

THE BULLETIN

—OF THE—

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The Western Theological Seminary and Home Missions

Rev. John A. Marquis, D.D., LL.D.

The Home Missions work of the Presbyterian Church in its organized form antedates the inception of the Seminary by twenty-five years. It is not to be inferred from this that there was no relation between them during the period while the Seminary was still unborn. Manifestly, the Seminary could make no contribution to the cause of Home Missions prior to 1827, but Home Missions could and did make a valuable contribution to the Seminary. That is, Home Missions created the conditions that made the existence of the Seminary necessary and called it into being. The growth of the Church in this region from 1802 to 1827 was so rapid that a ministry native to it became imperative. If this trans-Appalachian region was properly to care for its own church growth, then it must produce its own ministry. If that ministry was to be educated it must have institutions in which to educate them; and Presbyterians have always insisted on an educated spiritual leadership—at least they have always claimed to, and until this generation have generally stood by this claim. Washington and Jefferson Colleges and the Western University of Pennsylvania were giving young men the classical training needed to fit them for their holy calling, which was at that time practically the only learned profession. The only Seminary the Church had during most of this period was Princeton, which was on the Atlantic border several days' journey distant. It had been in operation but fifteen years and the few graduates it turned out were generally absorbed by churches east of the mountains.

The lack of a Seminary in what was then the West and the "Far West" was one of the chief causes, if not

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the chief cause, of the Cumberland split in 1810. We cannot refuse a certain sympathy with the Cumberland brethren of that day. The population of their territory was mounting rapidly. This population was Presbyterian by nature, by grace and by foreordination—that is, it was Scotch and Scotch-Irish, who have Presbyterianism bred in the bone. If anybody had a religious duty to perform to this rapidly multiplying population it was the Presbytery of Cumberland. It wanted an educated ministry, but could not get it; consequently it ordained men without the educational equipment the Church had always insisted upon. The majority of our presbyteries are doing the same thing to-day, with little protest, and with none of the excuse the Presbytery of Cumberland had in 1810, and, in my humble judgment, doing it greatly to the detriment of the Church. They are causing it far more harm than the policy of the Presbytery of Cumberland did, or could have done, in 1810.

No day since the Church was set forth on its career has demanded an educated leadership as deeply and as clamourously as our day. The difference between the average intelligence of the American people in 1810, and their average intelligence in the second quarter of the twentieth century, when there are college trained men and women in almost every community, men and women also trained in fields of human knowledge utterly unknown and undreamed then, when public schools are everywhere and attendance generally compulsory, when high schools whose curricula are fully equivalent to those of the colleges a century and a quarter ago are in almost every community, when there are more young men and women in the high schools, colleges, and universities in America than there were people then—the difference is immeasurable. If it can be grasped at all it is simply the measure of the demand for an educated ministry to-day as compared with the demand of the day in which this Seminary was born. Yet there is probably a larger percentage of uneducated ministers on the rolls of our Church

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at present than there was in 1810, and we are ordaining them in larger ratio every year than ever was proposed in 1810. Besides ordaining them ourselves, we are receiving them at the rate of nearly 150 a year from other denominations whose educational practice is no better than our own, and where most of them are failures before they come to us. Personally, if I had to choose for my pastor and preacher between one of those rough Tennessee pioneers of 1810, on fire with passion for his Lord and knowing only his Bible, and a graduate of one of our quasi-Bible Training Schools, with his warped theology, his prejudice against modern scholarship, his jaundiced pessimism about his times and his ignorant censoriousness of the modern church and its enterprises, I would choose the pioneer ruffian every time. He had a wholesome mind, whatever else he lacked, and was thereby nearer the mind of Christ.

In addition to the part played by Home Missions in creating the conditions that made the Seminary necessary, it is worthy of note that not a few of the great leaders in Home Missions were also leaders in the movement for the establishment of the Seminary. Time will allow the mention of but two or three. The two outstanding figures in Home Missions at the beginning were Ashbel Green, connected with the management, and Gideon Blackburn, a missionary on the field. Dr. Ashbel Green was made the first chairman of the Committee on Home Missions on its organization in 1802, and served in this capacity until his acceptance of the Presidency of Princeton College in 1812. He remained a member of the Board, however, and in 1827 he was again made President and served until 1847. He was also one of the influential leaders in pushing for a Seminary in the West, and the most influential factor in the selection of Allegheny as its site. He was a member of the first Board of Directors of the Seminary. It is fair to assume that it was his profound interest in the evangelization of the rapidly growing nation that had led him to see the neces-

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sity of a Seminary here and to become its friend and champion. He was also one of the founders of Princeton Seminary fifteen years earlier and pledged to its welfare, but his vision of the future Church and its needs made him an equal friend and supporter of the new project West of the Alleghenies.

Gideon Blackburn, commissioned by the Board in 1803 to work among the Indians of the Southwest, was also a member of the Assembly's Committee to organize the Seminary, appointed doubtless because of his intimate knowledge of the mission field.

Dr. Cyrus Dickson, one of the great Secretaries of the Board, was also a Director of the Seminary from 1855 to 1872, which parallels part of his activity as a leader in Home Missions.

The Board of Home Missions during its first years of service practically had no missionaries in the sense in which the term is now used, except to Indians. It requisitioned pastors contiguous to the frontier fields for a definite proportion of their time. They were the first home missionaries. In some instances they were called by their congregations with the stipulation that they were to spend a certain part of the year—sometimes as much as a half—in itinerant missionary work. This practice continued for at least a decade after the Seminary was established. In the Presbyterian Banner not long ago there was published some extracts from the diary of Dr. John Stockton, for fifty years pastor of the church at Cross Creek Village, telling of his experiences during one of his missionary journeys in Northwestern Pennsylvania, about the year 1829 or 30. What he relates is typical of what was a general practice at that time. In view of the service they rendered, one cannot escape the feeling that both the Church and the mission field suffered no small loss when this policy fell into disuse. If the leading congregations of our denomination could to-day be persuaded to release their pastors for two or three months yearly, and the pastors could be persuaded to be released,

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to give themselves to remote and needy mission fields, it would mean a great gain all around. It would bring new inspiration and vision to the mission fields, for one thing, and for another, might pep up the pastor himself to the delight and blessing of his congregation.

The probability is that all of the early graduates of the Seminary, whether so listed or not, were *de facto* home missionaries—that is, they served either temporarily or permanently home mission fields as part of their yearly program. The first graduating class were all home missionaries. Three out of four of them are explicitly so listed in the biographical catalogue, and the fields served by the fourth were mission fields long after that date. The Home Mission Board did not keep accurate data about either the number or the personnel of its missionary forces at that early period, but what little information is available indicates that an overwhelming proportion of the Seminary's graduates, at least up to the Civil War, went to the mission fields of this country. Because of the Seminary's location, the Home Mission fields of the Church in those early days were bound to enlist the service of the major part of its alumni.

Time will not permit an extended mention of many of the Home Mission pioneers and builders sent out by the Seminary. A study of the biographical catalogue, however, reveals the interesting fact that more than a score of the alumni were missionary founders—that is, they started missions either in altogether new territory or among new and hitherto unreached peoples. For example, the first Presbyterian missionary, and probably the first missionary of any church, within the State of Kansas, the Rev. William Hamilton, called wherever he was known "Father Hamilton", was a graduate of the Class of 1837. Immediately on his graduation he was sent to labor among the Indians in Eastern Kansas. He was sent to the Iowas and the Saes by the Foreign Board, which had charge of the work among the Indians at that time, to a point 80 miles west of the nearest white settle-

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ment. He was the pioneer herald of the Cross in that great unopened region.

Another pioneer was the Rev. Stephen A. Riggs of the Class of 1839, who spent 44 years among the Dakotas. He was commissioned by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. He was a prolific author and some of his books, such as "The Gospel Among the Dakotas", and "Forty Years Among the Sioux" are regarded as authorities on Indian life to this day.

The Rev. William K. Marshall, D.D., of the Class of 1846, was the first missionary of our Church to Arkansas, and later was among the pioneers in Texas.

The Rev. David Fulton McFarland, of the Class of 1866, was the first missionary to the Indians and Spanish-speaking population in the State of New Mexico. Our first church in that State was organized by him in 1867. It should be noted also that after his death his widow, Mrs. Amanda Reed McFarland, became the first missionary of our Church, or any other American Church, to Alaska, preceding by one year the coming of Dr. S. Hall Young.

The Rev. James Allan Menaul, of the Class of 1875, was the founder of the flourishing school in Albuquerque, New Mexico, which bears his name.

The Rev. William Speer, of the Class of 1846, was the founder of the work of our Church among the Chinese in this country at San Francisco. He organized the first Chinese Presbyterian Church in San Francisco on November 6, 1853, which was also the first Christian organization among the Chinese anywhere in the world outside of Asia. The work among the Indians was under the Board of Foreign Missions until 1893, as was the work among the Chinese in the United States until 1922.

The greatest home missionary of this generation, Dr. S. Hall Young of Alaska, was a graduate of this Seminary in the Class of 1878. He organized the first church among the natives at Fort Wrangell, shortly after his

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arrival the year of his graduation. He had more to do with the making of Alaska than any other man who ever travelled its vast territory. During the almost fifty years of his service he saw the native population, savage, cruel, and degraded, lifted from their paganism and brought into the light and life of Jesus Christ. He was more than a missionary, he was explorer, pathfinder, educator, and civilizer. When the time came to make Alaska a territory and to establish orderly government with legislature and courts, Dr. Young was the Secretary of the convention called to effect the organization. He was also the leading figure in inducing Congress to take this step. We cannot now speak further about him. His memoirs will soon be published by the Fleming H. Revell Company, and they are a story of romance and danger and victory from beginning to end.

Many other heroic names might be mentioned, such, for example, as that of General Robert N. Adams, who entered the Northern Army at the outbreak of the Civil War as a private, and came out a Brigadier General. He was offered the rank of Colonel in the regular Army at the conclusion of the war, which would have been a sinecure for the remainder of his life. He was also offered other governmental and commercial positions, tempting beyond our comprehension to-day, but turned away from them all to give himself to the Gospel ministry and entered the Seminary in the fall of 1867. He was superintendent of Home Missions in Minnesota for many years, and later became the field secretary for the district of the Northwest. He originated the plan of pastor-evangelist, which is still in operation in most home mission synods and presbyteries. He was one of the men sent by the Board to organize the work of the Prebyterian Church in the Island of Porto Rico at the close of the Spanish-American War.

So, we might speak of James M. Roberts, the first missionary to the Navajo Indians, Milton E. Caldwell, one of the first to be sent to Porto Rico, and George F.

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Leclere, who founded missions among the Indians in Wisconsin and the Dakotas.

The great contribution, however, of the Seminary to the Church and the Kingdom of Christ in this country has been its output of pastors who build the average church. As the biggest factor in American life is the average man, so the biggest element of strength in American Christianity is the average church, led by the average pastor. Outstanding pulpits and outstanding congregations are important and play a part of great usefulness, but the real body of any denomination of Christians is its middle class churches. They are the burden-bearers of the Christian enterprise throughout the country and are the strength of its world-wide program; and the heart of our ministry, the real pillars of the Christian structure, are their pastors. They may not be pulpit orators or platform spell-binders—they rarely are—but they are the faithful, dependable, full-time and over-time workers in the vineyard of Christ. Of this type have been the majority, the great majority, of the graduates of this historic Seminary. These are they that to-day are planting the Church and nourishing it to strength and usefulness in the average American community, the home of democracy and the reservoir of spiritual power. The greatest need of American Christianity has ever been, and is now, the preacher who can make the Gospel understood by the average man, for he is the real American and the real builder of the future.

To be sure the Seminary has turned out its share of such fleeting phenomena, Assembly Moderators, Board Secretaries, college presidents, editors, seminary professors, book writers, Chautauqua lecturers, life insurance agents, real estate promoters, and the like. But her glory is not in these, but in the pastors and missionaries who have given their lives to the shepherding of the flock of Christ in the average community. As 90% of our churches are the product of home mission effort, so 90% of our

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faithful, hard working pastors have at one time or another in their lives served as home missionaries.

The purpose of home missions is to establish the Church within an area so that without outside aid it becomes self-functioning and self-sustaining; that is, so that it will be able to carry on all the functions of Christianity—worship, evangelistic appeal, education, mercy and relief, and to do its share of the missionary extension of these items of service to the world outside. The Church cannot be regarded as established anywhere or to have reached the full stature of its New Testament conception until it is able and willing to assume a due share of the task of world evangelization. The Church is a militant organization, and militancy is vastly more than establishing comfortable bases. It is campaigning, it is going and doing, serving and fighting and dying until the victory of Christ is universal.

We have spent a hundred years in this country in planting and strengthening the Church and its allied institutions. As a result of this labor, America to-day is well churched and is well equipped with such supporting institutions as colleges, seminaries, printing presses, etc., and it has a magnificent personnel. Think of the amount of talent the Church of Christ has within her membership and of its overwhelming influence in this country. In the Providence of God the Church in America has been given one hundred years to do what the Church in Europe was allowed more than one thousand years to do, and she has done it well. We are fascinated and charmed by the startling strides science has made in the past one hundred years. It has built up a magnificent equipment of laboratories, libraries, and apparatus with which to do its work. Let us not forget that the Church of Christ in America has from two to three times as much money invested in her equipment as science has been able to collect. What about their relative effectiveness in changing and elevating the life of our people? The dispute between science and religion as to the truth of their re-

spective teaching is a temporary matter. Anything science discovers that is truth will not undermine or prove inconsistent with anything that religion teaches that is truth. "The Spirit of all Truth" can be depended upon to lead both into the way of all truth, which is the mind of God. But there is a practical or an operative side to both about which the men of our day are thinking a great deal more than they are about the abstractions of either, and that is their relative effectiveness in changing and improving life. Which is putting over its program in the more efficient and thoroughgoing fashion? Which is having the greater effect on human thinking and feeling and character and welfare? Is the Church making as good use of her five billion dollar equipment as science is of her two or three billion dollar equipment? What a tremendous change, for example, in our whole manner of living and working the coming of electric light and electric power has made! It has created a new era and added enormously to our human effectiveness, and all within a very short period of time. Has the Church in her field and in the same time anything comparable to show a pragmatic age like ours, for we are practical pragmatists whatever the philosophers have to say about the theory of it? Our Lord laid down a very pragmatic test for the genuineness of Christian faith—"By their fruits ye shall know them". There has never been an age since our Lord proclaimed this test that has insisted on it to the extent ours is doing. We want to see the goods, the fruits, and we refuse to be concerned until they are produced.

To go back to our question—has the Church in our day produced anything in the way of human changes for the better within her sphere comparable to what science has done in producing the modern applications of electricity? I think she has. At least a good case can be made for her. When she unshackled the slaves of most of the world in the nineteenth century, she did something that means more than girding the world with

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a blazing trail of electric light. When she inspired and founded the colleges and universities that have turned out the men who have made science, she did a greater thing than making the earth tingle with the throb of electric power. But I am not now arguing the case either for or against, and have no mind to do so. What I am trying to point out is that here is the field in which religion and science will both be judged in our age. If comparisons are to be made, they will be on what each is doing in the practical world and not in the world of abstractions. In the practical world I include, of course, the soul and its eternal interests, for there is nothing that has so much to do with the weal or the woe of our exceedingly materialistic age as the kind of souls we are making. Recently collected data bring to light the fact that 87% of the adult population of America accept the fundamental teachings of Christianity. This is part of the fruitage of the preaching of the past hundred years and is a great tribute to the effectiveness of our ministry. It also indicates where the chief emphasis in our preaching should be put in years to come. America is more Christian in intellect than it is in life. Our preachers have convinced the people that Christianity is true to a far greater extent than they have persuaded them to live it. The emphasis of the future should be, and we believe will be, placed on the enlistment of life, the actual living of the truth men believe.

The sum of it all is, that as the result of the past one hundred years, we have a Church to-day that, so far as its strength and size and equipment are concerned, can meet the special problems of the age. She is magnificently equipped for the task of transforming human life into what Jesus Christ wants it to be and died to make it.

I have mentioned science because it bulks so very large in the popular mind and because many good Christians are afraid of its rivalry in the attention of men, but it is a friendly rival and not an enemy. Religion

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has enemies to-day, real, venomous, and deadly, and stronger than ever before; materialism, sensualism, coarse, vulgar display of wealth, a wealth which has always corrupted those who have possessed it and used it for their own indulgence, and is corrupting us to-day. It is despiritualizing and externalizing our lives. An unusually capable pulpit is required to keep the youth of our generation from the complete materialization of their lives. It is harder to find time to-day to turn our eyes within and to think of God and the soul than ever before. It is going to take a strong ministry to persuade men to keep steady and keep God ahead, to substitute, for example, Christian and international race relations for the present race hate and the present urge to war. But the Church is able to meet every one of these dangers if she can be provided with the right ministerial leadership. She has the equipment and the human personnel to do it, and, of course, her divine leadership and power are to-day what they always have been.

The Western Seminary has contributed nobly to the building of this Church. She will, we believe, contribute as nobly to its use for the ends of Christ. In each of the generations through which the Seminary has passed she has done her share to furnish a ministry sensitive to the needs of their day and able to meet current streams of thought with openminded intelligence and open-eyed consecration to their task. Let us cherish and strengthen her so that she will continue to turn out a ministry that can lead each new age, no matter what its perplexities, into the ways of Christ, a ministry that can take any set of conditions and conform them to the program of the imperishable Gospel.