

## THE LIBRARY

### *A Survey of Benjamin Rush Papers\**

THE Society's manuscript collections contain nearly two hundred documents by or relating to Dr. Benjamin Rush. Since the dispersal of the Alexander Biddle papers in 1943 this group of documents has constituted the most important body of sources known to exist for the study of Rush's many-sided career. In magnitude it cannot compare with the vast mass of Rush's medical and miscellaneous papers inherited by Dr. James Rush, carefully shielded by him from the public gaze during his lifetime, and then deposited in the Ridgway Branch of the Library Company of Philadelphia. And the Society's group is not a great deal larger than the third most important body of Benjamin Rush papers, held by the Library of Congress. Yet compared with either of these holdings, it is a well-rounded one, remarkably representative of Rush's activities. The Society owns the earliest Rush autograph letter so far found (to Enoch Green, 1761), the most notorious letter he ever wrote (the anonymous letter to Patrick Henry, 12 January 1778), and a very characteristic letter written within a few weeks of his death (to Commodore Truxton, 5 March 1813, offering personally to attend to the admission of Truxton's Negro maid to the Pennsylvania Hospital). Between these extremes of a professional career of over fifty years there are nearly a hundred letters by Rush, nearly fifty letters to him, and over fifty documents to illustrate his medical, political, religious, humanitarian, and literary views and work.

\* *Editor's Note.* This survey was made in the course of Mr. Butterfield's work on a dual project sponsored by the American Philosophical Society in recognition of the two-hundredth anniversary of Dr. Rush's birth (24 December 1745, Old Style; 4 January 1746, New Style). One part of the project is an edition of Rush's letters, of which a great number survive but only a very few have been published. The other part is a union catalogue of all manuscripts and publications by or pertaining to Rush, to be deposited in the library of the Philosophical Society. Rush played so large a role in the medical, political, and intellectual life of his age that such a catalogue of source materials should prove useful to students of many phases of our history. In order to make it as complete as possible, Mr. Butterfield would welcome information regarding Rush papers in smaller public and college libraries, in historical and medical societies, and in private collections.

The representativeness of this group of papers is a fact of some significance. Distributed as they are through more than a dozen of the Society's manuscript collections, they are not a "group" at all except as approached by an investigator of Benjamin Rush.<sup>1</sup> None have come in large lots or directly from Rush's family; they have come, rather, in the papers of other early families, as the gifts of autograph collectors, and as individual purchases by the Society from dealers and auction houses. Taken as a whole they nicely illustrate the principle of gradual and steady accretion by which an historical society builds a collection of sources to place in the service of scholarship. The specimens printed hereafter will serve to show the richness of these sources, the variety of Rush's interests, and his quality as a letter writer. Virtually all of them are entirely unpublished or only partially published. In the following paragraphs an attempt is made to fit them into Rush's career and to touch on other noteworthy features of the Society's Rush holdings.

The Rush papers, other than correspondence, owned by the Society consist chiefly of business papers—prescriptions, bills, receipts, mortgages, bonds, a bank book, and the like. There is a short holograph manuscript essay, "Conjectures in favour of the future existence of brutes," a typical and favorite subject of speculation by the philosophical doctor. More important, in fact of first-class interest, is a contemporary manuscript copy of Rush's journal of his trip to Paris early in 1769. (The original, still unpublished, is in the Pierpont Morgan Library.) Financed by Rush's generous friend Dr. Franklin, the trip was written up in the style of a model young man of sensibility, with echoes of Lord Kames on taste and of Parson Sterne on extravagant religious devotions. It sheds a strong light on Rush's literary beginnings.

Turning to the correspondence, our selections begin with a letter about Rush, written by his schoolmaster to the acting head of the College of New Jersey. As a mid-eighteenth-century version of our modern "scholastic transcript," Dr. Finley's letter is an instructive document. Whether his scant year and a half at Nassau Hall taught Rush much or little should not perhaps be judged from his letter to

<sup>1</sup> There are Rush papers in the following collections: Dreer, Gratz, and Society Collections, Cadwalader, Conarroe, Etting, Irvine, Logan, Pemberton, Peters, Sprague, Watson, Wayne, and Wilson Papers.

a classmate, Enoch Green, written not long after their graduation. It is a schoolboy composition (the writer was only sixteen), with a slightly sulphurous air of Calvinism about it, though it furnishes a memorable phrase that Rush really meant: "to spend & be spent for the Good of Mankind is what I chiefly aim at." There are schoolboy postures, too, in the letter to Dr. Morgan from Edinburgh. It offers, however, a lifelike picture of a medical student's life; and in his prediction of the development of American medicine Rush voices the cultural nationalism that was an important phase of the Revolutionary movement.

There are few other Rush letters preceding the Revolution (nor are there many elsewhere). For the years 1775-1783, while Rush was in the midst of public life or busily watching and writing on its outskirts, there are over thirty letters by and to him. One of his correspondents was John Macpherson, the young lawyer who served as aide-de-camp to General Montgomery and who died with his leader at Quebec soon after sending the charming and informative letter on the campaign printed here. The Society has both sides of an intimate and extended correspondence between Rush and General Wayne, one of the few men, it would appear, who could twit Dr. Rush without offending him. There are also letters to Rush from General Charles Lee, who was as given to sounding alarms on the course of events as was Rush himself; letters from Rush to James Searle, the patriotic merchant of Reading; to General John Cadwalader, whom Rush upheld in his controversy with President Reed; and to John Dickinson. The two engaging letters to Wayne, here first printed entire, have been chosen partly because they show the violent alternation of Rush's moods as political prospects seemed to him to darken or brighten. His letter to President Boudinot (2 August 1783) on the mutiny that caused Congress to move to Princeton displays the same intemperance of feeling and expression. Charles Thomson, after quoting a prediction by Rush on this very subject, observed to his correspondent: "You know the man and can make proper allowances."<sup>2</sup> This is good advice to anyone reading Rush's political letters.

Besides medicine, a field in which he labored throughout his life

<sup>2</sup> To Richard Peters, 10 August 1783. E. C. Burnett, ed., *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress* (Washington, 1921-36), VII, 256.

with the strength of not one but several men, Rush had two primary interests in the years after the Revolution. The first was political. He was equally ardent for the overthrow of the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776 and for the adoption of a vigorous federal constitution. These two causes were, to him, as one. He spoke, pamphleteered, and at length even left his church (because of differences with Dr. William Ewing, a leader in the radical party) in the interest of this dual objective. His other great cause, pursued just as ardently and through difficulties still more protracted, was the planting of colleges. Among the several letters to and from Rush printed here, perhaps the most revealing is that to John Dickinson of 5 April 1787, since it shows so clearly the mingled intellectual and political motives involved in Rush's work as a founder.

The fine letter from the Scottish poet and philosopher James Beattie is given as an example of Rush's activity, as a member and officer of the American Philosophical Society for many years, in promoting friendly relations between European and American men of learning. The letter from Rush to which Beattie was replying begins: "The American Revolution, which divided the British empire, made no breach in the republic of letters."<sup>3</sup> Beattie's response gives point to this assertion.

Rush's letter to George Washington (26 April 1788), accompanying a present of European seeds, was a gesture of friendship, but it also proceeded partly from an uneasy conscience. For the modern reader it of course raises the whole question of Rush's relations with the great man with whom Rush had a quarrel that has clouded his reputation from that time to this. Though the question is raised, it cannot be argued here. The quarrel grew out of a justified professional complaint made by Rush and treated coolly if not negligently by Washington. It came to a head with Rush's foolish retailing of slurs on Washington's generalship. And it entered history in two bitter letters penned by Washington to Patrick Henry, to be cited by dozens of biographers and textbook writers not very deeply versed in either the evidence or the personal background of the affair. The most immediate and by far the most well-worked evidence in this celebrated case is a little group of letters owned by The

<sup>3</sup> 1 August 1786. Sir William Forbes, *An Account of the Life and Writings of James Beattie* . . . (New York and Philadelphia, 1806), 408.

Historical Society of Pennsylvania and originally assembled in a volume by Ferdinand Dreer. The volume contains the anonymous letter to Henry (in which Rush made no attempt to disguise his handwriting and virtually none to hide his identity), together with the letters between Henry and Washington that Rush's letter provoked. The memory of that letter hounded Rush until his death, and public knowledge of it has hounded his reputation ever since. By this time he has more than paid for his folly and has won a measure of redemption. No scholar today, as the history of the Revolution is dug out from under nineteenth-century encrustations of legend, would charge Rush with lack of patriotism. It is not paradoxical to say that he had an excess of patriotism, of that troublesome and not unfamiliar kind that prompts people to believe that *they* must win the war.

It has perhaps not been suggested before that Washington, too, was a little uneasy in his conscience about the quarrel. There exists some scattered evidence to show that he was ready very soon afterward to forget the whole affair. He politely invited Rush to headquarters a year later; during the Constitutional Convention he visited the Rush family and consulted the doctor on books; there were exchanges of complimentary letters like the present one; and during his presidency Washington attended Rush's lecture in commemoration of David Rittenhouse. The Washingtonians, then and later, have been much less willing than Washington to forgive.

With the establishment of the federal government one half of Rush's political program was effected. Nevertheless, during the sessions of the first Congress he kept in close and constant touch with national politics. Lacking Rush's side of the prolific correspondence he carried on with members of the Pennsylvania delegation, it is not easy to say just what, beyond his love of the role of unofficial adviser, prompted his absorption in congressional affairs.<sup>4</sup> His informants discussed each successive issue in detail: the housing of the government bodies, a permanent seat for Congress, titles for the executive officers, the Impost and Judiciary Bills, Madison's

<sup>4</sup> About one hundred and twenty-five letters to Rush, written during the first Congress by Senator Maclay and Congressmen FitzSimons; Clymer; F. A., and J. P. G. Muhlenberg, were sold in the various sessions of the Biddle Sale of 1943. Rush thus had almost daily information, and the letters imply that he was always eager for more. Twenty-three of these letters are owned by the Society. Two of especially fresh and intrinsic interest are printed below.

proposed amendments, Hamilton's plan of assumption. On all these issues Rush appears to have voiced his sentiments with characteristic positiveness and from a strongly Madisonian (or, as people would later say, Jeffersonian) standpoint. His main concern, probably, was with the effects of the new government and its acts on the political contest in Pennsylvania. In the fall of 1790 that contest ended with the adoption of a new State Constitution, and Rush departed, abruptly and for good, from the political scene.

Leaving that battlefield, he could hardly have been aware that he was about to enter another where he would have to fight the longest, fiercest battle of his life. At first the enemy was impersonal, inhuman—the yellow fever that four times during the 1790's murderously visited the city. Perhaps no more vivid account of the fever at its work is available than the letter, printed below, from Rush to Elias Boudinot (25 September 1793), written by a sick doctor in a house daily thronged with suppliants for his care. This first attack of the fever on Rush was mild; he bled himself twice and resumed his labors. Early in October, at the climax of the epidemic, the enemy struck him harder. Writing his sister Mrs. Montgomery after his recovery, he warned her not to tell his wife of the severity of this attack and added: "The history of the manner in which animal life has been supported in me for some weeks past, would make a curious paper for a philosophical Society" (24 October 1793, uncatalogued fragment in the Gratz Collection). It was characteristic of him to be meditating an essay on the subject.

Meanwhile many little enemies had risen up to aid, as it seemed to Rush, in the work of the greater one. These were Rush's professional colleagues who disputed his diagnosis and treatment. The latter has been aptly if grimly described by a recent writer as blood-transfusion in reverse. Being human, these enemies could be met with the kind of blows and knocks Rush knew how to deliver. Some notes on this running battle of a decade are furnished below in the letters to Dr. Coxe (19 December 1794) and to John Dickinson (11 October 1797). In extenuation of the self-pity that marks the second letter it should be pointed out that Rush was at this time enduring the blows of perhaps the most accomplished assassin of character in modern times, the journalist Cobbett. Taken together, however, the letters go far to confirm Dr. Weir Mitchell's judgment

of Rush as given by one of the characters in *The Red City*: "Only in the Old Testament will you find a man like that—malice and piety with a belief in himself no man, no reason, can disturb."

On the other hand, the letter to Coxe is a single specimen from a correspondence that shows a large capacity for friendship.<sup>5</sup> Whatever contentions Rush had with his colleagues, his pupils idolized him, and he felt and acted toward them as a benevolent parent. This kindness was altogether creditable in him, but it will be generally agreed that he was almost too effective a teacher. His method was to tell his students all the answers rather than to help them find them. It is not a method that promotes critical thinking on the part of either student or teacher.

After 1800 Rush is rather more thinly represented in the Society's files than before. This is natural in view of his withdrawal from politics and the subsidence of the great medical feud of the 1790's. His most active correspondence was with persons outside Philadelphia, and few of his letters have found their way back there. With his professional reputation secure—and perhaps greater at this period both at home and abroad than that of any other American physician before or since—these were fairly tranquil years after stormy ones. The letters chosen here for printing show that even Dr. Rush could mellow. Those to Madison (30 January 1806) and to Mathew Carey (24 November 1808) are letters of pure friendship and show a philosophical play of mind and a felicity of phrasing that distinguish many of Rush's letters when he was not engaged in controversy. The letter to John Adams (16 October 1809) shows Rush at his charming best. It is one of a long series of efforts by Rush to close the breach between Adams and Jefferson, two of his oldest and dearest friends, and it prophesies almost exactly the course and the fruitful consequences of the reconciliation that took place two years later. The last letter by Rush given here (to Samuel Bayard, 23 October 1810) deals with a cause that had engaged Rush's thought and energy since his earliest pre-Revolutionary writings: the improvement of the Negro's lot in America. Rush's avowal in 1761 that he aimed to spend himself "for the Good of Mankind" was not

<sup>5</sup> In a volume of manuscripts assembled by Ferdinand Dreer and now owned by the Society, there are, among other Rush letters and documents, ten letters to Coxe, 1794–1796. The other side of this correspondence is in the Ridgway Branch of the Library Company of Philadelphia.

an idle one. John Adams' claim for Rush's services, as set forth in the last document given here (letter to Richard Rush, 5 May 1813) was that of a devoted friend and too high. But that Rush tirelessly fought man's enemies, as he understood them, is abundantly clear from the following selections from his correspondence.

*Franklin and Marshall College*

L. H. BUTTERFIELD

DR. SAMUEL FINLEY TO REV. JACOB GREEN<sup>6</sup>

Nottingham [Maryland]. April 26. 1759.

Dear Sir /

I have but time to tell you, yt The Bearer *Thomas Ruston*, one of my Pupils, waits upon you for Admission into College; & with him I expect will also attend *Joseph Alexander*, his Class Mate. They have read the common Latin & Greek Classicks used in my School, *Longinus* excepted; also Logic, Arithmetic, Geography, some Geometry, Part of Ontology, & Natural Philosophy in a more cursory manner, as far as Opticks in *Martin's* Order. They have both behaved themselves regularly & agreeably; their Geniuses not mean, nor their Inclination to Study languid: Yet I suppose they will appear somewhat rusted in y<sup>e</sup> Classicks, as they have not been the object of their Attention for some Time. They aim to enter no higher than the present junior Class, into which I doubt not they will readily be admitted upon Examination.

I know not but another will soon enter the same Class with them, by name *Benjamin Rush*: But as yet I know not his Parent's Intention. I most sincerely wish you, dear Sir, Success & Comfort in your present arduous Employ, & am affectionately

Yours &c.

S: Finley

BENJAMIN RUSH TO ENOCH GREEN<sup>7</sup>

My Dear former Classmate/

Phila<sup>d</sup>: 1761

Give me Leave to use the Epithet if my long Silence in not Corresponding with you ere now, has not debarred me of so great a

<sup>6</sup> Gratz Collection, American Colonial Clergy.

<sup>7</sup> Gratz Collection, American Physicians,



Dignity. I shall ever acknowlege it as the greatest favour your Condescending to write to me first Seeing you had so few obligations for so doing. I am very glad to hear of your Welfare, & am well pleased to hear you have obeyed nature's Dictates in the Sublime Study of Divinity.—Doubtless you might have tho't too I was designed to fill some Station wherein Eloquence would have been a requisite Accomplishment.—But it has happened otherwise from my Aversion to the Study of the Law, & my Incapacity for that of Divinity—to be sure to have officiated in the Sacred D[uty?] would be my most delightfull Employment, to spend & be spent for the Good of Mankind is what I chiefly aim at—tho' Now I pursue the Study of Physick I am far from giving it any Preimenance to Divinity. Oh No—we are employed it's true in a necessary Calling But a Calling that enforces to us the Weakness & Mortality of human nature—this earthly frame, a minute fabrick, a Centre of Wonders is for ever Subject to Diseases & Death, the very Air we breath[e] too often proves noxious—our food often is armed with Poison—the Very Elements conspire the Ruin of our Constitutions, & Death for ever lies lurking to Deceive us—Now how inglorious must This Study Appear when set in Competition with Divinity, the One employed in advancing temporal Happiness the other eternal,—One applying Remedies to a fading, mortal Body—the other employed in healing the Sickness of a Soul: immortal & everlasting.—Every Pursuit of Life must dwindle into nought when Divinity appears—What Station in Life is more honorable? what more agreable? than for the Embassadors of heaven to Enjoy the fruits of thier Labours—& tho Alas they too often fail of Success, yet to A truly generous & pious Mind the Attempt & Endeavor yeilds some Comfort—But where am I hurried—? I imagin Davies [i.e., Rev. Samuel Davies, late President of the College of New Jersey] Still lives—for how can the State of the Church be presented to my Mind[?] But its Wound strikes my Heart—Alas its Mightiest Branch is lopt off. An Awefull Mysterious Providence! our poor par[ent] Nassau-Hall again left Desolate & Melancholly. Oh it [is] a Wound too fatal—the Stroke is almost too severe—when the Sylver Lockes of old Age, & UnUsefulness are taken away then indeed its vain to gri[e]ve—But when the Charms of Beauty, Vigour, Health, & Youth, & all the united Splendors of Utility are Snatched away, the Blow is heavy & portends

something important. Oh my friend you & I have lost a father a friend—he was the bright Source of Advice & Consolation, the focus of every Earthly Virtue—and Alas he bore to[o] much of the divine Image—he had too much of the Spirit of the Inhabitants of Heaven to be a long Sojourner here on Earth, he labour'd fast—& soon finished his worldly Task—Oh it is an Example worthy of Imitation—For to use his own Words he has served his Generations & fallen asleep.—

I am very well satisfied at the printing his Validictory Sermon, it deserves to be printed in Letters of Gold in every young Candidate's Heart—I can at present only inform you I am very much confined—& I hope for my Good—for the Town is a Snare to betray unwary Youths—Alas I am sorry to say this is a Seat of Corruption, & happy are they who escape its Evils, & come off Conquerors—I am Indeed here in a Conflict, while you landed from the World of Iniquity, enjoy the Sweets of a retired Life.—It is a Pleasure I long to enjoy—I must Conclude Wishing you Success in your Undertakings, Health, Happiness & Prosperity in performing the Sacred function, hoping at the same time Yet to be numbred among those [who] are the Heralds of the Kingdom of heaven.—Who knows But my heart may be sufficiently changed to enter into that holy Calling—for Grace is sufficient unto all Things—I am now

Dear Sir

your very humble Servant

&

Sincere friend

Benjamin Rush

P S. Excuse Errors & Prolixity

#### BENJAMIN RUSH TO DR. JOHN MORGAN<sup>8</sup>

Sir/

Edinburgh Novem<sup>r</sup>: 16<sup>th</sup>: 1766

As you was kind eno' when I left Philadelphia, to invite me to the Honour of a Correspondence with you, I have you see assumed that Freedom. At present I enjoy so much of the Fruits of your Benevolence, that had you never invited to [*sic*] me to that Honour, I

<sup>8</sup> Gratz Collection, Declaration of Independence.

should have been impelled by the motives of Gratitude to write to you.

The kind Recommendatory Letters you gave my Friend *Mr. Potts* and myself have been of the utmost Service to us, more especially those you gave us to the Professors. When we first waited upon *Dr. Cullen*, and told him we had the Honour of presenting him some Letters from Philadelphia, he immediately answered "He hoped from his good Friend *Dr. Morgan*" After having read his Letters he took each of us by the hand,—welcomed us to the College—and told us "that his Attention to his Lectures and practise was so great, and constant, that He had not time to treat his Pupils with that Hospitality he would wish to do, but however close my Attention (said He) may be to these necessary Avocations, young Gentlemen recommended to me from *Dr. Morgan* may always depend upon my immediate Patronage and Friendship"—He then made us welcome to his House, and commanded us to visit him very often—and to show us how desirous he was to treat us like his Friends, He introduced [us] to his Family, with whom we have since had the Honour of spending an Evening. The *Doctor* makes you the perpetual Subject of his Conversation, and endeavours to animate us in the prosecution of our Studies by setting your Dilligence and Reputation as Examples before us. He speaks highly of the medical Schools you have founded in Philadelphia, & imagins that your Fame in *America* will be more durable than his own in *Europe*.

Acording to the plan you proposed to me when I left Philadelphia, I am now attending *Dr. Monroes* Lectures upon Anatomy—*Dr. Blacks* ingenuous [*sic*] Lectures upon Chemistry—*Dr. Russell's* upon Natural Philosophy,—and the great *Doc<sup>r</sup>. Cullen's* on the Institutions of Physic, the last of whom daily exhibits such surprizing Efforts of Genius & Learning, that I am no longer surprized that you used to call him the *Boerhaave* of his Age, and speak of his great Merit with all those Emotions you were wont to do. I find it a painfull peice of Labour to attend these Lectures as I should do, and I am now more fully convinced than ever, how much Sleep you must have sacrificed in transcribing those volumes of Learning you carried with you to *America*.

I have had the Pleasure of being introduced to *Mr. Coon* [i.e., Adam Kuhn] who is now prosecuting his Studies with great Dilli-

gence here, with a view to graduate next Spring. The Professors speak in the most exalted manner of his Abilities, and *Dr Cullen* more especially in my hearing said, that He knew no Person in the World better qualified to teach *Botany* and *the Materia Medica*.

I should be glad to know what Success you met with last Winter in your Lectures, as I feel myself much interested in your Reputation. Science planted in a Spot so advantageous as *Pennsylvania*, methinks cannot help flourishing when reared by your carefull hand. Physic had long sought some new Abode in the wilds of *America*, and sought in vain 'till invited by you She fixed her Residence in Philadelphia. Methinks I see the place of my nativity becoming the *Edinburgh of America*.—The student now no longer tears himself from every tender Engagement and braves the Danger of the Sea in pursuit of Knowledge in a foreign Country.—Methinks I see the Streets of Philad<sup>a</sup>: crouded with Sons of Science whom your Fame has brought from the remotest Confines of the Continent. While future Ages rise up and hail the name of *Morgan*.

——“*Aspice ut Omnia Sac'lo venturo laetentur*”——

[“*Aspice venturo laetentur ut omnia sæclo!*”—Virgil, *Ecl.* iv. 52.]

I am much esteemed Sir with my best Compliments to M<sup>rs</sup>: Morgan

Your

much Oblidged

Most Obedient Humble

My best Respects to the  
Medical Society.

Servant

Benjamin Rush

JOHN MACPHERSON to BENJAMIN RUSH<sup>9</sup>

My dear Sir

Yours by M<sup>r</sup> Stevenson I received today—You may be assured I shall not fail to pay a due regard to your recommendation—

We sat down before St Johns the 17 Ult. Delays in the arrival of troops, & the ill provision made by people to the Southward for carrying on a siege, have protracted this to an unreasonable length; tho I doubt not we shall in the end carry the place, which is now

<sup>9</sup> Gratz Collection, American Miscellaneous.

shut up on every side—The public papers will inform you of the progress we make, & supercede the necessity of intelligence from me, which my time & situation will scarcely allow me to give—

I send you some pieces of the inner bark of the Birch tree of this Country—I am so ignorant of trees, as not to know whether it is to be found with us—The curiosity of it is it's fitness for writing.

My friend Jacob [Rush] I fancy has forgotten me. I have not been favored with a line from him since I saw him. Pray jog his memory, & likewise I Benezet's. They surely cannot be so immersed in Committee Business or Light Infantry duty, as not to be able to spare one moment to give pleasure to an absent friend—I have determined to write to no one to the southward who neglects to answer the letters I have written him already—This resolution is principally the effect of necessity, & in some degree of disappointment in being so long neglected—

The day before I left Ticonderoga, I had an ague: But altho the Ground of our Camp is extremely wet, I have had nothing of that rascally disorder since that time—Indeed I know nothing so entirely destructive of a soldier as it is. It unfits him for any sort of duty, & prevents every exertion of spirits—

Where my winter Quarters will be God only knows. The time of my seeing Philadelphia is equally uncertain. Should we penetrate farther into Canada, it may be very long before I see you—But wherever I am, believe me ever yours &c

John Macpherson

Camp before S<sup>t</sup> Johns 9 October 1775

My best compliments to all my friends—I had almost forgot to mention a trip I had to one of our advanced posts, La Prairie, to meet S<sup>t</sup> Luke La Corne, who desired persons might be sent to hold a Conference with him & other principal Inhabitants of Montreal—I rode in a thing they call a Caleche—Such roads & such a Carriage I have no ambition to see again—The Gov<sup>r</sup> found out M<sup>r</sup> Luke's intention, & prevented his coming. La Prairie is on the S<sup>t</sup> Lawrence nearly opposite to Montreal—The River a noble one.

BENJAMIN RUSH to ANTHONY WAYNE<sup>10</sup>

My dear General /

Philad<sup>a</sup> June 18. 1777

The people of Pensylvania possess so much of the national character of old Englishmen that upon the appearance of M<sup>r</sup> Howe's movement this way, they agreed to suspend the dispute about the goverment, and to join heart & hand in opposing him. The militia law will be executed, but from the unfortunate choice the populace have made of Officers I am afraid the ranks will be filled with nothing but substitutes. This will effectually put a stop to the recruiting service for the regular army in our state, for where will you find a man that will enlist during the war for 20 dollars bounty & 45/ [per] month, when he can get the same wages and 100 dollars besides for serving as a substitute two months in the Militia. Had the appointment of the militia officers been left to the counsel or to a Governor such men would probably have [been] put into office as would have drawn with them the flower of the yeomanry of the state into the field. This is only *one* of above 100 defects we have already discovered in our rascally constitution in the attempts that have been made to reduce it to practice.

The pamphlet which accompanies this letter has been ascribed to me. If it has not carried conviction along with it, it will serve at least to shew that I have been actuated by the principles of an honest citizen & a friend to liberty in the opposit'on I have given to the execution of the goverment. In my opinion the goverment of Turkey is not more to be dreaded than the goverment of Pensylvania.—If it should finally be established, I shall bear my testimony against it by quitting the state. But my fears upon this subject are nearly at an end. Gen<sup>l</sup> Mifflin has proclaimed war against it. *Whitehill* the leader of the house moved to have him committed for speaking disrespectfully of their "dignities." The general curses the goverment, and adds that its administration is in the hands of rascals. Col: Reed has spoken his mind with a manly decision upon the subject of our dispute. He will accept of nothing under the goverment till it is altered. A few letters from *you* to your friends in Chester County will put an end to its existence for ever. Honest John Morton your old correspondent it is said died of grief at the

<sup>10</sup> Wayne Papers.

prospect of the misery which he foresaw would be brought upon Pennsylvania by her present form of government.—

The acc<sup>ts</sup> we receive daily of the strength discipline—and spirit of our army give us great pleasure. I need not add, that we expect [to] hear that the Pennsylvanians will show us the “metal of thier pasture” in the day of tryal. Let not Virginia bear away from *us* the palm of military glory. I am sure our men are made of as good stuff for soldiers and officers as any men on the continent.—As for yourself my dear friend—may you be glutted with well earned fame—“for if it be a sin to covet honor”—I am sure “*you* are the most offending man alive.” God bless you.

Yours—yours—yours  
Benj<sup>n</sup> Rush.

BENJAMIN RUSH TO ANTHONY WAYNE<sup>11</sup>

My Dear Sir/

Philad<sup>a</sup> August 6. 1779.

There was but one thing wanting in your late successful attack upon Stoney point to complete your happiness, and that is the wound you received, should have affected your *hearing*—for I fear you will be stunned thro’ those organs with your own praises.—Our Streets for many days rung with nothing but the name of General Wayne. You are remembred constantly next to our great & good General Washington over our claret, and madeira. You have established the national character of our country. You have taught our enemies that bravery—humanity—& magnimimity [*sic*] are the national virtues of the Americans. Accept my Dear Sir of *my* share of Gratitude for the honor & services you have done our cause and country.—M<sup>r</sup> Rush joins in the offering, and when our little ones are able to repeat your name we shall not fail to tell them in recounting the exploits of our American heroes how much they are indebted to *you* for thier freedom & happiness.—

Adieu—my Dear friend, and be asured of the sincere affection and

Yours most  
sincerely  
Benj<sup>n</sup> Rush.

PS: Many congratulations upon Count D<sup>e</sup> Estang’s victories in the West Indies.—Britain I hope will soon enjoy the heroic pleasure of

<sup>11</sup> Wayne Papers, VII, 83.

dying in *the last ditch*. Are not peace—liberty—& independance before us?—There will be no end to our commerce—freedom—and happiness.—I had like to have added grandeur—but grandeur belongs not to republics.—Best comp<sup>ts</sup> to Col: Butler & Major Stewart who shared so largely with you in the danger & glory of your late victory.—

ANTHONY WAYNE to BENJAMIN RUSH<sup>12</sup>

Head Quarters Ebenezer  
State of Georgia 10<sup>th</sup> May 1782

My Dear friend

Your very polite favor of the 30<sup>th</sup> Oct<sup>r</sup> 1782 was handed me by Capt. Read a few weeks since in the dreary desarts, between Georgia & Florida. I only regret that it was not in my power to receive him in a manner more agreeable to my wishes; & better suited to his Merits; however like a generous soldier, he accepted of a piece of cold beef & *rice*, & drank of *Alegator* water, with the same cheerfulness, as he would have participated of old *green* madeira, & every delicacy that abounds on your most luxuriant Phil<sup>a</sup>. tables; because he knew it was accompanied by a sincere welcome;—a welcome which every genuine whig, & friend to Doct<sup>r</sup>: Rush will always meet from me.

If in the course of this arduous struggle for liberty, any part of my Conduct shou'd be such as to merit the Approbation of my Country, & the esteem of my friends, I shall consider it a rich reward, for every difficulty & danger, that I have experienced.

I am extremely Obliged by your kind & judicial advice, but my Dear Sir I have it not in my choice to follow it,—the only covering to screen me from the burning ray's of the meredian sun, the rude thunder storms, & baneful evening air,—are the concave heavens, & a horsemans cloak, which probably will be the case for the chief part of the Campaign;—our regimen is rice, poor beef, & *Alegator* water, which in addition to the British bullet & bayonet, the tommy-hock, or scalping knife of their less *Savage allies*, the Chickasaws, Choctaws, Tapoockaws, Tukkebatches, Nitahoorits, Makatasas, Apalaches, Sakuspagas, Timookahs, Okmulghes, *Cherakees*, &

<sup>12</sup> Wayne Papers; draft copy.



Owaquaphenogas;—affords no very flattering prospect of seeing Penns<sup>a</sup>. in *health* & safety;—Apropos—will you be so Obliging as to have the inclosed extract of a letter inserted in one, or more, of the Phil<sup>a</sup>. papers, as it probably may be the surest channel, thro' which the fate of that Gallant Partizan, can reach the ears of his friends, some of whom live in Penns<sup>a</sup>. & others in Virginia?

Notwithstanding the true picture I have drawn, & surrounded as we are by Hostile savages, I don't despair of surmounting every difficulty & soon restoring liberty & happiness, to a people whose situation was not to be envied scarcely by the Damned;—I mean the Inhabitants of Georgia,—when this is affected, I shall retire to my paternal seat, & *rise* again to the private Citizen.

till when & ever believe me your

Affectionate friend  
Ant<sup>y</sup> Wayne

#### BENJAMIN RUSH to ELIAS BOUDINOT<sup>13</sup>

Dear Sir/

Philad<sup>a</sup>: Aug<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup>: 1783

I am sorry to find by a letter from M<sup>rs</sup> Rush that my answer to yours by her has miscarried. I hope it has not gone into New York. Please to enquire after it.

I do not mean to defend the conduct of our counsel or of the citizens of Philad<sup>a</sup>:—I should wish they were a thousand times more criminal in the eyes of the world, provided thier infamy would justify the Congress. Indeed my friend the states deceive you in thier pretended sympathy with you. Strangers from Europe as well as every state in the Union condemn you. You are called the *little* Congress, & in many companies no *Congress at all*. Our *whole* state have taken part with the counsel & the city of Philad<sup>a</sup>.; and I have no doubt but some measures will be adopted when the assembly meets (unless your return to Philad<sup>a</sup>: prevents them) that will seperate us for ever. Madness you know begets madness.—The first act will probably be to put a stop to our taxes being paid into the foederal treasury. The report of this, has already affected M<sup>r</sup> Morris's notes. You have no time to loose. For God's sake—be wise—& let not those words *dignity of Congress* produce the same fatal effects

<sup>13</sup> Gratz Collection, Declaration of Independence.

upon our Union, that *Supremacy of parliament* has produced upon the British empire. The house is on fire—it is no matter *where* it kindled, or *who* blew the flame—Buckets—Buckets should be the cry of every good citizen. We do not want you back again for our *own* sakes. We know full well how much of the 150,000 [per] annum you spend among us comes out of the Pennsylvania treasury. You cannot hurt us by your absence unless you can carry our Delaware—(the Vehicle,) & our Germans & Quakers (the sources of all our wealth along with you). I am known [by] but a small part of your body—none of them swallow bolusses from my shop—but I solemnly declare that I view thier sullen—pettish—puerile absence from our city in so alarming a light to our Union, & future consequence as a Nation, that I would willingly give 1000 Guineas to bring them back again (if it was only for one month) to Philadelphia. I protest no defeat or catastrophe that happened to us during the war distressed me half so much as your present Conduct. “The Congress is *angry*—The Sovereigns of the new world are in a passion—at what—Has England broken her late treaty—? Is all Europe in arms ag<sup>st</sup>. her?—no—Sergeant Nogel [i.e., Nagel] called them rascals—and a few drunken soldiers insulted them as they walked the streets.—Oh! no this is not all—M<sup>r</sup> Dickinson looked crolly [*sic*] on, and tho’ called upon over and over would not run the dogs thro’ the body.” This is the daily language my friend of every table & of every company in our city. I am distressed to hear such things. Dearly as I love my native state, I could chearfully sacrifice a great part of her honor to save the honor—I almost hate the word—it smells of *dignity*—I ought to have written the CHARACTER of Congress.—

With love to all the family I am D<sup>r</sup> Sir in great sincerity yours

Benj<sup>n</sup> Rush

PS: Three wrongs will not make one right. The soldiers did wrong in revolting—The Counsel did wrong in not calling out the militia—& the Congress are doing wrong in *remaining* at Princeton.—The two former have come *right*—Congress alone persevere in the *wrong*.—If you fled for safety—come back—the Mutiny is quieted—If you fled ’till a power could be collected to protect you, come back—here are 1500 of your troops devoted to your wills.—But if you availed yourselves of an ostensible excuse only to detach Congress from thier strong hold in Philad<sup>a</sup>—Then stay where you are ’till you are

duped, and laughed at on Hudson's river.—Excuse the freedom with which I write to you. I honour your Authority—I am zealous above all things for our Union—and I place all my hopes of the safety perpetuity & happiness of our government in the success of the late wise & benevolent resolutions of Congress upon the subject of finance.—

WILLIAM BINGHAM to BENJAMIN RUSH<sup>14</sup>

Hague Septem 28th 1785

Dear Sir

I feel with very poignant Distress the Account your Letters convey of the unfavorable State of Politics in Pennsylvania

Want of Union—of Energy—& of System have occasioned our Misfortunes, & our Party will never recover its Weight & Influence, untill it has recourse to those necessary but long neglected Qualities—

Your observation is very just—that we have suffered by many of the leading Characters being too greedy after Offices, which is not only attended with Loss of Reputation to a Party, but a general Neglect of its Interests, after the Object that occasioned their Exertions, has been attained—

Before my Departure, I foresaw & predicted these Consequences, & therefore wished to see Characters brought forward, whose Perseverance in the Cause from Patriotism & public Virtue, could be depended on, & whose Fortunes, & Situation in Life, placed them above the Pursuits & Emoluments of Office

But all Attempts were unavailing—I then began to despair, as I was convinced that our preponderating Influence arose from adventitious Circumstances, of a temporary Nature, & required a great Deal of Caution & disinterested Conduct to preserve it—

I ardently wish, that you may be right in your Conjectures, respecting a Change in the Rulers of the State;—but, I am afraid, you are too sanguine;—Success must however depend on proper Characters being brought forward, & on proper Measures being pursued, to support them—

But it is not only in the Affairs of our State, that a Reformation ought to take place, but in the general Politics of the Confederation—

<sup>14</sup> Gratz Collection, Old Congress.

Our miserable pitifull System has occasioned the United States to become a "Byword amongst Nations," & as a Member of this great Republic, I have my Feelings daily tortured with the Consideration & Contrast, of *what we are*, & *what we ought to be*, in the Eyes of the European Powers.—

This Country exhibits Scenes, similar to those now passing in our State;—Two Parties are contending for Power, & every Art & Stratagem that the Management of Parties, is susceptible of, are made use of, to insure Success—

It is a Scene, that a Republican may contemplate with great Advantage;—he may derive many important Benefits, from the Examples, which these practical Lessons daily teach him—

The Apathy & Indifference to public Affairs, that now exist amongst the republican Party cannot be of long Duration, if those who compose it, have any Feeling for the Situation of their Country—

I have wrote to M<sup>r</sup> Willing, & desired him to pay the Amount of my Subscription in Loan Office Certificates, to the College—I am happy to hear that this Seminary of Learning is likely to become so extensively usefull—

Please to make my respectfull Complements & those of M<sup>rs</sup> Bingham to M<sup>rs</sup> Rush, & believe me to be with affectionate Regard

D<sup>r</sup> Sir

Your obed<sup>t</sup> hble Serv<sup>t</sup>

W<sup>m</sup> Bingham

JAMES BEATTIE to BENJAMIN RUSH<sup>15</sup>

Aberdeen 12 December 1786.

Sir

I had the honour to receive Your letter about six weeks ago, together with the Diploma. I was then confined by a severe illness, which has proved very tedious, and of which I have not yet got the better. This will serve as an apology for my long silence.

And now, Sir, when I sit down to write, I am really at a loss for words to express the warmth of my gratitude to You, and the high sense I entertain of the very great honour done me by the American Philosophical Society. If circumstances would permit, I should be

<sup>15</sup> Dreer Collection, English Poets.

happy in an opportunity of crossing the Atlantick, and returning my thanks in person. But, that not being in my power, I must satisfy myself with assuring them by letter, that I shall to the end of my life retain a most grateful sense of their goodness, and (which I know they will look upon as the best return I can make for it) endeavour, to the utmost of my poor abilities, so to promote the cause of Truth and of Good Learning, as to prove myself not altogether unworthy of their Friendship. To be connected with so respectable and so learned a Society, is a circumstance which I can never cease to reflect upon with most particular satisfaction.

I must beg You will present my humble respects, and most affectionate compliments, to The Illustrious and Venerable President [Benjamin Franklin], and the other learned Gentlemen, whose subscriptions do me so much honour. May their labours for the improvement of the human mind, and the advancement of human happiness, be ever successful. Though, for the wisest purposes no doubt, Providence has so disposed affairs, that I cannot now have the happiness to call the Citizens of The United States of America my fellow-subjects, I must ever love them as my Brethren, and rejoice in their prosperity.

I have the honour to be, with the most perfect regard and esteem,  
Sir

Your ever-obliged and most faithful  
servant

J Beattie.

D<sup>r</sup> Rush

#### BENJAMIN RUSH to JOHN DICKINSON<sup>16</sup>

Dear Sir /

The enclosed pamphlet written with a design to procure *further* alterations in our penal law, humbly solicits your acceptance.—It has made many converts in our city from the assistance it has derived from the miserable Spectacle which is daily before our eyes.

I have great pleasure in informing you that your College is in a very flourishing condition. Pupils are coming & expected in great numbers from Maryland—Virginia & even North Carolina. Twenty

<sup>16</sup> Logan Papers.

young men will graduate there in May. The philosophical apparatus has been received in good order, & has given great Satisfaction to the Masters & Scholars. The citizens of Carlisle have lately bought & given to the College for the use of the Principal a neat commodious stone house. Thus Sir—after all our difficulties & disappointments, heaven has at last crowned our labors & wishes with success.

The German College at Lancaster bids fair for becoming a wealthy & useful seminary. The Germans subscribe liberally to it. It is to be consecrated with peculiar pomp & solemnity on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of next June. From these two Colleges we hope will issue rays of knowledge which shall finally reform our constitution & laws, and humanize even the half civilized inhabitants of the Western Counties of Pennsylvania.—

With respectful Comp<sup>ts</sup> to M<sup>rs</sup> Dickinson & Miss Sally—& kindest remembrance of Miss Maria in which M<sup>rs</sup> Rush joins, I am Dear Sir

Your affectionate

humble

Servant

Benj<sup>n</sup>: Rush

Philad<sup>a</sup>: April 5<sup>th</sup>  
1787.

#### BENJAMIN RUSH to GEORGE WASHINGTON<sup>17</sup>

Sir / Philadelphia 26<sup>th</sup> April 1788.

I received a small quantity of the mangel wurzel or Scarcity root seeds a few days ago from D<sup>r</sup> Lettsom of London. In distributing these seeds among the friends of Agriculture in this country, I should have been deficient in duty, and patriotism, to have neglected to send a small portion of them to your Excellency.—

The pamphlet which accompanies the seeds will furnish your Excellency with a particular account of the method of cultivating—as also—of the great encrease, & useful qualities of this extraordinary Vegetable.—

From an accurate examination of the plant, the botanists have agreed in its being a mongrel Species of the Beet. D<sup>r</sup>: Lettsom has called it the “Beta Hebrida.”

<sup>17</sup> Gratz Collection, Declaration of Independence.

With respectful Compliments to M<sup>rs</sup> Washington in which M<sup>rs</sup> Rush joins, & sincere wishes for your Excellency's health & happiness, I have the honor to be your

most obedient Servant  
Benj<sup>n</sup>: Rush.

THOMAS FITZSIMONS to BENJAMIN RUSH<sup>18</sup>

Dear Sir

I have not troubled you with a Letter since my Arrival here, having in fact Nothing to communicate Worthy your attention. The proceedings of our house are daily published, and you have Correspondents here more in the Secret (if there is any) than I can pretend to be. I have hitherto been pretty busily employd in the business of the day, which is Important, and in Which I possibly can be more usefull than any other as yet. There is the most perfect harmony among the Members, tho the Subject under Consideration is Considered as Affecting Very differently the different Members of the Union. We have in most instances Succeeded in Obtaining protection for the Domestic Manufactures, which I think Important in itself and more so as it Manifests a Spirit of Accomodation. This business will be got thru in its first stage (The Committee of the Whole) to day—it has so intirely Occupyd us that Little else has been tho<sup>t</sup>: of—The Article of Salt bro<sup>t</sup> forw<sup>d</sup> our Colleague Scot, who opposed it Strongly—& I suspect We shall not find in him a Very tractable Assistant in the divisions upon particular points. There has been no appearance of Concert in any of the states. When the questions become more Important we must Endeavor to draw more together—The Vice presid<sup>t</sup> will be here to day—& the people of this place are preparing to Receive him with some formality. Their behaviour generally appears very unexceptionable & their delegates have been serviceable in the Business of Impost—I do not find that there is the most distant Idea of Removal, but it may happen that the State of the Treasury may bring it into View very soon after the Presid<sup>ts</sup> arrival. That object must Engage our attention. Hartly Goes home in a day or two, I suppose to be absent for a Considerable time. M<sup>r</sup> Scott talks of returning too, but I dont know that he is

<sup>18</sup> Gratz Collection, Old Congress.

Serious—The Georgians arrived Yesterday so that the Representation is Nearly Completed—as M<sup>r</sup> Clymer is with You it will not be Necessary—for me to say any thing about the Politicks of Pensylv<sup>a</sup>. I am Very happy at the Issue of your Corporation Election, but am Surprized to see your Man Buren Engaged with the Chief Justice & Lewis—Those disagreements will be taken Advantage of, & ought to be avoided. I shall be happy to hear from you as often as Convenient and When my services can be usefull—I hope I need not tell you, they May be Commanded. You will be so good to make my best Respects to the Good Lady & believe me to be

Dear Sir

Y<sup>r</sup> M<sup>t</sup>. hble serv<sup>t</sup>

Tho<sup>s</sup>. FitzSimons

New York 20 April 1789—

Doct<sup>r</sup> Rush

J. P. G. MUHLENBERG to BENJAMIN RUSH<sup>19</sup>

New York June 17<sup>th</sup> 1790.

Dear Sir

Some circumstahces, that have lately arisen induce me to write you a few lines this Morning in The House to request your Sentiments on a Subject which is like to involve the Pensylv<sup>a</sup>. Delegation in some difficulties; I do not wish that any of my Colleagues should know I have wrote you on the subject, and if you please to give me your Sentiments They shall remain inter nos—The removal of Congress from this place becomes every day more necessary, The reasons are obvious to every one that is acquainted with the politics carrying on—It is now established *beyond a doubt* that the Secretary of the Treasury guides the Movements of the Eastern Phalanx; They are now ready to sacrifice every other object, provided They can thereby gain the assumption of the State Debts. They now offer a Carte blanche for the permanent Seat, provided we will join in carrying the assumption, and permit the temporary Seat to remain here for two years longer—The difficulties arising with me, which prevent my joining in the measure are these. I can not reconcile it to my feelings to vote for a measure which in my *opinion* is unjust,

<sup>19</sup> Gratz Collection, Generals in the Revolution.



in order to obtain a doubtfull good—I have likewise so bad an opinion of N. York politics, that I really believe, if, at the expiration of the two years residence in this place, The Southern Members should come forward, and propose to the Yorkers, to remain two years longer provided the permanent Seat should be fixd on the Powtomac, that the Yorkers would accede to the proposal—The Southern Members have some suspicion that a measure of this kind is in agitation and in order to counteract it, propose to fix the temporary Seat in Philad<sup>a</sup>. for 10, 15, or 20 years, provided the permanent Seat shall then be on the Potowmac—The Southern Members have hitherto acted with great Candour on this occasion, and I am more inclind to accede to their proposal, because no Conditions are annexd that may be thought dishonorable, and because in the course of 15 or 20 years, Circumstances may alter cases.—It is needless to enlarge; This short sketch will fully explain the predicament in which we stand.—I will only add, that the different interests are so equally pois'd, that Pensylv<sup>a</sup>. can turn it in favor of either.

I am Dear Sir

Yours Sincerely

P: Muhlenberg

#### BENJAMIN RUSH to ELIAS BOUDINOT<sup>20</sup>

My dear friend /

Philadelphia Septem<sup>r</sup> 25. 1793

The sympathy contained in your most affectionate letter of yesterday, was a cordial to my soul.—

HERE will I meet my *Ebenezer*, for thus far hath the Lord preserved and helped me.—Hitherto I have endeavoured to have no will of my own, as to my surviving the present calamity. I can truly say, that no anxiety for my family, has produced for a moment, a wish for life. The widow's husband, and the orphan's father I am sure will take care of them.

The disease continues to spread. In short tho' all our citizens are not confined, yet from the general diffusion of the contagion, thro' every street in the city, no body is perfectly well. One complains of giddiness, or head ach—another of chills—others of pains in the back & stomach, and *all* have more or less quickness of pulse and redness

<sup>20</sup> Society Collection.

or yellowness in the eyes. No words can describe the distress which pervades all ranks of people, from the combined operations of fear—grief—poverty—despair and death.—More tears have been shed in my entry, and in my back parlour, within the last month, than have been shed perhaps for years before in our city. Never can I forget the awful sight of mothers wringing thier hands,—fathers dumb for a while with fear & apprehension—and children weeping aloud before me, all calling upon me to hasten to the relief of their sick relations. But this is but a faint picture of the distress of our city. My labors in combatting the disease have been great, & before I was precluded from a *close* and *vigilant* attention upon my patients,—they were successful in 99 cases out [of] an 100,—but my principal exertions have been created by the pride—ignorance—and prejudices of my medical brethren. From the dull D<sup>r</sup>: Kuhn, down to the volatile D<sup>r</sup>: B. Duffield (D<sup>r</sup>: Griffiths & five or six others, chiefly my old pupils, excepted) they have all combined to oppose,—to depreciate, and even to slander the new remedies. [Name erased]'s letter has cost our city several hundred inhabitants. I have not heard of a single person having recovered by the use of the West India remedies since Kuhn left the city—from which we now infer that [name erased]'s family and all Kuhn's patients had nothing but common remitting fevers from *cold*, instead of the malignant *contagion*. Kuhn's last printed letter has added much to the mischief of his first absurd publication. But why complain of the ignorance, or malice of my brethren?—They are a part of the instruments of the divine displeasure against our wicked city.

“When Obedient nature knows his will  
A Doctor, or Disease, alike can kill.”

It is computed that 100 persons upon an average have been buried every day for the last eight or ten days. The sick suffer from the want, not only of Physicians—bleeders—nurses & friends, but from the want of the common necessities of life. Five physicians—four students of medicine and three bleeders have died of the disorder. But the mortality falls chiefly upon the poor, who by working in the sun, excite the contagion into action. Whole families have been swept away by it. Some of the wealthy are at last affected. M<sup>r</sup>: Van berkle—M<sup>r</sup> Powel—M<sup>rs</sup>: Blodget & M<sup>r</sup> Clymer, are at present con-

finied by it. Van berklee is in danger. By the help of a banister I continue to climb up about a dozen pairs of stairs every day. My milk & vegetable diet (for I loathe meat & fermented liquors), an obstinate wakefulness for nearly a week before my late indisposition,—profuse night sweats,—my disease—my remedies, and above all my constant labors, have reduced me to the weakness of an old man of 80. Nothing scarcely is left of what I was, two months ago, but my Voice and my usual Spirits. But in my present debilitated state, my divine master still honours me to work for him. In my parlour, on my couch, & even in my bed I prescribe for 50 to 100 people, chiefly the poor, every day. Adieu—my dear friend—Give my love to my dear aunt & to all our dear friends, and continue to pray for our distressed, and desolating [*sic*] city as well as for your

sincere & affectionate

Benj<sup>n</sup> Rush.

PS: Tell the whole village of Eliz<sup>th</sup>: town to lift up their hands & hearts to heaven “without ceasing” for us.—

#### BENJAMIN RUSH TO DR. JOHN REDMAN COXE<sup>21</sup>

My dear friend /

Philad<sup>a</sup> Decem<sup>r</sup> 19<sup>th</sup>. 1794

Accept of my thanks for your letter by the Pigon.—Your next, I hope will contain all the Medical News of Edinburgh.—

We have nothing interesting here. A *Syncope* has taken place in medicine in our University. D<sup>r</sup> Priestley has declined the chemical Chair, and as yet no Successor has been appointed to it. D<sup>r</sup> B Duffield is giving a course of lectures on Midwifry gratis—under the patronage of D<sup>r</sup> Shippen.—The design of this volunteer course was to defeat D<sup>r</sup> Price who has merit, and would otherwise have had a large private Class. Actuated by resentment, the D<sup>r</sup>: has written to a M<sup>r</sup> Steel in London to come over to our city & to teach Anatomy with him, thereby to lessen the reputation & class of D<sup>r</sup> Shippen.—I doubt of the success of the measure. I have taken, & shall take no part in the dispute.—

B Duffield seldom concludes a lecture without a phillipic against me. D<sup>r</sup> Kuhn delivered the two lectures upon the yellow fever a few

<sup>21</sup> Dreer Collection, Letters of Benjamin Rush.

days ago, which you heard last year. His class smiled at him during the greatest part of the time he was employed in reading them. But low as he is with the Students, he is still the Apollo of the College of Physicians.

D<sup>r</sup> Griffitts, D<sup>r</sup> Physick & D<sup>r</sup> Dewees (late of Philad<sup>a</sup> County) continue to support my principles & practice in their utmost extent. D<sup>r</sup> Physick is rising into great business, more expecially in Surgery. I have requested your grand Papa [Dr. John Redman] to send you a copy of the second edition of the first volume of my Inquiries. The 2<sup>nd</sup>: edition of the Account of the yellow fever has made its appearance in our city. It contains but few additions. I have reserved all the facts and opinions suggested by the disease this year, for another volume to be published (if my health be spared) next Summer.—

I am preparing three or four clinical lectures upon the Gout, to which I shall apply some of my principles.

M<sup>rs</sup> Rush—M<sup>r</sup> Alexander, & all my little folks, join in love to you & M<sup>r</sup> Fisher w<sup>th</sup> : my dear friend your affectionate

preceptor

Benj<sup>a</sup> Rush

PS: our winter fevers, are (as last winter) strongly marked with Bile, & require copious bleeding.

#### BENJAMIN RUSH to JOHN DICKINSON<sup>22</sup>

My Dear friend /

Philad<sup>a</sup>: October 11. 1797.

Your pamphlet and letter came safe to hand. Never 'till now did I know, you were the Author of the letters under the signature of Fabius in defence of the general Government. I read them with pleasure at the time, and have often since spoken of them as the most practical & useful things published upon the Controversy which then agitated the public mind.—

I will chearfully undertake to forward three or four copies of the work to France, and accompany it with a short preface in which I shall give an acc<sup>t</sup> of the author. Your name was well known in France in 1769. Your letters added to the seeds of liberty planted in that country by Montesquieu, Ruisseau & Voltaire.

<sup>22</sup> Logan Papers.

Our fever is evidently upon the decline. Such seasons as we have just witnessed are called "the Doctors harvests." To me it has been a harvest, but it has been of unprofitable labor, anxious days, sleepless nights, and a full and overflowing measure of the most merciless persecution. I have not merited the indifference with which the citizens of Philadelphia have witnessed the butchery of my character. When the fever first appeared in our city, my dear & excellent wife spent many hours in urging me to leave it. My second daughter a girl of 13 years of age added tears to the entreaties of her mother to prevail upon me not to expose myself a second time to the dangers & distresses of the year 1793.—To their intreaties & tears I made the following reply "If I thought by remaining in the city, I should *certainly die*, I should think it my duty to stay. I will not quit my post."

The religion in which you & I beleive has been my only support under the malice of enemies, & the ingratitude of friends.—The persecutions of our Saviour were most aggravated at the time he was performing the highest Acts of mercy to his creatures. It is only by experiencing the malice & rage of man that we can comprehend what is meant by having fellowship with the sufferings of the Son of God.—

Adieu—my dear friend. With love as usual to M<sup>rs</sup> Dickinson & the young Ladies, I am ever yours

Benj<sup>a</sup> Rush

PS: My remedies for the yellow fever would have met with no opposition this year had I not signed the declaration of Independence, and laterly declared myself a Republican in the Eulogium upon M<sup>r</sup> Rittenhouse. I consider Federalism & Republicanism as synonymous, but many people mean by Federalism, the monarchy of Great Britain.

BENJAMIN RUSH TO JAMES MADISON<sup>23</sup>

Dear Sir /

Philadelphia Jan<sup>y</sup> 30<sup>th</sup>. 1806.

Many years have passed away since I have read a political pamphlet. The subject, and name of the author of the one which you have done me the honor to send me will force me from my habits of neglect of such publications. My son is now devouring it. It is

<sup>23</sup> Dreer Collection, Signers of the Declaration of Independence.

spoken of in all the circles in our city with the highest praise and admiration.

Connected with our present controversy with Great Britain permit me to relate the following fact. In the spring of 1777 I called to see M<sup>r</sup>: John Adams at his lodgings in Philadelphia soon after his return with Congress from Baltimore. He informed me in the course of our conversation that he had been much gratified by a communication recently made to him by Col: Henry Laurence [i.e. Laurens] who had lately returned from a long residence in England, and who had at that time just taken his seat in Congress. Previously to his sailing for America, he waited upon George Grenville, and entered into a discussion with him of the American claims to an exemption from taxation by the British parliament, and urged the impropriety of risking the loss of the Colonies for the sake of the trifling revenue which was the object of the controversy. "Hold, said M<sup>r</sup>: Grenville—M<sup>r</sup> Laurence, you mistake the designs of this country. We do not expect much revenue from you. The present contest with America is for the empire of the Ocean. *You spread too much canvass upon our Seas, and we are determined to clip it.*"

The late conduct of the Court of Britain shows that the declaration of M<sup>r</sup> Grenville has been hereditary in it.

You may make any use you please of the above anecdote,—only keep my name from the public eye.—

From Dear Sir your sincere  
and affectionate old friend  
Benj<sup>n</sup>: Rush

BENJAMIN RUSH TO MATHEW CAREY<sup>24</sup>

Dear Sir /

I have read the papers you sent me with great pleasure. Every thing that enables me to think well of all Sects of Christians is highly gratifying to me. The fact is new to me that Lord Baltimore taught W<sup>m</sup> Penn his sublime lesson of religious tolleration. It is certain according to D<sup>r</sup> Robertson that Oviedo, a Spanish monk, first wrote in favor of it in South America. What Tacitus says of the

<sup>24</sup> Society Collection (the gift of Gabriel Wells, 1928).

Vices of Lawyers, viz: “*Vitium hominum*, non *Oratorum*” should be said of the faults of all the different Sects and professions of men. They belong to human nature.—

From Dear Sir  
Yrs very respectfully  
Benj<sup>n</sup>: Rush

Nov<sup>r</sup> 24 1808

BENJAMIN RUSH to JOHN ADAMS<sup>25</sup>

My dear friend /

Philadelphia Octob<sup>r</sup> 16. 1809

Who were the ancestors and posterity of Homer Demosthenes Plato, and Aristo[t]le? Who were the ancestors of Cicero, Virgil and Horace? Were any of them philosophers—Orators or poets? Who were the ancestors and posterity of Walsingham, Sully, Mulborough & Wolfe? Were any of them Statesmen, generals, or Heroes? I do not ask whether they were descended from gentlemen, or left gentle sons behind them.—I ask, were thier ancestors or posterity GREAT, in the same elevated walks in life as themselves? I believe history and common observation will furnish many more instances of the truth of Lord Bacon’s remark than of the reverse of it.

I send you herewith a new edition of my lectures upon animal life extracted from the first pages of the first volume of the new edition of my Medical Works. It contains a number of new facts in support of the doctrine I have advocated. Perhaps they may serve to render an autumnal evening less gloomy to you should you honour them with a perusal. I have had the satisfaction of seeing the opinions I have defended, adopted by nearly all my pupils. Some of them embrace & propagate them with enthusiasm.—

What book is that said I to my son a few nights ago in a dream? It is the history of the United States Sir said he. Shall I read a page of it to you?—no—no said I—I believe in the truth of no history now but in that which is contained in the old & new testaments. But Sir said my Son—this page relates to your friend M<sup>r</sup> Adams. Let me see it then—I read it with great pleasure, and herewith send you a copy of it.—“Among the most extraordinary events of this year [1809 written in margin] was a renewal of the friendship between M<sup>r</sup>: John

<sup>25</sup> Gratz Collection, Declaration of Independence; draft copy.

Adams & M<sup>r</sup>: Jefferson the two expresidents of the United States. They met for the first time in the Congress of 1775. Thier principles of liberty, thier ardent attachment to thier country, and thier views of the immense importance and probable issue of the struggle in which they were engaged being the same, they were strongly attracted to each other, and became personal, as well as political friends. They met in England during the War, while each of them held commissions of honor & trust at two of the first Courts in Europe, and spent many happy hours together in comparing the difficulties and success of thier different negociations. A difference of opinion upon the objects & issue of the French Revolution, separated them during the years in which that great event interested and divided the American people. The preponderance of the party which favoured the french cause threw M<sup>r</sup>: Adams out of the Chair of the United States in the year 1800 and placed M<sup>r</sup>: Jefferson there in his stead. The former retired with dignity and resignation, to his farm at Quincy where he spent the evening of his life in literary and philosophical pursuits, surrounded by an affectionate family & a few old and devoted friends. The latter resigned the Chair of the United States in the year 1808 sick of the cares, and disgusted with the labors of public life and retired to his seat at Monticello in Virginia where he spent the remainder of his days in the cultivation of a large farm agreeably to the new System of husbandry. In the month of Novem<sup>r</sup> 1809 M<sup>r</sup>: Adams addressed a short letter to his old friend in which he congratulated him upon his escape to the shades of retirement, and tranquility, and concluded it with assurances of regard, and good wishes for his happiness. This letter did great honor to M<sup>r</sup>: Adams. It discovered a magnanimity known only to great minds. M<sup>r</sup> Jefferson instantly replied to this letter and reciprocated expressions of regard & estêem. These letters were followed by a Correspondence of several years in which they mutually reviewed the Scenes of business in which they had been engaged,—and candidly acknowledged to each other all the errors of opinion & conduct into which they [had] fallen during the time they filled the same stations in public life. Many precious aphorisms, the result of observation and experience, it is said, are contained in these letters. It is to be hoped the world will be favoured with a sight of them, when they can neither injure nor displease any persons or



families whose ancestor's follies or crimes are mentioned in them. These Gentlemen sunk into the grave nearly at the same time full of years, and rich in the gratitude and praises of thier country (for they outlived the heterogenous Parties that were opposed to them) and to thier numerous other merits and honors, posterity has added, that they were RIVAL FRIENDS."

From Dear Sir ever  
yrs—yrs—yrs  
Benj<sup>a</sup>: Rush

BENJAMIN RUSH to SAMUEL BAYARD<sup>26</sup>

Dear Sir /

Philadelphia October 23<sup>rd</sup>: 1810

The bearer of this letter the Rev<sup>d</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Gloucester an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church visits your town in order to obtain pecuniary aid to enable him to purchase the freedom of his wife and children for which the extravagant sum of 1500 dollars has been demanded by thier master & mistress. The friends of Religion and of the poor Africans in Philadelphia have sent 500 dollars to them for that purpose—, and have subscribed liberally towards building him a Church. At present he preaches to crowds of his African brethren in a school house every Sunday, and to great acceptance. The prospects of his usefulness to them are very great. Perhaps the best mode of obtaining a contribution for the emancipation of his family will be to invite him to preach in your Church, and after he has finished his sermon—for your minister to appeal to the Christian Sympathy of the Congregation in favor of M<sup>r</sup> Glousters wishes.

From D<sup>r</sup> Sir yours truly  
Benj<sup>a</sup>: Rush

PS: Subscription books are now in circulation in our city for building three more African places of worship besides the one for M<sup>r</sup> Gloucester. By the present Census it appears that the Blacks in our city will amount to more than 12,000 souls. Their late great encrease is from emigration from the Southern states. It will be much cheaper to build Churches for them than jails. Without the former, the latter will be indispensably necessary for them.

<sup>26</sup> Dreer Collection, New Series.

The late excellent M<sup>r</sup> Thornton of London bought churches and livings for evangelical episcopal ministers. Let us if possible exceed him by purchasing evangelical ministers & thier families for our Churches.

JOHN ADAMS TO RICHARD RUSH<sup>27</sup>

Quincy May 5. 1813

My dear Sir

In what terms can I address you? There are none that can express my Sympathy with you and your Family, or my own personal Feelings on the loss of your excellent Father. There is not another Person, out of my own Family, who can die, in whom my personal Happiness can be so deeply affected. The World would pronounce me extravagant and no Man would apologize for me if I should say that in the Estimation of unprejudiced Philosophy, he has done more good in this World than Franklin or Washington.

Knowing the demands of your office upon your Time, I cannot ask your Correspondence: yet I shall ever rejoice in any Information of your Prosperity.

M<sup>r</sup> Andrew Eliot will present this Letter to you. I know nothing of the Nature of his Business. I knew his Father and Grandfather, who were learned and ingenious Doctors of Divinity.

I hope you are, or are soon to be, Secretary of the Treasury. And should be glad to know, who is, in reality at the Head of that important Department. I am, Sir, with unalterable Affection for your Family

your Friend  
John Adams

<sup>27</sup> Gratz Collection, Old Congress.