

Charles Pettit Mcllvaine Letters

4-4-1833

Letter to Dennison

Charles Petit Mcllvaine

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Rev. and Dear Sir

I am going to propose to you a matter of so great delicacy and one which, were it not for my entire confidence in ~~my~~ your Christian character and readiness to consult supremely the glory of God, and your candour to appreciate my motives, I should not venture upon. Before you think any thing, if possible; read all this letter - by yourself. The proposition is this (I am almost afraid to write it lest you should not take it, as I think you will, after due reflection) that, at a convenient time you should resign your Professorship, for a Parish, or on a notion of having your place supplied by a very efficient and competent lay man of piety, such as I will afterwards describe. Receive in

brotherly kindness my reasons.

I have not made this proposition, in any degree from a consideration of your competence to the duties of your office. I have no reason to believe that you are not well up to the work you have to do and would be always unequal in sufficiency - I knew also that you have suffered and endured much in troublous times for the sake of the College and desire that of it. My views have no personal bearing but that of increasing your usefulness and the spirituality of your work. I have heard

And not like to entertain the idea of being always
a Professor of Mathematics or for so long a time as
to disqualify you for a parish field. I do not
wonder at this. Were I in your situation, I
should only submit to the sacrifice of being
a Professor of Science, while no other person
of equal advantage could be obtained for the
office. I should long for the special work of
preaching the Gospel, to which you have been
called and accquined. If your plan in the
institution can be supplied with equal advantage
to the college by a pious layman, should it not
be and is it not your desire and should it not
greatly promote your usefulness to the Co. and
to ^{ours} as well as your own spiritual hap-
piness and the end for which you have received
the imposition of hands to take a parish in
preference to your present place? The great
cry of all parts, is for preachers. You
know our wants in Ohio in that respect.
The Board of the College for a laborer in
your Department who should be content with
its moderate salary and be efficient, has
hitherto been unimpaired. You have supplied
it. The college owes you thanks. But
if a suitable person can now be ob-
tained for your Professorship, without

dismissing or parting of a Minister, and you can
thus be sent to supply a vacant Ministry
in the gospel field, should you not rejoice
in it? Will it not be good news to you a
kind? And if you contemplate ever ex-
changing your present place for a parish
should it not be done as soon as possible,
with reference to the good of the College,
before your professional ^{ial} habits be so
formed that you become unfitted in
a great measure for parochial work?
It is my opinion that your disposition and
education and spirit qualify you for much
usefulness in a parish - that in reference
to such work, this is an age that you,
when you should be forming your minis-
terial habits; increasing rapidly in the know-
ledge and experience of ministerial duties
and obtaining a growth which can be got
at no subsequent period of life, without
great disadvantage - I feel that your
time, your education, your influence
upon the Cause of Christ are not where
they should be unless the place you now
occupy, cannot be filled advantageously by
some one not in the Ministry. You must

to daily decreasing in the ability required by his
rank in proportion as your are increasing
in that demanded by your professorship.

I wd. can your place be substituted advantageously
I have taken great pains to ascertain. I have
communicated with but one person in Ohio
on this subject and with him confidentially
I mean Mr. Buckingham of Lancaster. To him
I put this question in confidence "In case
there should occur a vacancy in the Pro-
fessorship of Mathematics in any ^{of} any, would
you accept it". I said nothing about the
prospect of a vacancy. So none of the faculty
at the College have I written a word
about it. Mr. Buckingham became ^{prev.} friend
at Mr. Grant while Assistant in the Depart-
ment of Mathematics there. He is by attested
rank and choice an Episcopalian, though
his parents were Presbyterian. He was
considered at N. P. quite eminent in
math. and of admirable talents. The Professor
of math. who educated him there, said to be
that he should be a prize to any institution
He is accustomed to instruction, was a
pupil of Prof. Douglass who then be our Pres.

and Professor of Nat. Philosophy. See our names
of two such Men from W. P. and having decided
piety would give Lincen. College. an equal
eminence in the public mind. Again
Mr. Buckingham is of high family well known
and of high standing in Society - the Appoint-
ment would be very popular in the Disci-
ple
It would be supplying the place per-
manently - Again should he come he would
bring a large property with him - he would
build himself a house without expense to
the College and as the owner of property
might be of great service, in a great vari-
ety of ways - These are evidently very
important Considerations

But would he come? I answer yes. He
has written to me that in case a vacan-
cy occurs sometime during the ensuing
Summer or the next fall he will accept
an appointment. He knows nothing (I repeat)
of how I suppose the vacancy may occur.

Now, my dear brother, I trust in your Christian
character, your sense of what is my duty
and your duty to the ch. and your views of
ordination and consecration obligations, to re-
ceive by way of damages these Considera-
tions

without offence, and to consider them in love and
faithfulness - My proposition is this, that you
resign at the next Commencement. That you say
what you should receive by way of damages
that you meanwhile and you should do what
is necessary to obtain for you a mutab pa-
rish - Should you accept this, I promise you
all I can do to provide a place for you,
mutab to your Ministry. It should be necessary
that your decision should be known to me as
soon as possible that Mr Buckingham might,
during the present season, be putting up a place
of residence.

Should you be unwilling to embrace the
proposition, I will drop it, and never complain.
But when we can fill a Ch. and Professorship,
shall we ^{consent to} fill but one? When such a man as
Buckingham can be brought into the ser-
vice of the Ch. shall we lose him? If he comes
not to us he becomes a lawyer or a
Merchant.

I shall await your answer with an-
xiety. May the Lord direct your heart & hand.
My love to your dear wife.

Yours affectionately,
C. P. M.

though I have said nothing to the Brethren
at Gambia touching this matter, because I
wished to be entirely free and candid with
you first. yet if you choose you may lay
this matter before them.

I intended no application of any of the
above considerations for Mr. Litch as a chryg-
mon — The cases are different.

Copy of a letter to /
the Rev. Mr. Dennis on
Ap. 4, 1833
From Bishop McVane.