, that Justice is the queen of virtues, & has a right to the precedence before all of the others; & that all pretensions to charity, humanity & public spirit without justice are mere mummery & hypocrisy; & we have been careful to hold up the execration & abhorrence of mankind those, who break their contracts, or refuse paying their just debts on any pretence whatever. As man is naturally a member of society, & as every citizen, in a Republic, is of importance to the community, we have omitted no opportunity of inculcating public virtue, & a regard to the laws & interests of our country. We have shewn you, that indifference for the public is a most base & odious disposition, connected with the most disgraceful qualities & tending to the destruction of society. The heroes, who have preferred the public to their private interest, & benefited their country at the risque of their lives & properties, we have uniformly held up to your imitation & admiration, & wished sincerely, that you

would add all the moral & social to the well-earned military fame of your fathers, & that of reforming our morals might be no longer left to posterity. We have been no less anxious to teach you the use of civil liberty, than to impress you with a sense of its value. We have shewn you, that it includes the observation of equal laws, & a sacred regard to the rights of others; that no man can have a right to do any wrong, or under pretence of liberty, either to refuse another what is his due, or to take from him any thing, which he lawfully possesses. We have uniformly held up to your condemnation & abhorrence those enemies of true liberty & honest society, who pretend to have a right to the property of others, or that a community of Goods is necessary in a Republic; & we have inculcated on you on all occasions a regard to the rights of others, & the eternal obligation of commutative justice.

You have not been ruled with a rod of iron, nor have your purses or persons suffered for any casual neglects of your duty. In dealing with you we have endeavoured to keep constantly in our view that golden rule of morals, which we have so often recommended to you, namely, "to do to others what we would think just & proper to be done to ourselves in the same circumstances.

You have not been treated with insolence, bitterness, or respect of persons, being equally unknown to & unconnected with all of you; & being conscious of a sincere desire to promote the

welfare of all of you, we have prayed, studied & labored daily for your welfare, & endeavoured by all means to bring you to a knowledge & sense of true religion, & to fellowship with God, through Christ, without which all learning & philosophy is but ingenious, trifling & unworthy of the regard of rational creatures.

As having in the sight of God the charge of your souls, we take this opportunity to exonerate ourselves before God & the world. If you do not fear God & keep his commandments, if you do not practise the duties of religion & morality; if you do not endeavour to obey the commands & promote the happiness of your parents, & your country as well as your own; if you do not set God before you, as the object of your love, obedience, reverence & imitation, we call heaven & earth to witness that you will not do what you have been taught, & repeatedly & earnestly exhorted you to do. If you neglect your duty, if you disgrace the Christian or the rational character, by a life of intemperance, impiety & injustice; if you do not study to shew the fruits of good instruction, by wise & holy living, our lessons & admonitions, our prayers & entreaties, your own notes, memories & consciences, will be witness against the great day of accounts, & ye will be witnesses against one another. But we hope for better things from you, & things accompanying salvation, though we thus speak; we hope, on the contrary, that you will do honor to this infant seminary, by the propriety, decency & purity of your conduct, & by the practice of very moral & social virtue, as well as by the pursuit of useful knowledge,

for which God has given you capacities, if you are not wanting to yourselves.

If you think that our care, tenderness & attention, which we have shewn to your best interests, deserve any return, we would recommend to you, as that which would be most agreeable as well as profitable to us, “be sober minded; be wise unto salvation; choose the good part that cannot be taken away from you”; do honor the care & abilities of your teachers, do honor to their zeal & tenderness, for your welfare, by a decent, honorable & worthy behaviour; “follow not a multitude to do evil,” despise the sneer of fools in the cause of virtues & sobriety, “abhor that which is evil, follow after that, which is good, & may the Lord give you understanding in all things”.

Your further progress in learning, & especially your good behaviour may recommend this infant seminary now abandoned by the far greater part of its pretended friends, & those who made the greatest noise about its establishment. Though greatly deficient in funds, payments & accommodations, it may yet flourish, if it abounded in students. We despair with justice of any more assistances from an exhausted public, especially in an age when the commonplace complaint of the scarcity of money, which is as old as money itself, is reckoned a sufficient excuse for the non-payment of just debts. But if the custom of giving a liberal education to children could be introduced, even among a small part of those who are able, this College may yet become flourishing by becoming useful. It cannot be in the power of private citizens to have much influence in

a free country, but your good behaviour may engage your parents & friends, & perhaps others, to patronize this forsaken & friendless seminary, by using their interest to procure students to it.

We mean not the smallest disparagement to other seminaries. May they flourish! May they be useful! May they be frequented! May even their numbers be increased! There is room & work for all of them; but as God has been pleased to give this Seminary a beginning, it is certainly the interest of the citizens to wish that it was encouraged as well as others, & your good behaviour will be considered as a valuable contribution to that important end.

Being myself a stranger, & unfortunately no longer independent, I have need of friends to do me justice, & to procure me an opportunity of being useful to the Public. When so far from those that have known me long, I can expect countenance only from those that have known me of late; & you have had the best opportunities of knowing my character, disposition & affection to the public. I have had the misfortune to have been abused, belied & misrepresented to the public by persons, who had neither opportunities nor capacity of judging of my character while I was under the afflicting hand of God, soon after my arrival, & in my apprehensions drawing nigh the grave. I & my poor family were made the song of drunkards, & the mob of the Capital of this State were entertained with feigned stories of our behaviour, & of our pretended enmity

to a country, for which we had long suffered persecution, & to benefit which we relinquished an honorable & independent station, & I am afraid the same management is still carried on by obscure & anonymous slanderers. I know that a prejudice against strangers is the disease of little minds in all parts of the World; yet it is peculiarly ridiculous in this country, where every white inhabitant is a stranger, or the son, or at most the grandson of a stranger. But so prone is the greater part of mankind to absurdity that I must expect its continuance. In this situation, I must appeal to your testimony, & to that of the rational & candid inhabitants of this place. They can tell whether I love this country or desire to promote its important interests, & whether these be not the subject of my daily prayers, exhortations, studies & endeavours. When I forget thee, O America, for whom I have already suffered so much, may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, & my right hand forget its office! I have often inculcated upon you how much the dissemination of knowledge, & the improvement of learning is calculated to promote the happiness of this country; & this is not barely from the prejudices of a man of Letters, though I readily confess a strong tincture of these prejudices; but likewise by conviction & experience.

Having had the happiness of being educated in the

most learned nation of Europe, & being conversant from my childhood with the most learned in it, I may pretend to have made some observations, that have been thought worthy of their approbation. In my native country, I have observed the progress of literature, taste, agriculture, manufactures & commerce, with not an inattentive eye. I have marked the causes, that have raised that country from a situation not dissimilar to that of America at present to that eminent prosperity it now enjoys. and I am firmly persuaded that if knowledge, learning, taste & application to manufactures, & the useful arts are not encouraged, America cannot retain her liberties, nor emerge from her present disgrace & difficulties. When I first arrived no man stood with me; but I have now the satisfaction to observe that the public have been obliged by necessity to adopt my notions, & societies are formed to reduce some of these to practice.

We have carefully shewn you the folly of those, who despise Learning, as if it were of no use, except to Physicians, Lawyers & Divines, & endeavoured to convince you, that farmers may be signally benefitted by it, not only as a genteel amusement, but in their worldly interests. Can we

wonder if our Legislators want dignity, if our Councillors want penetration, or if our people in general do not think that our laws ought to be executed, when knowledge is in so little request, & so very rare among us. I wish I knew how to pique the pride of the Americans to a desire of knowledge, or could represent to them how absurd it is for the Lords

& Legislators of the rich soil of America, who repulsed the armies of the King of Great Britain, & can scarcely be restrained within the bounds of liberty itself, should be so humble in their desires of knowledge, as to be contented with that poor pittance of instruction, which cold charity bestows on the children of the Parish poor, in the most barren countries of Europe; far below what is bestowed on children in any of the Hospitals of Great Britain. But I leave this task to you & the few remaining friends of this Institution, whose testimony may be more credited, & whose advice may be more equitably received, than mine can be.

The little encouragement, which Learning has met with hitherto among us, & awkward & absurd methods prevailing in most seminaries, from a superstitious regard to custom, has in our opinion not a little retarded the prosperity of this country, though we affect to speak of it in the language of surprize & exaggeration. Let us not flatter ourselves; we are a small people, though scattered over a vast extent of country, & our attainments in letters, arts & legislation, as well as our property is small & inconsiderable in comparison with the nations of Europe. But we are free, & want only wisdom & willingness to mend our condition, & to emerge from our difficulties. It is worthy of remark, that tho' seminaries of learning have existed, & have been frequented for now about one hundred & forty five years in this country; yet these seminaries have produced so few scholars, whose names have been heard of out of their own country, & almost none indeed except such as would have been scholars without any Seminaries at all.

When

Harvard College was founded, England knew not its Milton, its Locke, its Newton, its Pope, & all the writers, which it most celebrates. And why has not America had counterparts to all these? Not purely from a defect in the faculties of its natives, who being of the same stock as the others, must have as good natural parts, as they can pretend to; but solely from its situation & peculiar institutions. The bad discipline of the Colleges of England is compensated by their opulent foundations, which enable many students to spend many years at the University, & its ample libraries, which compensate for the negligence of Professors & tutors, & the numbers of Nobility & people of fortune, who either apply themselves to the study of learning, or procure preferments & church livings to those, who do. Scotland, with a much less share of these advantages, has risen to eminence in learning, by the rational & liberal discipline of its Colleges, & the opportunities, which they afford for the improvement of the faculties of the mind. Instead of being immured in a College for ten months in the year, the youth of Scotland spend five, six, or at most seven months in the year in attending College lectures, & in their long vacancies, they have the opportunities of reading the best authors recommended to them by their tutors, & of obtaining a variety of ideas & a stock of knowledge, scarcely conceivable by those, who have been educated in another manner, besides enjoying their liberty & learning to improve their leisure in a rational manner. Besides, in these vacations, they have an opportunity of studying the modern languages,

which, however useful, are not taught in Universities. This I know by experience, having studied the French, Italian & Spanish languages in the summer vacations. And when the spirit of improvement is excited, & the spirit of superstition is discouraged, those, who have the care of Colleges here, may procure the like advantage for this country. By the charter of this College, the Trustees have vacations entirely in their own power, & may, when they please, lessen the sufferings, & promote the progress of our students, by putting it in their power to converse with their books, which at present their tasks allow them but little time to look at. You may yet enlarge your ideas, & improve your taste to a considerable degree by the study of the best authors. Providence now releases you from confinement. Let me exhort you to improve your liberty by the cultivation of your taste, & the exercise of your faculties, & by profiting as much as possible by the helps you have had already. Unfortunately the first College in New England was composed only of a Master & two fellows, being the form that was suited to the poverty of their circumstances. But though these are considerably altered, the same wretched management has been continued & extended to all seminaries erected since that time, to the great disparagement of learning, as the Tutors remained commonly so short a time, that they could never be expert in the practice of teaching, & they had no motives to diligence, being at once poorly paid & defrauded of the merit, that they acquired by their diligence, the whole praise being given to the master. We have gotten over this absurdity in this College already, &

may we not hope to overcome the other in time. New notions & rational institutions always find a powerful adversary in custom, which is the idol of the mob, & the gospel of the ignorant & superstitious. But truth is great & will prevail at last, so that we will wonder that we did not listen to it sooner.

Now we recommend you to God, & to the word of his grace, who is able to save you, & to keep you from falling, & to present you in the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. Call on him daily & he will hear you; commit your way to him, & ye shall never be moved

Transcribed this 13th day of May Domini 1787