

**THE WORKS**  
**OF**  
**BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.**  
**VOL. VII.**



*Engraved by J. S. Adams*

MR. FRANKLIN.

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THE  
WORKS  
OF  
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN;  
CONTAINING  
SEVERAL POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL TRACTS  
NOT INCLUDED IN ANY FORMER EDITION,  
AND  
MANY LETTERS OFFICIAL AND PRIVATE  
NOT HITHERTO PUBLISHED;  
WITH  
NOTES  
AND  
A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

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BY JARED SPARKS.

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VOLUME VII.

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money here has hindered me near two months, and our Assembly will sit the 2d of August next, at which time I must not be absent; but I hope to see you this fall. I am your affectionate brother,

B. FRANKLIN.

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TO JOSIAH FRANKLIN.

*Religious Opinions and Practice. — Freemasons.*

Philadelphia, 13 April, 1738.

HONORED FATHER,

I have your favors of the 21st of March, in which you both seem concerned lest I have imbibed some erroneous opinions. Doubtless I have my share; and when the natural weakness and imperfection of human understanding is considered, the unavoidable influence of education, custom, books, and company upon our ways of thinking, I imagine a man must have a good deal of vanity who believes, and a good deal of boldness who affirms, that all the doctrines he holds are true, and all he rejects are false. And perhaps the same may be justly said of every sect, church, and society of men, when they assume to themselves that infallibility, which they deny to the Pope and councils.

I think opinions should be judged of by their influences and effects; and, if a man holds none that tend to make him less virtuous or more vicious, it may be concluded he holds none that are dangerous; which I hope is the case with me.

I am sorry you should have any uneasiness on my account; and, if it were a thing possible for one to alter his opinions in order to please another, I know none whom I ought more willingly to oblige in that respect than yourselves. But, since it is no more in a man's



power to *think* than to *look* like another, methinks all that should be expected from me is, to keep my mind open to conviction, to hear patiently, and examine attentively, whatever is offered me for that end; and, if after all I continue in the same errors, I believe your usual charity will induce you to rather pity and excuse, than blame me. In the mean time your care and concern for me is what I am very thankful for.

My mother grieves, that one of her sons is an Arian, another an Arminian. What an Arminian or an Arian is, I cannot say that I very well know. The truth is, I make such distinctions very little my study. I think vital religion has always suffered, when orthodoxy is more regarded than virtue; and the Scriptures assure me, that at the last day we shall not be examined what we *thought*, but what we *did*; and our recommendation will not be, that we said, *Lord! Lord!* but that we did good to our fellow creatures. See Matt. xxv.

As to the freemasons, I know no way of giving my mother a better account of them than she seems to have at present, since it is not allowed that women should be admitted into that secret society. She has, I must confess, on that account, some reason to be displeased with it; but, for any thing else, I must entreat her to suspend her judgment till she is better informed, unless she will believe me, when I assure her, that they are in general a very harmless sort of people, and have no principles or practices that are inconsistent with religion and good manners.

We have had great rains here lately, which, with the thawing of snow on the mountains back of our country, have made vast floods in our rivers, and, by carrying away bridges, boats, &c., made travelling almost impracticable for a week past; so that our post has entirely missed making one trip.

I hear nothing of Dr. Crook, nor can I learn any such person has ever been here.

I hope my sister Jenny's child is by this time recovered. I am your dutiful son.

B. FRANKLIN.

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TO MRS. JANE MECOM.

*Religion. — Charity.*

Philadelphia, 28 July, 1743.

DEAREST SISTER JENNY,

I took your admonition very kindly, and was far from being offended at you for it. If I say any thing about it to you, it is only to rectify some wrong opinions you seem to have entertained of me; and this I do only because they give you some uneasiness, which I am unwilling to be the occasion of. You express yourself, as if you thought I was against the worshipping of God, and doubt that good works would merit heaven; which are both fancies of your own, I think, without foundation. I am so far from thinking that God is not to be worshipped, that I have composed and wrote a whole book of devotions for my own use; and I imagine there are few if any in the world so weak as to imagine, that the little good we can do here can merit so vast a reward hereafter.

There are some things in your New England doctrine and worship, which I do not agree with; but I do not therefore condemn them, or desire to shake your belief or practice of them. We may dislike things that are nevertheless right in themselves. I would only have you make me the same allowance, and have a better opinion both of morality and your brother. Read the pages of Mr. Edwards's late book, entitled "Some

Thoughts concerning the present Revival of Religion in New England," from 367 to 375, and when you judge of others, if you can perceive the fruit to be good, don't terrify yourself that the tree may be evil; but be assured it is not so, for you know who has said, "Men do not gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles." I have no time to add, but that I shall always be your affectionate brother,

B. FRANKLIN.

P. S. It was not kind in you, when your sister commended good works, to suppose she intended it a reproach to you. It was very far from her thoughts.\*

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\* The following extract from a letter, written to a relative many years afterwards, may with propriety be added in this place.

"I received a letter or two from you, in which I perceive you have misunderstood and taken unkindly something I said to you in a former jocular one of mine concerning *charity*. I forget what it was exactly, but I am sure I neither expressed nor meant any personal censure on you or anybody. If any thing, it was a general reflection on our sect, we zealous Presbyterians being too apt to think ourselves alone in the right, and that, besides all the Heathens, Mahometans, and Papists, whom we give to Satan in a lump, other sects of Christian Protestants, that do not agree with us, will hardly escape perdition. And I might recommend it to you to be more charitable in that respect, than many others are, not aiming at any reproof, as you term it; for if I were disposed to reprove you, it should be for your only fault, that of supposing and spying affronts, and catching at them, where they are not. But, as you seem sensible of this yourself, I need not mention it; and, as it is a fault that carries with it its own sufficient punishment, by the uneasiness and fretting it produces, I shall not add weight to it. Besides, I am sure your own good sense, joined to your natural good humor, will in time get the better of it."



## TO GEORGE WHITEFIELD.\*

*Motives with which Benefits should be conferred. —  
Faith and Good Works. — Example of Christ.*

Philadelphia, 6 June, 1753.

SIR,

I received your kind letter of the 2d instant, and am glad to hear that you increase in strength; I hope you will continue mending, till you recover your former health and firmness. Let me know whether you still use the cold bath, and what effect it has.

As to the kindness you mention, I wish it could have been of more service to you. But if it had, the only thanks I should desire is, that you would always be equally ready to serve any other person that may need your assistance, and so let good offices go round; for mankind are all of a family.

For my own part, when I am employed in serving others, I do not look upon myself as conferring favors, but as paying debts. In my travels, and since my settlement, I have received much kindness from men, to whom I shall never have any opportunity of making

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\* During Whitefield's several visits to America, a close intimacy and attachment existed between him and Franklin, many particulars of which may be seen in the autobiography contained in the first volume of this work. In writing to his brother, August 6th, 1747, he said, "I am glad that Mr. Whitefield is safe arrived, and recovered his health. He is a good man, and I love him." The above letter has often been printed, and always, I believe, as having been written to Whitefield; but among the author's manuscripts I find the first draft, with the following indorsement, in Franklin's handwriting; "*Letter to Joseph Huey.*" I know not how to explain this circumstance, nor is it of much importance, since the value of the letter consists in the matter it contains, and not in the name or character of the person for whom it was intended.

the least direct return; and numberless mercies from God, who is infinitely above being benefited by our services. Those kindnesses from men, I can therefore only return on their fellow men, and I can only show my gratitude for these mercies from God, by a readiness to help his other children and my brethren. For I do not think, that thanks and compliments, though repeated weekly, can discharge our real obligations to each other, and much less those to our Creator. You will see in this my notion of good works, that I am far from expecting to merit heaven by them. By heaven we understand a state of happiness, infinite in degree, and eternal in duration. I can do nothing to deserve such rewards. He that, for giving a draft of water to a thirsty person, should expect to be paid with a good plantation, would be modest in his demands, compared with those who think they deserve heaven for the little good they do on earth. Even the mixed, imperfect pleasures we enjoy in this world, are rather from God's goodness than our merit; how much more such happiness of heaven! For my part I have not the vanity to think I deserve it, the folly to expect it, nor the ambition to desire it; but content myself in submitting to the will and disposal of that God who made me, who has hitherto preserved and blessed me, and in whose fatherly goodness I may well confide, that he will never make me miserable; and that even the afflictions I may at any time suffer shall tend to my benefit.

The faith you mention has certainly its use in the world. I do not desire to see it diminished, nor would I endeavour to lessen it in any man. But I wish it were more productive of good works, than I have generally seen it; I mean real good works; works of kindness, charity, mercy, and public spirit; not holiday-

keeping, sermon-reading or hearing; performing church ceremonies, or making long prayers, filled with flatteries and compliments, despised even by wise men, and much less capable of pleasing the Deity. The worship of God is a duty; the hearing and reading of sermons may be useful; but, if men rest in hearing and praying, as too many do, it is as if a tree should value itself on being watered and putting forth leaves, though it never produced any fruit.

Your great master thought much less of these outward appearances and professions, than many of his modern disciples. He preferred the *doers* of the word, to the mere *hearers*; the son that seemingly refused to obey his father, and yet performed his commands, to him that professed his readiness, but neglected the work; the heretical but charitable Samaritan, to the uncharitable though orthodox priest and sanctified Levite; and those who gave food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, raiment to the naked, entertainment to the stranger, and relief to the sick, though they never heard of his name, he declares shall in the last day be accepted; when those who cry Lord! Lord! who value themselves upon their faith, though great enough to perform miracles, but have neglected good works, shall be rejected. He professed, that he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; which implied his modest opinion, that there were some in his time so good, that they need not hear even him for improvement;\* but now-a-days we have scarce a

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\* In all the printed copies which I have seen, this passage is found as follows;—"which implied his modest opinion, that there were some in his time, *who thought themselves* so good, that they need not hear even him for improvement." The words here *Italicized* are not contained in the original draft. They must, of course, have been interpolated by some later hand. The sense evidently requires that they should be omitted.



little parson, that does not think it the duty of every man within his reach to sit under his petty ministrations; and that whoever omits them offends God.

I wish to such more humility, and to you health and happiness, being your friend and servant,

B. FRANKLIN.\*

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TO JAMES BOWDOIN.

*Treaty with the Indians. — Their Complaints.*

Philadelphia, 18 October, 1753.

DEAR SIR,

I recollect that I promised to send you Dr. Brownrigg's Treatise on Common Salt. You will receive it herewith. I hope it may be of use in the affair of your fishery. Please to communicate it to Captain Erwin, Mr. Pitts, Mr. Boutineau, or any other of your friends, who may be desirous of seeing it.

Since my return from Boston, I have been to our western frontiers on a treaty with the Ohio Indians. They complained much of the abuses they suffer from our traders, and earnestly requested us to put the trade under some regulation. If you can procure and send me your truckhouse law, and a particular account of the manner of executing it, with its consequences, &c., so that we may have the benefit of your experience,

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\* Soon after writing this letter, Franklin set out on a tour to New England. In writing from Boston, July 16th, to his friend Hugh Roberts, he said; "I have had a delightful journey hither, and have felt but one hot day since my arrival. On the road I often thought of you, and wished for your company, as I passed over some of the best *punning* ground perhaps in the universe. My respects to Mrs. Roberts, and to all our old friends of the Junro, Hospital, and Insurance. I purpose to set out on my return in about ten days." Mr. Roberts, it seems, excelled in the art of punning, some amusing specimens of which are found in his letters to Franklin.

now my time is taken up in the Assembly. Providence seems to require various duties of me. I know not what will be next; but I find, the more I seek for leisure and retirement from business, the more I am engaged in it. Benny, I understand, inclines to leave Antigua. He may be in the right. I have no objection. My love to brother and to your children. I am, dearest sister, your affectionate brother,

B. FRANKLIN.

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TO MISS E. HUBBARD.\*

*On the Death of his Brother, John Franklin.*

Philadelphia, 23 February, 1756.

—I condole with you. We have lost a most dear and valuable relation. But it is the will of God and nature, that these mortal bodies be laid aside, when the soul is to enter into real life. This is rather an embryo state, a preparation for living. A man is not completely born until he be dead. Why then should we grieve, that a new child is born among the immortals, a new member added to their happy society?

We are spirits. That bodies should be lent us, while they can afford us pleasure, assist us in acquiring knowledge, or in doing good to our fellow creatures, is a kind and benevolent act of God. When they become unfit for these purposes, and afford us pain instead of pleasure, instead of an aid become an incumbrance, and answer none of the intentions for which they were given, it is equally kind and benevolent, that a way is provided by which we may get

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\* John Franklin married a second wife, by the name of Hubbard, a widow. Miss E. Hubbard, to whom this letter was addressed, was her daughter by a former marriage.

rid of them. Death is that way. We ourselves, in some cases, prudently choose a partial death. A mangled painful limb, which cannot be restored, we willingly cut off. He, who plucks out a tooth, parts with it freely, since the pain goes with it; and he, who quits the whole body, parts at once with all pains, and possibilities of pains and diseases, which it was liable to, or capable of making him suffer.

Our friend and we were invited abroad on a party of pleasure, which is to last for ever. His chair was ready first, and he is gone before us. We could not all conveniently start together; and why should you and I be grieved at this, since we are soon to follow, and know where to find him? Adieu.

B. FRANKLIN.\*

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\* On a similar occasion he wrote to his sister, a few years afterwards, as follows. "It is remarkable, that so many breaches by death should be made in our family in so short a space. Out of seventeen children, that our father had, thirteen lived to grow up and settle in the world. I remember these thirteen (some of us then very young) all at one table, when an entertainment was made at our house, on occasion of the return of our brother Josiah, who had been absent in the East Indies, and unheard of for nine years. Of these thirteen, there now remain but three. As our number diminishes, let our affection to each other rather increase; for, besides its being our duty, it is our interest; since the more affectionate relations are to each other, the more they are respected by the rest of the world."

Again, speaking of the death of an acquaintance, he wrote; "Your neighbour must have been pretty well advanced in years when he died. I remember him a young man, when I was a very young boy. In looking back, how short the time seems! I suppose that all the passages of our lives, that we have forgotten, being so many links taken out of the chain, give the more distant parts leave, as it were, to come apparently nearer together."



TO GEORGE WHITEFIELD.

*Confidence in the Divine Goodness.*

Philadelphia, 19 June, 1764.

DEAR FRIEND,

I received your favors of the 21st past, and of the 3d instant, and immediately sent the enclosed as directed.

Your frequently repeated wishes for my eternal, as well as my temporal happiness, are very obliging, and I can only thank you for them and offer you mine in return. I have myself no doubt, that I shall enjoy as much of both as is proper for me. That Being, who gave me existence, and through almost threescore years has been continually showering his favors upon me, whose very chastisements have been blessings to me; can I doubt that he loves me? And, if he loves me, can I doubt that he will go on to take care of me, not only here but hereafter? This to some may seem presumption; to me it appears the best grounded hope; hope of the future built on experience of the past.

By the accounts I have of your late labors, I conclude your health is mended by your journey, which gives me pleasure. Mrs. Franklin presents her cordial respects, with, dear Sir, your affectionate humble servant,

B. FRANKLIN.

P. S. We hope you will not be deterred from visiting your friends here, by the bugbear Boston account of the unhealthiness of Philadelphia.

TO SARAH FRANKLIN.

*Paternal Advice. — Devotion and Attendance at Church.  
— On the Eve of sailing for England.*

Reedy Island, 7 at night, 8 November, 1764.

MY DEAR SALLY,

We got down here at sunset, having taken in more live stock at Newcastle, with some other things we wanted. Our good friends, Mr. Galloway, Mr. Wharton, and Mr. James, came with me in the ship from Chester to Newcastle and went ashore there. It was kind to favor me with their good company as far as they could. The affectionate leave taken of me by so many friends at Chester was very endearing. God bless them and all Pennsylvania.

My dear child, the natural prudence and goodness of heart God has blest you with make it less necessary for me to be particular in giving you advice. I shall therefore only say, that the more attentively dutiful and tender you are towards your good mamma, the more you will recommend yourself to me. But why should I mention *me*, when you have so much higher a promise in the commandments, that such conduct will recommend you to the favor of God. You know I have many enemies, all indeed on the public account, (for I cannot recollect that I have in a private capacity given just cause of offence to any one

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wards wrote, "that, under whatsoever circumstances this second embassy was undertaken, it appears to have been a measure preordained in the counsels of Heaven; and it will be for ever remembered to the honor of Pennsylvania, that the agent selected to assert and defend the rights of a single province, at the court of Great Britain, became the bold asserter of the rights of America in general, and, beholding the fetters that were forging for her, conceived the magnanimous thought of rending them asunder before they could be riveted."

whatever,) yet they are enemies, and very bitter ones; and you must expect their enmity will extend in some degree to you, so that your slightest indiscretions will be magnified into crimes, in order the more sensibly to wound and afflict me. It is therefore the more necessary for you to be extremely circumspect in all your behaviour, that no advantage may be given to their malevolence.\*

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\* The violence of party in Pennsylvania at this time was carried to its highest extreme. An ample account of the merits of the controversy, which agitated the public mind, may be found in the author's tract, entitled "*Cool Thoughts*," and also in his "*Preface to Galloway's Speech*," and "*Remarks on a late Protest*," contained in the fourth volume of this work. As a leader of one of the parties, Franklin was made to bear the full weight of the displeasure and acrimonious censure of the other party. At a recent election of members of Assembly in Philadelphia, the Proprietary party had triumphed, and Franklin lost his election, after having been annually chosen fourteen years. But in the counties the popular party prevailed, so that in the Assembly there was a large majority of Franklin's friends. It being decided to petition the King for a change of government, he was fixed upon as the agent to transact the business in England. The debates on the occasion were conducted with much warmth of temper and pointed invective. The following extract from a speech of John Dickinson, which is transcribed from a manuscript copy, will serve as a sample.

"Another reason," said he, "why I must oppose that gentleman's being appointed our agent, is, that no measure this House can pursue will be so likely to inflame the resentments, increase the divisions, and embitter the discontents, of the people we represent. Some gentlemen have amused themselves with making curious calculations to show, that near one half of the freeholders in this province think very favorably of the conduct of the person proposed; but, without troubling this House with vain conclusions drawn from loose suppositions, I appeal to the heart of every member for the truth of this assertion, that no man in Pennsylvania is at this time so much the object of the public dislike, as he that has been mentioned. To what a surprising height this dislike is carried among vast numbers I do not choose to repeat. The well known fact sufficiently supports the present objection against him. Though but a few hours have elapsed since he was first proposed as an agent in this House, yet already we see remonstrances against his appointment from several hundreds of our most reputable constituents laid on the table, and we are afraid, that, if a little time was allowed, thousands would crowd to present the like testimony against him.

"Why then should a majority of this House single out from the



Go constantly to church, whoever preaches. The act of devotion in the Common Prayer Book is your principal business there, and if properly attended to,

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whole world the man most obnoxious to his country, to represent his country, though he was at the last election turned out of the Assembly where he had sat for fourteen years? Why should they exert their power in the most disgusting manner, and throw pain, terror, and displeasure into the breasts of their fellow-citizens? Excusable indeed would be their choice, if all wisdom and all virtue were lodged in his head and heart. But it is not pretended that there are not many men in Great Britain qualified and willing to defend the interests of Pennsylvania. Unhappy Pennsylvania! whose peace must be sacrificed to private connexions. Since the zeal of his friends will not suffer them to regard her tranquillity, more worthy of the trust intended him would he appear, in the eyes of many good men, should he voluntarily decline an office, which he cannot accept without alarming, offending, and disturbing his country. How would a virtuous Roman or Grecian have acted on such an occasion? Would he have fixed himself upon the reluctant necks of his countrymen, and thus have told them, 'I will rule you, and dispose of you as I please, because at present I am so fortunate as to have it in my power?' Would one of these ancient patriots have forced himself into public employment to the hazard of the public peace? No! He would have endeavoured to serve his country in a less offensive, in a less dangerous manner, and in this manner I wish the gentleman proposed would endeavour to serve the people of Pennsylvania. Aristides submitted to the voice of Athens, and contented himself with wishing that she might never repent her sentence against him. When Roman virtue was swiftly waning, the dissolute Otho still retained so large a share as voluntarily to resign a life and an empire, that could not be preserved without misfortunes to Rome. Much are they mistaken, who think no man can serve a state, but in the glare of office. He may render the most effectual service to his fellow citizens by examples of virtue and moderation, especially where those examples are particularly necessary. The temperance and other excellent qualities of the elder Cato in private life were perhaps no less useful to the commonwealth, than his consulate and censorship; and I do not know but it may justly be said, that Epaminondas, within the walls of Thebes, gained the battle of Leuctra.

"How many men have greatly promoted the public interests by their counsels and writings! The gentleman proposed has been called here to-day 'a great luminary of the learned world.' I acknowledge his abilities. Far be it from me to detract from the merit I admire. Let him still shine, but without wrapping his country in flames. Let him, from a private station, from a smaller sphere, diffuse, as I think he



will do more towards amending the heart than sermons generally can do. For they were composed by men of much greater piety and wisdom, than our com-

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may, a beneficial light; but let him not be made to move and blaze like a comet to terrify and to distress."

Notwithstanding the tone here assumed, it does not appear that there was any personal hostility between Franklin and Dickinson. Three years afterwards, when John Dickinson's celebrated *Farmer's Letters* came out, Franklin republished them in England, and wrote a preface commendatory of the author and his performance; and at the beginning of the revolution they acted together and in harmony.

The Muses also were made to join in the lamentation, that a philosopher should descend from his high station in the ranks of science to become a politician. The following verses have been often printed, and ascribed to various authors; but they are believed to have been from the pen of Hannah Griffiths, of Philadelphia, a poetess of considerable celebrity in her time, to whose memory there is an elegant tribute in Mr. Fisher's "Essay on the Early Poets of Pennsylvania," published in the second volume of the *Memoirs of the Pennsylvania Historical Society*. They were probably written at a date somewhat later than Mr. Dickinson's speech.

*"Inscription on a curious Stove in the Form of an Urn, contrived in such a Manner as to make the Flame descend instead of rising from the Fire; invented by Dr. Franklin.*

"LIKE a Newton sublimely he soared  
To a summit before unattained,  
New regions of science explored,  
And the palm of philosophy gained.

"With a spark which he caught from the skies,  
He displayed an unparalleled wonder,  
And we saw with delight and surprise  
That his rod could secure us from thunder.

"Oh! had he been wise to pursue  
The track for his talents designed,  
What a tribute of praise had been due  
To the teacher and friend of mankind.

"But to covet political fame  
Was in him a degrading ambition,  
The spark that from Lucifer came,  
And kindled the blaze of sedition.

"Let candor then write on his urn,  
'Here lies the renowned inventor,  
Whose flame to the skies ought to burn,  
But inverted descends to the centre.' "

mon composers of sermons can pretend to be; and therefore I wish you would never miss the prayer days; yet I do not mean you should despise sermons, even of the preachers you dislike, for the discourse is often much better than the man, as sweet and clear waters come through very dirty earth. I am the more particular on this head, as you seemed to express a little before I came away some inclination to leave our church, which I would not have you do.

For the rest, I would only recommend to you in my absence, to acquire those useful accomplishments, arithmetic and book-keeping. This you might do with ease, if you would resolve not to see company on the hours you set apart for those studies.

We expect to be at sea to-morrow, if this wind holds; after which I shall have no opportunity of writing to you, till I arrive (if it please God I do arrive) in England. I pray that his blessing may attend you, which is worth more than a thousand of mine, though they are never wanting. Give my love to your brother and sister,\* as I cannot write to them, and remember me affectionately to the young ladies your friends, and to our good neighbours. I am, my dear child, your affectionate father,

B. FRANKLIN.

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\* William Franklin, governor of New Jersey, and his wife.