

PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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ADDRESS DELIVERED, BY INVITATION OF
THE DIRECTORS, ON THE OCCASION OF
THE ONE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE SEMINARY IN ALEXANDER
HALL, PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

BY

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PRINCETON IN ITS EARLY ENVIRONMENT AND WORK.

Henri Rochefort has said that after men become fit for nothing else they write reminiscences.

When the invitation came to me to deliver one of the addresses on this memorable occasion, I, with the sensitiveness natural to men of my years, was tempted to think, from the subject assigned to me, that the committee perhaps imagined me a contemporary of the fathers of this institution, and hence able to speak from personal knowledge of its early days. The committee would not have been far wrong, if this had been their impression. It so happens that I spent a portion of every year from 1850 to 1859, in the kindly hospitality of the old Alexander house, and like most early impressions, the recollections of that time are most vivid.

Dr. Archibald Alexander died in October, 1851, and I do not recall him.

Owing to the limitations of time, portions of this address were omitted.

I well remember being taken as a little boy to see Dr. Hodge in the house across the campus, and being told not to forget that I was to meet one of the great scholars of the age.

At the period I have mentioned, the only buildings on the campus were what is now called Alexander Hall, the Miller Chapel, and the old Library. It was a great source of interest to me to visit a little museum, on the first floor of the Seminary. It contained a few shells from the South Seas, and copper coins. There were also some beads, which I understood were the costume of dusky converts before they adopted the traditional garb of civilization. There were, moreover, certain idols in the cases, which, in my early innocence, I supposed might occasionally, in moments of backsliding be worshiped by the students, but later learned that they had been sent home by missionaries, after being discarded by their disciples, very much as the Indian braves of the day sent home to their lodges the scalps of the conquered.

Above all, I remember the current of life which flowed through the house. The family then consisted of Joseph Addison Alexander, and his two brothers, William and Archibald, and their sister, Janetta. Hardly a day passed

without a visit from some returning graduate or eminent personage from abroad, and there were frequent calls from the other members of the faculty. I remember the intense interest shown in the work of every graduate, and the eagerness with which all news of the alumni was sought. The early Professors always kept their hands on their former students, wherever they might be, the hands of sympathy, of imagination, of Christian love. I have since thought, that this interest bound the graduates very closely to their Alma Mater.

Of course, I recall Dr. Addison Alexander and all his well known peculiarities. In a few lessons he sought to make me a great Oriental scholar, but I clearly proved that the mantle of Elijah had not fallen on Elisha.

Before leaving these personal reminiscences, let me say that I have had great pleasure in sending to the Seminary Library the English Bible which Dr. Archibald Alexander used daily for over thirty years. It contains the entry of the births and baptism of his children in his own handwriting. In the cover, Dr. Alexander pasted several verses, which form the best possible clue to his character. They are as follows: "To love Him with all the heart and with all the soul and with all the

strength is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." "I dwell with Him that is of a contrite and humble spirit." "But to do good and to communicate forget not." "The Lord is nigh unto them which are of a broken heart and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Well may it have been said of him by his biographer that at the time of his call to Princeton "no man of eminence could think more humbly of himself." From the worn appearance of portions of the book, it would seem that the Psalms and the major prophets were the most frequently read. I have also sent to the Library an ancient Hebrew Old Testament, used daily by Dr. James Waddel Alexander, and another read by Joseph Addison Alexander from 1828 until his death.

Let me now turn to the subject assigned to me. Let us consider for a moment the condition of the country at the time of the foundation of the Seminary. In 1811, the people were preparing for the expected war with England. The things common to a new country characterized American life. Traveling facilities were poor. There was not a steamboat west of New York City. Transportation between Princeton and Philadelphia was by coach. In these days of the railway,

bicycle, motor, telegraph, telephone, photograph, and electricity in all its forms, one can hardly imagine the primitive character of our national life.

The educational advantages in the country were far from what they are today. Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and some lesser colleges set the standard, but the school facilities were limited, and the teaching inferior. The morality of the people was characterized by the laxness of a new land, and strange sects sprang up, "Halcyon," "New Light," and the like, due in a large degree to a lack of religious training,

Sharing in the general educational and moral depression, theological education was at a low ebb. Ministers were being prepared either by private instructors, or by what they could pick up in their college courses. This condition is indicated in "The Brief Account of the Rise, etc. of the Seminary," published in 1822. It states that the founders deeply lamented the want of such an institution, and saw with much pain the extreme disadvantage under which their candidates for the ministry labored, in pursuing their theological studies. They saw young men with very small previous acquirements in literature and science, after

devoting only twelve or eighteen months, and in some instances much less, to the study of theology, and even for that short time almost wholly without suitable help, taking on themselves the most weighty and responsible of all offices.

But in spite of the gloomy outlook, intellectual, moral, and spiritual life was beginning to revive.

Something vital happens before the green blade appears. Although at the beginning of the last century there seemed little hope of improvement, the first decade of the nineteenth century showed a marvelous renaissance, of which the foundation of the Seminary forms a part.

There was a reaction proceeding in Europe from eighteenth century infidelity. W. G. Ward in his recently published *Life of Newman* says that this reaction was heralded in 1802 by Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme*.

The great idea of Christian Foreign Missions was born at the Haystack meeting in 1806. The temperance movement began in Moreau, New York, in 1806, when a society was formed pledging its members to drink rum only on special occasions. The first missionary society

was founded in 1806. Twenty-four benevolent societies, the first growth of the immense charities of our own day, were incorporated in the first decade. The New Jersey Bible Society was founded in 1815, and shortly afterwards the American Bible Society.

The life manifested in these agencies, so new and so startling, is also to be remarked in the Government. The appearance of Clay, Calhoun, Webster, Cheves and Lowndes, at Washington, revealed a determination to end the humiliating trade difficulties with France and England by an aggressive war.

With this new spirit so manifest in the political and social life of the country, the Church awakened to its responsibilities and opportunities as it had not done before. The leadership in thought as well as in action fell upon men unprepared by education to bear them. As a response to the call of the time, loud and insistent, Princeton Seminary was born. The men who promoted it appreciated that on the one hand an ignorant ministry is a national misfortune, and that on the other, a cultivated, educated ministry is a national blessing. Therefore, the organization of this Seminary was not only a religious, but a patriotic service.

It is remarkable that the founders of the Seminary made it independent of any college already in existence. It would have been easy to graft it upon Nassau Hall. Indeed, in 1805, the College of New Jersey showed considerable uneasiness at the project of a separate seminary, for the trustees sent a communication to the Assembly setting forth, that the college was founded with a particular view to furnishing men for the ministry, that the trustees were devoted to this object, and that an opportunity was afforded by the college for the study of divinity. This exhibits the change which has taken place in public sentiment, when the object of so many universities and colleges now is to secularize learning.

The plan for the Seminary adopted by the Assembly of 1811 described the kind of men it was desirous of supplying to the Church in words which might well have been written by John Calvin. The author was Ashbel Green. "It is to form men for the Gospel Ministry, who shall truly believe and cordially love, and therefore endeavor to propagate and defend that system of religious belief and practice which is set forth in the Confession of Faith, and thus to extend the influence of true evangelical piety and gospel order."

This Seminary has been called "the Home of Calvinism." To-day no thinking man should be ashamed of the title. Any institution might be proud to furnish to the Church men whose ideas of liberty and justice, whose zeal and love for men, whose scholarship and power are characteristic of the school of Calvin.

Calvin had died two hundred years before this Seminary was founded, but just as his theology had persisted, so did his views of an educated Protestant clergy continue to influence the Presbyterians of the world. He had a fine jealousy as to the character and competence of his professors. He was himself professor of theology. His theological graduates were described by a French bishop as "modest, grave, with the name of Jesus Christ on their lips." He made Bossuet and Massillon possible. On his return from Geneva, John Knox copied Calvin's methods of education, and these ideas were brought here by our Scotch and Scotch-Irish and Puritan ancestors.

Michelet said of Calvin's disciples: "If in any part of Europe blood and torture were required, a man to be burnt or broken on the wheel, that man was at Geneva ready to depart, giving thanks to God and singing Psalms

to him." If it be thought that this is an excessive estimate of the character and heroism of the present day Presbyterian minister, let me quote from the report of the famine and cholera of 1900 in Gugerat made by Sir Fred-eric Lely, one of India's greatest administrators. He says: "There was Milligan, Pres-byterian missionary, who, when he heard that the district was in sore need of strong men, volunteered to help and was put in charge of a thousand persons on whom cholera had already taken hold on a relief work. There was Mawhinney, also a Presbyterian missionary, who also took a similar trust in the adjoining native state of Sunth. Each of them took up his abode among the people in a hut like their own; he restored order and cleanliness; he in-stilled some of his own courage; and then each within a month of the other was stricken with the disease from which he had saved others, and died the death of a Christian." Such men have always been among the grad-uates of this Seminary.

The early professors here seem to have been imbued with Calvin's ideals and with his spirit, in that he is described as a man of in-vincible calm, of balanced speech, gentle to-ward weakness, severe toward vice, severest

of all toward himself. Beza in his dedication of Calvin's "Petits Traictes" to the Duchess of Ferrara declares that Calvin was of such integrity of conscience, that he fled from all vain subtle sophistries, and all ambitious ostentation, and never sought anything but the pure and simple truth.

It is evident from the writings of the first professors that they had Calvin's character and work in mind, as they attempted their important task. Dr. Miller in his inaugural address pointed out that witnesses for the truth in the dark ages were all friends of sound learning, and he closed by saying: "Wickliffe, Luther and Calvin are all gone, but the Kingdom of Christ did not die with them. It still lives and it will live forever." Dr. Alexander wrote shortly after to a friend: "We go on here upon our old moderate plan, teaching the doctrines of Calvinism, but not disposed to consider every man a heretic who differs in some few points from us." Earlier, in the stirring circular issued by the General Assembly in 1816 in aid of the Seminary, reference is made to Calvin, as one of those who have done more for the illustration and defence of the common salvation, than hosts of unlettered, though pious, ministers. Truly, to

use Comtes' aphorism, "The living are dominated by the dead."

Let me now briefly allude to the intellectual life of the Seminary during this early period. It is difficult in this age of specialization to realize all that the first professors did. By them the plan of the theological curriculum was developed into substantially what it is to-day. They themselves taught every branch of the theological encyclopedia. In the revival of 1815, the professors threw themselves into the work with all their heart. They preached frequently in Princeton and in the neighboring towns. Their sermons might serve as examples to those whose ideas of evangelistic preaching do not include the fundamental principles of Calvinistic theology. Dr. Alexander was not content to teach simply a system of doctrine. He aimed to send out warriors of the Cross. To this end, he studied the religions of heathenism, and the erroneous faiths of every age, and he knew what should be said to refute their doctrines. A fresh examination of the literature relating to Dr. Alexander, and of the books which he wrote convinces me that too much stress has been laid on his sweetness of character, great piety and spiritual common

sense, and too little on his profound and varied learning, marvelous for the place and time.

It is hardly fitting for me to say too much about my grandfather and his sons, but too much cannot be said of Dr. Samuel Miller, who united patience, learning and eloquence with all the social and courtly graces and the most fervent piety. He came to Princeton the year after Dr. Archibald Alexander, and found the curriculum created and the means for maintaining the religious life of the students perfected. He was of inestimable use in forming the manners and bearing of future ministers. Perhaps his example and precepts extend to the present day. I often reread his book on Public Prayer, full of good sense and of a quiet and appropriate humor. It was fortunate for the infant institution that its two heads should be so different in type: Dr. Miller, with his long training of city life as Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in New York, brought to the Seminary the experience of the metropolitan pulpit, and Dr. Alexander, whose great characteristic was a tender regard for the feelings of others, a ripe scholarship and the simplicity which is characteristic of most profound thinkers.

Thomas Chalmers said: "The Heraldry of an Institution of Learning is its Alumni." And perhaps Dr. Alexander's and Dr. Miller's greatest contribution to the Seminary was an early appreciation of Charles Hodge. As a student, he developed into a man of massive learning, sound exegesis and great skill as a teacher. I am glad to allude to the intimate personal friends of my father, his sons, Archibald Alexander Hodge, who by the flame of his genius made even the darkest theology glow with an almost supernatural light, and Casper Wistar Hodge, who with the modesty and reserve of a great scholar, made the New Testament new in another sense to successive classes of faithful and admiring students.

Just as a faculty may be judged by the students, the product of their training, so the trend of thought in the Seminary's life may be judged by the contributions of its faculty to the current literature of the day. The Biblical Repertory begun in 1828, gives a good idea of Princeton's thought, as developed during the sixteen preceding years, for it is fair to assume that it contained the ripe result of the professors various studies during that period. I call your attention to a few subjects on which they wrote in the earlier numbers. Dr. Miller wrote

a review of Cook on the Invalidity of Presbyterian Ordination, and on certain extremes in pursuing the temperance cause, which recalls the fact, that in one of his first letters after arriving in Princeton, he offered to send Mrs. Green, through President Ashbel Green some very good claret. Another subject was "Use of Liturgies," another "Thoughts on Evangelizing the World," and in 1821 he published his "Letters on Unitarianism." The following were contributed by Dr. Alexander: "The Bible a Key to the Phenomena of the Natural World," "Priesthood of Christ," "Pelagianism," "Inability of Sinners," "Christian Baptism," "Organization of the Presbyterian Church," "Character of the Genuine Theologian," "Articles of the Synod of Dort," "The Foundation of Opinions and the Pursuit of Truth," "Melancthon on Sin," "Catechism of the Council of Trent," "English Dissenters," "Evidences of a New Heart," "The Scottish Seceders," "Woods on Depravity," "Synnington on the Atonement," "Practical View of Regeneration." His books on the Canon, Moral Science and Religious Experience, will not be forgotten. It is not necessary in the presence of such an audience to comment on the breadth and depth of these topics.

If there were time here to-day, we might leave the beaten tracks of those days and hear the voices of the early professors speaking through their students in quiet villages and lonely hamlets, on frontiers and in the wilderness, in foreign lands and at home. The memory of these men is not preserved on any stone or monument, nor is it best kept alive even in the Seminary so beloved by them, but in the truth which they implanted in ministers' lives and handed on by them to homes widely scattered, to burdened, toiling, sinning men and women, to whom it meant pardon, peace and eternal hope, to children whose plastic lives were moulded; to the heathen world, to whom it came as the shining of the Star of Bethlehem. In these things are indelibly written the testimony of the Church and of the world to the founders of this Seminary.

No one who has studied the history of this great school can fail to be impressed by the sincere fidelity to the principles of its founders, which has been manifested to those who succeeded them. There are many who do not agree with these principles, but they must be constrained to admire this tenacity and constancy, considering the atmosphere of

unstable equilibrium in which the theological world lives and moves.

In visiting the graveyard here, I sometimes think that even if all other records were to be destroyed, a history of Princeton and its institutions might almost be reconstructed from the inscriptions on those venerable tombs—the tombs of presidents, professors and other benefactors who did loyal service to the Seminary and to the University.

There is one group of graves which I cannot look upon without personal emotion and unspeakable sorrow at the loss of those, all of whom loved Princeton, and of some who had for this institution a paternal as well as a filial affection. It is a comfort and encouragement to turn to this Seminary—a living monument, in which I trust my family may claim a share.

One does not have to be a professional theologian to be aware that the kind of thought for which Princeton Seminary has always stood most firmly is now attacked persistently from many quarters. Voices come to us from across the sea and are raised here at home telling us that the sun is fast setting upon the old faith, and that the doctrines taught here will pass away like those of the Athenian and Roman schools. It may be said that in our

own country the seminary stands in a somewhat isolated position. Isolation has been the portion of the exponents of truth in all ages. Although not an expert in these things, I venture to predict that if the sort of theology which is taught here should die, and if its enemies should grant it decent burial, like the Lord of Life Himself, it will have a triumphant resurrection.

Yet even if these sinister prophecies of the foes of Princeton theology should be fulfilled to the uttermost, if this Seminary should perish amid the ruins of its great traditions, I should wish that its remains might be marked and made memorable by a Cross. For it is the Cross which has been the inspiration of its founders and their successors, even as it is the hope and the glory of this passing world. For the Gospel which it teaches is an unconquerable force. The Cross which it uplifts is the world's greatest power. And by the Gospel of the Cross, this Seminary will stand in spite of attack, in spite of any storm of criticism or unbelief until its work is done, and God comes to take the talent given to our fathers, from whom we have received it with its increase, to the praise of His eternal glory.