

Western Theological Seminary

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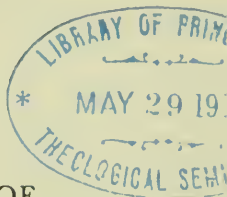
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Alexander, Charles Beatty,  
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Western Theological Seminar  
address delivered

WESTERN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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ADDRESS DELIVERED, BY INVITATION OF  
THE DIRECTORS, ON THE OCCASION OF  
THE LAYING OF THE CORNER-STONE OF  
MEMORIAL HALL, A NEW DORMITORY,  
NORTH SIDE, PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

BY

✓  
CHARLES BEATTY ALEXANDER, LL.D.

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY AND WASHINGTON AND JEFFERSON COLLEGE

MAY THE FOURTH, MCMXI

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*Mr. President, Fathers and Brethren :*

We are laying the foundations of a building, the future value of which it is hard to estimate. The time is past when institutions of learning were criticized because they spent a great deal of money on their material surroundings. While intellectual and moral interests should be supreme, it cannot be denied that the usefulness of a university, or seminary, or college, is very largely dependent on the way in which the members are housed. Our Protestant, and especially our Presbyterian, ancestors did not always realize this. They had simple ideas. They thought more of the inward and spiritual grace, than they did of the outward and sensible sign.

But of late years the advantages of stately architecture have been more and more understood. Good buildings not only satisfy the æsthetic sense, but have a moral value. Much might have been lost from the influence of Oxford and Cambridge, if those universities had had their homes in the uncouth houses of the German schools.

There is a practical side to this subject. When a number of young men, preparing for one of the learned professions, have to live with unattractive surroundings, they must be demoralized. To live in rooms that are clean and hygienic and comfortable must surely make for a good and wholesome life.

Let me say also, that we owe something to men who are going out to sacrifice themselves for the Church. No doubt there are some who will live very well in the great city parishes, and in prosperous towns. But there are many who will have to endure hardness as good soldiers of the Cross. It is a great thing for these to have a comfortable home, at least while they are preparing for their great conflict with the world. They can afterwards look back and say that the Church helped them to begin their career in comfort.

From a layman's point of view the existence of a Theological School of the right kind in a great center of industry like this, is of incalculable value to the City itself. It gives tone to all its surroundings. It brings in residence learned and able men. It gathers in the City advanced students, and it has a constant influence on the preachers of the Word.

There have been cases where the influence of a Seminary, of a so-called ultra liberal type, has not been for the good of the surrounding Churches. But this is not that kind of an institution.

In seeing the corner-stone laid of this important building, one cannot help thinking of another less material foundation upon which this Seminary is built. It is built upon the foundation of the Prophets and Apostles. Surely I do not have to tell you what it has done for the Church. It has occupied one of the strategic points, with Princeton on the east, Auburn on the north, and McCormick on the west.

It has in the years since its foundation in 1825 carried on a great work. Its advance under its present able President, Dr. James A. Kelso, of which this building will be an outward and visible sign, is known in all the Churches. It cannot be hid. We congratulate him on this auspicious occasion.

May we not without straining our imaginations indulge the hope that this great edifice, which we are beginning, may be one of a group of buildings, under the same able control, testifying to the willingness of Pennsylvania Christians to express, by their



gifts, their approval of great educational success.

Bishop Berkeley thought that the course of empire was toward the west. It seems to me that the course of theological empire is toward the east. As a Princeton and eastern man, I know what a refreshing source of inspiration this school of theology and this part of the country have been for different centers of learning. To speak specifically, our gardens farther east have been watered by such men as Archibald Alexander Hodge, M'Gill, Paxton, Warfield, Purves and Gregg, who were famous here before we took them from you.

There is, however, one professor whom we have never been able to lure across the mountains. He remains here, faithful to his ancestral soil, and loyal to the old blue flag of Alleghany. I refer to that most learned and saintly man, Professor Matthew Brown Riddle.

It is not for a layman to point out the things that have made this Seminary efficient. Yet I cannot refrain from referring to some of them.

In the first place, this school has always represented a very definite and uncompromising theology. For want of a better name,

I shall call it Calvinism. Calvinism has had, and still has, its defenders and assailants. It is not always palatable. Sometimes it is thought to be medicinal. It has, however, one great advantage. It is true. However it may be regarded, its principles are the same, yesterday, to-day and forever. The eternal years of God are theirs.

In all the learned professions, particularly in law and theology, this is an age of compromise. The period of great advocates is almost past. We know that the battles in the courts are no longer what they were. It is now considered better to have disputes settled out of court, and to avoid the clamor and shouting of the forensic arena. In theology, it is the same. Men are looking always for a ground on which they can meet, and are seeking to obliterate so far as possible the old dividing walls which were once so bravely defended.

This tendency has its advantages. It lessens friction, and makes for peace. But I sometimes think that, with this habit of concessions and compromise, we are in danger of effacing the great dividing lines between truth and error, between the right and the wrong. As it was in the days of the Early

Fathers, so it was in the day of the Reformers, so it is in our day. Truth is not discerned and won and conserved by concession and compromise. It is the spoils of war—a war not carnal, but intellectual and spiritual. This Seminary has been no friend of compromise.

And let me digress here and now to say to the young men present, from the point of view of the non-official layman, that the secret of clerical success at the present day is the uncompromising preaching of the fundamental doctrines of Our Holy Faith.

In the second place, it seems to me that you have here taken a very practical view of religious teaching. How indeed could it be otherwise? You could not, if you would, give yourselves over to mere speculative dogma and sterile scholarship, being so near as you are to the great industrial capital with the flame of its furnaces before your eyes, and the sound of its machinery in your ears. The real world, with its pathetic hunger and thirst after righteousness, is at your very doors; and a man who can study here without knowing what he is studying for must be both blind and deaf.

And thirdly, I think that this school of the

prophets has been great, because of the fire of its missionary spirit. More than one of its professors have come from the foreign field to lead students to see farther horizons and more glorious visions. We recall the great Samuel Henry Kellogg, the translator of the Old Testament into the Hindi language, and Archibald Alexander Hodge. Nor must we forget that a missionary home has given us the distinguished President of this institution.

I confess that I should like to read the record of those who have gone from here to carry light and life into the African jungle, and into the formidable regions of India and China, or who have worn out their lives on an apparently hopeless frontier nearer home. Our hearts burn when we remember J. C. Lowrie and John Newton (fifty-seven years a missionary). I must pause to tenderly refer to that saint and martyr, F. E. Simcox, who with his lovely wife and their three children was brutally murdered in China in the year nineteen hundred.

The *Sun* (of New York) on Saturday last stated that Mr. Carnegie, in an address on the twenty-eighth of April in this city, deploras the expenditure the Churches make for Foreign Missions. I applied to him for a copy of his

address. He replied that he had no notes of his address. He said: "The *Sun* is not correct. I gave no figures. I think it is the first duty of millionaires to attend to the needs of their neighbors. I count Home Missions first in importance."

I hope Mr. Carnegie, although he has not contradicted the paragraph, did not say what was credited to him by the *Sun*. The protest would sound strange from the Donor of the Peace Foundation, which is in itself a missionary work among foreign nations, the expenditures of which will not be confined to territorial limits. The Church will, we hope, continue to send abroad the Heralds of the Prince of Peace.

I hope you will forgive me now, if I refer to something more personal to me than are these general thoughts. I never come into this part of the country without realizing that it is a place made dear to me by many holy memories. Not far away was born one to whom I owe more than I do to any human being. Her father made Washington and Jefferson College the chief interest of his life. And I am very proud to wear to-day the gown and hood of doctor of laws of that College, bestowed on me at its Centennial.

She often told me that her religious character was formed, at her mother's side, before she was ten years old, in the old President's Home in Canonsburg, and her interest in the educational work of this region was keen until her life closed last December. My mother was deeply gratified when ten years ago one of my brothers became a director of this institution.

Moreover the building which we begin to-day replaces one which was built by one of my own kindred, whose name I bear. There are probably very few here who remember Dr. Beatty, and the singular energy and pertinacity with which he gave himself to the cause of religion and education—the education of ministers, college education, the education of women. Although it was many years ago, I remember very well how he came to New York and, with Dr. William Adams of happy memory, worked to unite the divided branches of the Presbyterian Church, to make it once more a mighty fortress against ignorance and evil. Dr. Beatty was the pioneer of that great body of philanthropists who have made Pittsburg famous. I very vividly recall his wife Hetty, called by hundreds of the women of this region “Mother Beatty,” with



her sweet face and Early Victorian curls on each side of her face. She was a woman well worthy of her distinguished husband.

In closing, we wish for this Seminary a most prosperous career. May it continue to be a source of sound learning and of fervent piety, so long as time shall last.

We know not what the future has in store for Church or Country. In the Desert of Sahara, last winter, I was told, that in the sand storm in the darkest night, under a clouded sky, every true Moslem ever intuitively knows in what direction lies the Sacred City of Mecca. And when he prays, even as Daniel prayed, his "windows open toward Jerusalem," he turns toward his Holy Places. May it not be that in the days of darkness which may come in the future, Christians may turn in like manner to this sacred and historic hill, and receive as they pray to the God above, light and guidance and peace.