
AN
ADDRESS

TO THE
STUDENTS AND FACULTY
OF THE
COLLEGE OF NEW-JERSEY.

DELIVERED MAY 6th 1802—

*The day on which the Students commenced their Studies, after
the burning of the College Edifice.*

BY ONE OF THE TRUSTEES,
Appointed by the Board for the purpose.

Rev. D. Ashbel Green.



TRENTON:
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1802.

Address to the Students, &c.

YOUNG GENTLEMEN—

IT is by the appointment of the trustees of this institution and as their organ that I now address you. You are therefore to consider what I deliver, not merely as the opinions of an individual, but as the collective sentiments of the guardians of the college; as clothed with their authority, and dictated by their solicitous and paternal concern for your welfare.

THE most of you have been witnesses of the mournful event which has threatened the very existence of this seminary. It has required the exercise of all our skill, industry and influence, to obtain the promising prospect which we now possess of re-establishing the college; of raising its buildings from their ashes, renewing its instructions, and restoring it to its former respectability. In the execution of an undertaking so arduous, we found it necessary to pledge ourselves in the most serious and unequivocal manner to the public, that we would make this institution an asylum of sound principles, both in religion and in learning. This engagement we are determined, under favour of divine providence,

sacredly to fulfil. We are now met to fulfil it. We have called you here at this time to inform you of our purpose, and to enter on its execution. From this hour a new era commences in the government and discipline of this institution—Perhaps I should rather say, that from this hour the old and original system is restored. To effect this, we have revised, amended, and added to, the laws of the college. We have put them into your hands, and allowed you time for a careful inspection and consideration of them: And we shall presently call upon you individually to pledge your truth and honour to obey them.

In this concern, young gentlemen, we entreat you to act heedfully and conscientiously. We wish that no one may promise obedience who does not intend to yield it. We offer you a fair alternative—If you now refuse, you are free to leave us, and you shall depart without censure. But after you have promised obedience, be assured it will be exacted, and you must render it scrupulously. Not an individual will violate order hereafter with impunity. No combinations that you will be able to form will alter our resolution in this respect. The resolution has been deliberately formed, and it is immovably fixed. We have agreed and are ready to dismiss the whole college rather than to suffer the least infringement or contempt of its authority. Our duty calls us to this, and our interest is perfectly compatible with our duty. If, for disorderly behaviour, we should disband the whole of the students at any time collected, it would be so high a recommendation of the institution to all virtuous minds, that in a few months we should have it filled again with the best youth in the

United States. The friends of piety and of rational education throughout our country are, at this time, looking round them with more than ordinary anxiety, and asking where they may send their children with safety and advantage :—Where they may send them with a reasonable expectation that their religious principles will be guarded, their morals carefully inspected, the habits of order, industry and due submission to superiors formed and established, while science shall enlighten their minds and exertion invigorate their faculties—We mean to say to them with truth, You may send them here. If we can accomplish this, we shall never want pupils.

FROM the prevalence of loose sentiments in regard to morals and religion in various parts of this country, connected with that dissipation of mind and dissoluteness of manners, with that neglect of family government and instruction, which always proceed from bad principles, and which constantly encrease and strengthen them, it has unhappily come to pass, that many of the youth who have been placed here, for some years past, have been corrupted from the beginning, have rendered the government of the institution unusually difficult, and have gradually, but yet greatly in the issue, warped it from its original design and destination. By the destruction of the college a warning voice has admonished us to put a stop to the growing defection, to purge the seminary of the dross which it now contains, and to provide effectually for its future purity. To this admonition, whatever be the consequences, we must be obedient.

WE cannot believe that the laws we have formed are too rigorous : And therefore if you think

them so, we must consider it as an evidence that your minds and habits are already corrupted and perverted and need such laws to correct and regulate them. We are sensible, indeed, that many of these laws would be superfluous, if every student would voluntarily govern himself by the dictates of reason and virtue. But we also believe, that if every student would so govern himself, he would act very much in the manner that those laws enjoin. The laws, therefore, will not prove irksome to any student who is reasonable and virtuous, and those who are disposed to be otherwise ought to feel coercion. It is our intention that they should feel it. All equitable laws are formed, not for the good and obedient, but for transgressors. We could earnestly wish not to admit into this institution, any who are disposed to vicious practices, and by requiring a subscription of the conditions of admittance, we do all in our power to prevent their entrance. But all experience demonstrates that, however desirable, it is utterly impracticable, wholly to preclude vicious and disorderly individuals from any society. To restrain these, therefore, to reform them if possible, and if failing to reform them, to make them examples for the benefit of others and prevent their injuring and contaminating the whole community, these are the leading purposes for which all laws are enacted. Some restraints, indeed, must commonly be laid on the worthy members of a society, which would not be necessary if all were worthy. But to these every considerate and well disposed individual will cheerfully submit for the general good, and as the condition on which alone he can himself receive the benefits of society.

You perceive, then, that notwithstanding the plain manner in which I have spoken, and which the occasion has rendered necessary, it will by no means follow, that your treatment here is to be rigorous, harsh, and severe. Let no such impression rest upon your minds, for there is no reason why you should indulge it. The discipline to which you are to submit is, indeed, to be strict and firm, but it is at the same time to be equitable, reasonable, suitable, and such as every virtuous and sensible young man would choose for himself, if the choice were left to himself. Nothing will be required of you but what is contained in the laws which you have examined ; and though these will be inflexibly executed, they will be administered with as much mildness and tenderness as possible. He who resolves to do his duty has nothing to fear either from the law or the officer—They will both be his friends and promote his happiness.

But to explain to you our views a little more particularly, and in such a manner as that they may remain on your minds, you will observe, that the government and management of this institution is *domestic and moral*. You are to consider the college in the light of a large family, of which each of you is a son, and all concerned in its government and instruction are parents, guardians, and teachers. We inform your natural parents and guardians, by our laws and regulations which are printed and public, what is the system of management and education which we pursue in this large family, of which they propose to enter you as members. If they choose that you should have a standing here they give you up to us. They transfer to us the whole of their prerogatives, to be possessed and

used for your benefit, and with the expectation that we will carefully sustain to you the relation of parents, and exercise toward you that discipline, and that only, which is suitable for children. They have, indeed, the power and the right to take you from us, at any moment they please : But as long as they continue you here, they vest in us all their right and authority. Our system of government may vary from some of their ideas of propriety ; but still they consent to that system, and must abide by it fully, while they keep you here. In forming a system of government we have certainly been at considerable pains, and have felt much solicitude, to make it as unexceptionable as possible : And if we profess and are expected to act toward you the part of parents, we must be the most unfeeling of men if we do not allow you every indulgence consistent with your good and the good of the seminary. At the same time, remember that we shall be the weakest, or the wickedest of men, if we grant you such indulgencies as are plainly and entirely inconsistent with your own interests and those of the institution. We are not, through any pliant and short sighted tenderness, or any unmanly timidity, to bend to your humours and caprices, much less to overlook your vices, in such a manner as would bring on you, and on all connected with you, the most lasting mischiefs. As often as parents do this—and they too often do it—they most cruelly and lastingly abuse their children. We will, then, keep in mind that you are young, and that youth and inexperience demand tenderness, patience and forbearance. But we will not suffer you to ruin yourselves by vice, nor to waste your time in idleness, nor to contract habits of extravagance, disorder, disobedience or resistance to lawful author-

ity, while you are under our care. This would be to make the college a scourge and curse to society, instead of a blessing ; and it would fill up for ourselves an awful account both to GOD and man.

Farther—While you view the college as a large family, it will also be of use to you, to keep constantly in recollection the great design with which it was formed. This design was somewhat peculiar, and I beg your attention while I state it distinctly. Perhaps no institution was ever more sincerely founded in the fear of GOD, more truly consecrated to his service and glory, or more fervently commended to his blessing and protection, than this of which you are members. Its pious founders had for their main object the promotion of science in union with evangelical piety. The importance of this union to society they justly thought to be inconceivably great, and they erected this college to cherish and ensure it. Science without piety is one of the most dangerous talents to its possessor, and one of the most hazardous to the interests of the community. The mischiefs that it may do, and that it has actually done, are incalculable. On the other hand, religion without knowledge is unable to defend itself against its enemies, is apt to run into enthusiasm, fanaticism, superstition, bigotry and persecution, and thus to produce evils both numerous and extensive, and in the end to dishonour and injure the cause which it sought to promote. But science and religion united form a respectable and happy individual, who is also the ornament and blessing of society—And when speaking of religion, I would remind you that I mean the christian religion. As yet, we have never been requested to educate at this place a Turk or a Jew. If the request should

ever be made, I would give my vote that he should possess a complete toleration, as far as this could consist with the duties and exercises of the college. But notwithstanding all the talk that you may have heard about *the religion of nature*, be assured that it is *only talk*, and that in *practice* there is no such religion. I would, therefore, proscribe infidels, not because their religion is erroneous, but because they have *none*, and because they are hostile to every thing that deserves the name. They may be governed in a degree by social principles, and for a while may feel something of the force of moral obligation. But show us their temples—Show us the individuals “whose temples are their own breasts,” as they are fond of expressing it—Show us the men among those who are called deists who, you really believe, do habitually and sincerely worship, love and serve, the living GOD. You cannot show them; and I conscientiously deliver it as my opinion that they do not exist—I mean under the light of revelation. With us the man who is not a christian has no religion.

REMEMBER, therefore, that to teach you to be christians is one object of your education here. This is a sacred point which we must regard; and Oh! if we can engage you to regard it as you ought, our labours will receive their best reward, and your gain will be immense. If you shall here learn effectually “to know the only true GOD and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent,” you will make an acquisition truly inestimable—It will be the acquisition of “eternal life.” It will prepare you for the greatest happiness and usefulness in this world, and for endless and inconceivable felicity in the world to come. We do, therefore, most earnestly entreat, that not one of you may ever loose sight

of this infinitely important concern. Whatever is to be your future character or employment in life, this is the great and essential preparation for all. It would coincide precisely with the original design of the seminary, if many of you had in prospect the sacred office of the gospel ministry. To all such it is admitted at once that true piety is an indispensable qualification. But beware of supposing that it is necessary only to the sacred office. It is "the one thing needful" to you all without exception. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of GOD:" And small, small indeed, will be the consolation at the close of life, to go to the place of torment as lawyers, physicians, politicians or merchants, and not as ministers of the gospel. Lay to heart, therefore, seasonably and seriously, the things that belong to your future peace; And never be satisfied with your situation, till you have good evidence that you are renewed in the temper of your minds and vitally united to Jesus Christ.

THE statement now given may serve to show, that to allow sceptical and irreligious sentiments to be maintained and propagated in this college, would be an unjust, and even sacrilegious perversion, both of the design and the property of its founders. The property and trust that we hold were bestowed to promote christian piety, and therefore as honest men we cannot permit it to be opposed or trifled with. We are not, indeed, going to turn inquisitors, and to search your minds, or require you to avow your secret sentiments. But if any student voluntarily avows opinions hostile to revelation he must leave this institution. No christian parent would or ought to permit such a person to

remain in his family. It cannot consist with the confidence reposed in us, to give opportunity to such an individual to corrupt the minds of those you h, whose christian parents, relying on our fidelity in this point, have committed them to our care, and who would esteem the death of their children a blessing, in comparison with their becoming infidels.

BUT while we thus absolutely proscribe all infidel and irreligious books, conversation and discourse, we do not impose, on any of you, a particular religious creed. We are ourselves of different christian denominations, and you are at liberty to belong to any that you or your parents choose, while you conform to the laws of the institution.

FROM the view that has now been taken two particulars result, which may serve to epitomize in your minds what you are to expect in the discipline and government of this college—

1. OFFENCES against GOD, or direct violations of the divine and moral laws, will ever be considered and treated as the most aggravated of all. To these the least allowance will be made; the least indulgence or tolerance will be shewn. We should, in any circumstances, be utterly unworthy to sustain the character of guardians and teachers of youth, if we did not lay this down as a principle. But in our circumstances, if we should fail to do it, we should, as you have seen, literally betray our trust.

2. THE very next grade of offences is constituted by any disrespect, disregard or disobedience,

shown to the authority of the college. This strikes at the very root of that domestic or family government by which, as you have heard, the institution is regulated. Neither order, comfort nor improvement, can exist in a family, where the heads of it are treated with disrespect. Insubordination is immediately followed by every other evil. At every risk, therefore, this must be prevented: And accordingly you will here find it repressed in the most exemplary manner.

Fix these two points, then, in your memory, and keep them constantly in view: And if you fear GOD and reverence and obey your teachers, every other duty will follow of course.

BEFORE I conclude, it is proper to remark, that during the ensuing summer you will, by boarding in the town, be removed from that constant inspection of the officers of the seminary, to which you were accustomed when you lived in the college edifice. By this circumstance you will find yourselves more at liberty to pursue your own inclinations than heretofore. We trust and hope, however, that you will consider this very circumstance as putting you *en your honneur*, and that you will let it be seen that you are most careful to restrain yourselves when others cannot restrain you; that you scorn to offend when the misfortunes of the institution have put it in your power. How much more noble will be the ambition, and how much more useful to yourselves, to endeavour to aid and give pleasure to your teachers, and to contribute to the reputation of the place of your education, than to be emulous of thwarting every design, and violating every rule, that is instituted for your own

benefit. Believe it, the workers of mischief are commonly blockheads, as well as profligates. What genius does it require to play tricks and to do mischief? A monkey, after all, is the successful rival of every genius of this diicription. Love order, then, as indicative both of mental energy and improvement, and of moral dispositions and attainments. Love order, regularity and industry, as essentially necessary to your progress in science, and to your comfort, usefulness and respectability in the world—Love and practice them yourselves; countenance and encourage them in one another.

FINALLY—Young gentlemen—Be reminded that if you are studious, virtuous and pious, you will be happy in your present situation, you will qualify yourselves for honourable distinction in future life, you will be the comfort of your parents and friends, you will be the ornament and boast of the place of your education, you will be your country's best treasure, you will be pillars in the church of the living GOD, and you will possess, at last, a crown of eternal glory.—How intolerable is the thought of losing all this, and subjecting yourselves to a reverse infinitely fearful! Therefore be pious, be studious, be orderly, be industrious.

All who are disposed are now to come forward and take and subscribe their obligations to obey the laws of the institution.

THE questions proposed and the answers received from each student were the following—

Question. Have you read and understood these laws?

Answer. I have.

Question. Do you solemnly pledge your truth and honor to obey them?

Answer. I do.

THESE questions were proposed by the Governor of the State, acting as president of the corporation, and there was not a student who did not voluntarily and readily return the answers required, and afterwards subscribe his name to a copy of the laws.

THE faculty of the college were then addressed as follows——

GENTLEMEN OF THE FACULTY,

BY the order, and in the name of the trustees, I am now to address a few words to you—We have placed in your hands a most sacred trust, we have committed these youth to your care, and their present and future well being may, under GOD, very much depend on your fidelity to them. We expect that you will be faithful—We expect that your abilities will be exerted to the very utmost in their instruction and government. We solemnly charge you to let this be realized. We deliver to you, this day, a band of youth, who have voluntarily promised to obey the laws of the institution. You have heard us tell them that these laws *must* be obeyed. We now tell you that you *must* execute them. We pledge ourselves to bear you out in it, at every risk; and doing this, we tell you explicitly, that we will require it at your hands. We respect your characters, your office, and your talents. But we know that all good men are willing and desirous to be reminded of their duty frequently and plainly, and therefore we thus speak. Good men are willing to be laid under the most sacred

bonds to discharge their duty. You know that you are under such bonds. Not only are they imposed by the very nature of your business as instructors of youth, but they are strengthened by the solemnities of an official oath—You have sworn to be faithful—And brethren, we have confidence in you that you will be faithful to your trust—We pray GOD to support and bless you in it. May he give you the unspeakable pleasure to see his work prosper in your hands. May he render you instrumental in fitting many eminently to serve him and their generation in this world, and at last may you, with them, shine forth as stars of distinguished lustre in the kingdom of our heavenly Father.

AFTER this, the transaction was closed with prayer and a benediction.

FINIS.