

THE BULLETIN

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Western Theological Seminary and Education

Rev. Hugh Thomson Kerr, D.D., LL.D.

There is a statement accredited to John Knox to the effect that "Every scholar is something added to the riches of the commonwealth". This expresses the fundamental educational principle of our Presbyterian Church. Wherever the Presbyterian Church has gone, the school has flourished; for Calvinism champions intellectual freedom, and the love of truth is her guiding star.

It was this passion for intellectual and religious liberty that created the Puritan movement and guided the Pilgrims across the high seas. In his history of the United States Bancroft says: "The Pilgrims renounced all attachment to human authority and reserved an entire and perpetual liberty of forming their principles and practice from the light that inquiry might shed upon their minds, pushing free inquiry to its utmost verge and yet valuing inquiry solely as the means of arriving at fixed conclusions". "We boast", he said, "of our common schools; Calvin was the father of popular education, the inventor of the system of free schools. Wherever Calvinism gained dominion it invoked intelligence for the people and in every parish planted the common school".

It was this vital union between the sciences and religion that characterized our Presbyterian ancestry. To understand their distinctive service it is necessary to understand that they were not the first to establish educational institutions in the New World. Long before the Puritans established a college in North America, institutions of learning had been established in South America. They were, however, exclusively religious institutions and did not bind together intellectual integrity and religious loyalty. The first university founded on the West-

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ern Hemisphere was the University of San Marcos, Lima, Peru, founded in 1551. The University of Mexico was established in 1552, the University of Bogota in 1572, the University of Cordoba in 1614, and the University of Sucre in 1623. This means that five great American Universities were established in the New World before the first college was founded in North America. They were preëminently schools of religion and their main purpose was to protect the mind of youth from an intellectual viewpoint which would discredit dogmatic authority. The purpose of our Puritan and Presbyterian ancestors was far otherwise. Their motto was, "There is more light still to break from the Word of God". They carried the torch of truth into every dark avenue of human ignorance; and in order to assure the permanent alliance of education and religion they demanded intellectual leaders in the Gospel ministry. The pronouncement of 1643, preliminary to the founding of Harvard, sounded the keynote of religious education. "After God had carried us safe to New England, and we had builded our houses, provided necessaries for our livelihood, rear'd convenient places for God's worship, and settled the civil government: one of the next things we longed for and looked after was to advance learning and perpetuate it to posterity, dreading to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches, when our present ministers shall lie in the dust".

These noble words are worthy to have a place on a tablet in every Theological School. Our Western Pennsylvania Fatherhood followed this ideal and there was a determined effort to proclaim theology queen of the sciences. The establishment first of academies, transformed later into colleges, at Canonsburg and Washington, was part of this movement, and the founding of the Western Theological Seminary was born of the same passionate desire to maintain a high standard of ministerial leadership; and during the years of the century

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which we now celebrate that idea has never known doubt nor change, in the curriculum of the Seminary.

Western has always been a school of Theology for college graduates and has maintained through the years the conviction that all truth, whether scientific or religious, is one; and that what God has joined cannot permanently be put asunder.

The stream rises only as high as its source; and we look for the secret of scholarship and intellectual leadership in the Faculty. If the thrill and passion of intellectual conquest is not found there, we will expect the student body to be pious enough, perhaps, but lacking in mental virility. "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle."

If one were to judge from the contemporaneous criticism of the student body, it would perhaps go hard with the faculty in any generation. A great teacher is rare, and perhaps God intends that in his preparation a student shall receive the impress of only one great mind. A glance at the history of the Western Theological Seminary, however, will reveal the fact that the roster of the faculty contains names that shine like stars in the theological and educational firmament. The passing of the years has not yet silenced the response of the heart to the great faculty names that endure, and which we now celebrate.

We have heard from those who went before us of Melancthon William Jacobus. A man with a name like that is sure of immortality, but his genius for interpretation abides in his commentaries on the Gospels, the Acts, and the Pentateuch. The thundering eloquence and incisive analysis of Archibald Alexander Hodge, with his quaint humor, fashioned the theology of the preachers of his generation and challenged them to maintain the truth against intellectual indifferentism. Samuel Jennings Wilson, orator and scholar, preacher and historian, held in his keeping both the heart and the mind of this community. Some of us who still consider ourselves

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young, knew William H. Jeffers with his encyclopedic knowledge and his gracious ways, leading us alluringly through a faulty recitation and after repeated attempts on the part of the student to lay hold of an historic fact, bringing the ordeal to a conclusion with the remark, "Young gentlemen; it is difficult to extemporize facts". The name of Samuel H. Kellogg, Hindi scholar, student of comparative religion, interpreter of the prophetic in Scripture, minister and missionary, scholar and saint, is still fresh and fragrant in the hearts of his students. We come, too, upon the adamant name of Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield, theologian, scholar and higher critic, master of men, humanist and dogmatist, who both at Western and later at Princeton poured forth into the current of the Church's life the quickening influence of his scholarship.

The name of Matthew Brown Riddle will awaken perhaps a greater response in the hearts of this audience than that of any other scholar of old Western. He thought in Greek, and apart from a knowledge of the Greek New Testament he scarcely believed in a minister's salvation. His name is honored among the American Revisers of the New Testament and his commentaries are on the shelves of all who love the truth. He hated intellectual shabbiness as he hated the devil, and denounced the student who could only lay hold on what he called "the tail-feathers of an idea". He made men ashamed of indolence, idleness, and intellectual contentment. "There are", he said, "two general methods in vogue to-day in the interpretation of the Scripture; the historic method, which is pursued by all conscientious students of the Bible; and the hysterical method, which is pursued by men of both sexes". Out of China a missionary, whose love for truth has been kept alive by the memory of Dr. Riddle's influence, sends the characteristic saying attributed to Dr. Riddle: "It makes my soul burn within me when I hear Boanerges Blatherskite stand on his hind legs in the pulpit and howl like a wild leviathan in the

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desert over the inspiration of the Scriptures when he doesn't know a thing he is talking about". Yet, with it all, his warm evangelical piety, his personal devotion to his Lord cast a spell over his class that the years have not lifted. "Young men", he said, "I have made considerable attainment and have some reputation in the world of scholarship, but I would gladly give it all now for a more intimate personal knowledge of Jesus Christ." When his students handle the American Revised Version of the Bible they feel instantly that they still touch his sensitive and delicate and devoted hand.

The impress of the personality of Robert Christie, theologian, humanist, friend and counsellor, prince of preachers, is upon more than one generation of students. He was a gentleman of the old school, master of the art of expression and in him thought and language were wedded to truth and winged with imagination.

We name and honor those of the faculty who still are with us and whose names have honored distinction. Robert Dick Wilson, linguist and logician; David R. Breed, master of men and music, interpreter of the ways of God to men; David S. Schaff, gentleman of the old school, scholar and historian. The members of the present faculty we leave with the present student body. We dare not praise them for we know not what a day may bring forth.

Fashioned in such an atmosphere of Christian scholarship we do not wonder that men with lighted torches marched out into educational leadership: William O. Thompson, Moderator and President, standing foursquare for Christ and the Church, moulding the intellectual ideals of a great state because of his leadership in secular education; John A. Marquis, College President, student, thinker, and missionary statesman; Samuel Black McCormick, Chancellor, dreamer, builder, seeing visions and dreaming dreams, making his dreams take form upon the hills of Pittsburgh; William H. Black, Moderator, author, President of one of our strongest Presbyterian

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colleges; Daniel W. Fisher of the Class of 1860 (made illustrious by such men as William T. Beatty, Samuel J. Niccolls, and George P. Hays) pioneer, President of Hanover College; William J. Boone, botanist, educational pioneer, President of the College of Idaho since 1887, and still strong in the conviction that true education is to be defined as "the gradual improvement of character"; Isaac Ketler, scholar and statesman, who, being dead, yet speaketh; Alonzo Linn, greatest among teachers, analytic, scholarly, massive in intellect; John L. Lowes, student of literature, English authority, professor in Harvard.

What shall we more say? For among the educators which Western has sent forth, the foreign field also has had its share; the Ewings of India, Calvin Mateer of Weihsien, Watson Hays of Tungshien, Robert Fitch of Hangchow, Andrew Happer and John S. Kunkle of Canton; and yet the record is incomplete. The story of old Western is still to be told and in her educational children she has reason to rejoice and does rejoice.

One scholar, let us repeat, is riches added to the commonwealth, and it will become Western, as it turns the page of a second century, to weigh carefully its place in the world of Christian scholarship. Dr. Johnson used to say "Words are daughters of earth, but ideas are the sons of Heaven". It is in the laboratory that the secrets of life disclose themselves; and it is in the study that ideas are discovered and rediscovered for the men and women of each generation.

Members of the Faculty must have time and leisure to keep abreast of the highest scholarship if they are to prepare their successors. Our professors ought to be relieved from the grind of financial anxiety made necessary by salaries that have been static too long. To release a great idea, as did Ezekiel or Jeremiah, is to be in the providence of God a prophet. A professor who is creative in his scholarship is a priceless possession for any institution. We are interested, and rightly inter-

ested, in increased endowment, but if endowment means only more brick and mortar, it will not advance much the kingdom of God. But if it means better teaching on the part of the Faculty, enhanced scholarship, then it speaks loudly for the things of the spirit.

A professor who releases a great spiritual idea, who issues a book which captures the imagination, that stirs the conscience, that awakens the intellect, that reveals the Gospel, has done his work. Let us proclaim this truth. Let us establish it as a principle that a theological faculty must be intellectually creative in the life of the Church. If the faculty is to form and fashion the theology of the Church, opportunity for scholarship must be provided. Recently the Librarian of the State of New York, in estimating the value of ideas over against the value of battleships, contrasted the cost of building battleships with the cost of establishing libraries, and asserted that books were a better line of national defense than battleships. He said, over against the so-called fifteen decisive battles of the world he would place a book published about the same date. The book, he said, was more potent in its influence than the battle. Over against the Battle of Marathon he placed the Iliad; over against Syracuse he placed Euclid's Elements; over against Arabela he placed Aristotle; over against Metaurus he set Plato; against the battle of Arminius over Varnus he placed the Hebrew Scriptures; against Chalons he placed Augustine's "City of God"; against Tours he placed Justinian; against Hastings he placed "Chanson de Roland and Morte d'Arthur"; against Joan of Arc he placed "Divina Commedia"; against the Spanish Armada, Shakespeare; against Blenheim, "De Imitatione Christi"; against Pultowa, "Pilgrims's Progress"; against Saratoga, 1777, "The Wealth of Nations"; against the battle of Valmy, "Positive Philosophy"; against the battle of Waterloo he placed "Origin of Species".

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It is interesting to note that five of these fifteen books are definitely and particularly devoted to the subject of religion. The simple conclusion is that Theological Seminaries, to maintain their place in the advanced educational standards of our age, must make the scholastic as well as the spiritual ideals their devoted concern.

The primary task of the Theological Seminary is, of course, to turn out preachers. What value is scholarship, learning, and logic if the preacher who is prepared in these halls lacks the passion of Pentecost? Nothing that is said here must be used as an argument against the first and last qualification of the Minister of God, viz., the unction of the Spirit, who alone equips and qualifies the preacher for his task.

Western Theological Seminary has cause to be proud of the men she has sent forth who have become masters of the pulpit. The stamp of her preaching is upon the ethical and spiritual life of this great Western Pennsylvania area. What it is is largely on account of the faith created through the ministry of the sons of this Seminary. It was intellectual vigor wedded to evangelical piety which made this community strong in its church allegiance which abides even to this day. In sounding a call to an educated ministry to meet the challenge that comes from a more educated pew, I am following in the train of the scholarly leaders of our great past. If one is to be a commanding preacher, a worthy interpreter of the Evangel of Jesus, he must know that Evangel, and be able to marshal his authorities. We are living in days when philosophy strikes across the path of Christian faith, and passion and piety are not substitutes for learning. Intellectual fertility makes for eloquence. If the preacher knows the truth, the truth will set him free in thought and speech. Abraham Lincoln said he had never learned the secret of being eloquent when he had nothing to say.

There is a searching paragraph for all theological students in the life of Bishop Phillips Brooks which bears

on this subject. He was in the Theological Seminary at Alexandria. "I shall never forget", he writes, "my first experience of a divinity school. I had come from a college where men studied hard, but said nothing about faith. I had never been at a prayer-meeting in my life. The first place I was taken to, at the seminary, was a prayer-meeting; and never shall I lose the impression of the devoutness with which these men prayed and exhorted one another. Their whole souls seemed exalted and their natures were on fire. I sat bewildered and ashamed and went away depressed. On the next day, I met some of these men at a Greek recitation. It would be little to say of some of the devoutest of them that they had not learned their lessons. Their whole way showed that they never learned their lessons; that they had not got hold of the first principles of hard, faithful, conscientious study. The boiler had no connection with the engine. The devotion did not touch the work which then and there was the work, and the only work, for them to do. By and by, I found something of where the steam did escape to. A sort of amateur preaching was much in vogue among us. We were in haste to be at what we called our work. A feeble twilight of the coming ministry we lived in. The people in the neighborhood dubbed us parsonettes."

Times have not changed in regard to this same bad habit of student preaching, and theological students are permitted still to mortgage their future ministry to their present necessity. The Church can well afford to await the eloquent deliverances of students who feel that God has called them to preach before they have learned what to preach; and they themselves can well afford to give themselves to hard mental discipline before they venture out on their long life work.

The term of the Theological Seminary is now too short; three years of seven months at the best, and the student has all too little time, even with undivided attention, to master not only the art, but the subject matter

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of his profession. All about us we see the standards of other professions rising. The student of medicine plows his way through an ever-advancing curriculum to which is added a year or perhaps two years of compulsory hospital experience. He, too, is in a hurry. He, too, is poor. He, too, is engaged to be married. He, too, is burning with eagerness to set his profession right, but he carries on in the hope that some day he will be prepared to meet disease and to master it. He does not practice except as he is guided by his professors, and he seeks experience in a market where he gives what he has without money and without price. And the medical school is turning students away from its doors and dismissing the incompetent before they reach the Junior year. Surely it is not too much to ask for a more complete concentration on the part of students upon their theological studies during the Seminary years of preparation.

I am not pleading for merely academic scholarship. I am concerned about an educated ministry. There is a distinction between scholarship and education. One may be a scholar and not be an educated man; on the other hand one may be educated and not be a scholar. The pulpit is not in need of pedantic scholarship, but it is demanding more and more a thoroughly educated leadership. In the days which we now honor the minister was required to be the best educated man in his community. Can we claim that to-day? Has the ministry maintained its intellectual supremacy over the greatly elevated level of scholarship on the part of our Church members? College men and women sit in our pews. Can their minister look them between the eyes and challenge them to a life of faith according to the Gospel of Christ?

Twenty years ago Dr. Marcus Dodds, in delivering the closing address at New College, Edinburgh, said, "I do not know whether more to pity or to envy those who are proceeding to a ministry which may naturally be expected to cover the next thirty or fifty years". Dr. Marcus Dodds was wise in the ways of men and of the world,

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and he knew that the ministry was to face critical days during the generation that would follow his. We are in the midst of that generation. The years in which we live are years of testing, and the ministry which will abide shall be one which is loyal to the changing times in which we live and to the unchanging Christ.

I do not plead for scholarship for its own sake, but for Christ's sake, that He may be crowned King of Truth in a bewildered world. In the midst of what the world called defeat, Jesus said, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world". If that is victory one may well ask what would we call *defeat*. That paradox of the cross abides; and it must be that through much tribulation the ministers of to-morrow will enter into the Kingdom. In these prophetic words Francis Thompson speaks of the Church of to-day and to-morrow.

"O Lily of the King! Low lies thy silver wing,
And long has been the hour of thine enqueening;
And thy scent of Paradise on the night wind spills its
sighs,
Nor any take the secrets of its meaning,
O Lily of the King, I speak a heavy thing,
O Patience, most sorrowful of daughters!
Lo! the hour is at hand for the troubling of the land
And red shall be the breaking of the waters.

"Sit fast upon thy stalk when the blast shall with thee
talk
With the mercies of the King for thine awning;
And the just understand that thine hour is at hand,
Thine hour at hand with power in the dawning.
When the nations lie in blood and their kings a broken
brood,
Look up, O most sorrowful of daughters!
Lift up thy head and hark, what sounds are in the dark
For His feet are coming to thee on the waters".