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Men Of Vision.

A DREAM COME TRUE

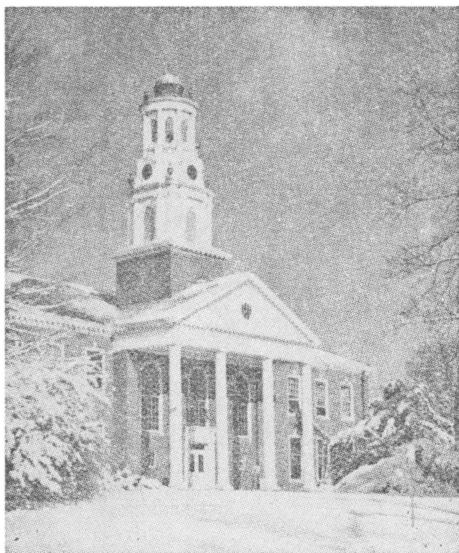
John Broadus Abraham

*story of the founding of the Southern Baptist
Theological Seminary, and of the
men who did the work.*

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NORTON HALL
Louisville, Ky.

Men Of Vision

A Dream Come True

By

JOHN BROADUS ABRAHAM

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1951

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FOUNDERS OF THE SEMINARY

For a little while I ask you to close your minds to thoughts of this present day, to shut out consideration of the difficult times in which our Nation and the world are struggling to find solution, and go with me back more than ninety years, when the Southern Baptist Convention in 1857 decided that the time was ripe for the establishment of a Theological Seminary to instruct men how to become efficient ministers of the Gospel. Many and voluble were the plans advanced, to the end that a committee of five ministers and college professors was appointed to study, prepare, and report a plan. The five were James Petigru Boyce, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Columbia, South Carolina; Basil Manly, Jr., pastor of the First Baptist Church of Richmond, Virginia; William Williams, Professor of Theology at Mercer University, in Georgia; E. T. Winkler, who held the same chair at Furman University, in Greenville, South Carolina; and John A. Broadus, who was pastor of the First Baptist Church of Charlottesville, Virginia, also serving as Chaplain of the University and Assistant Professor of Ancient Languages, under the revered Dr. Gessner Harrison, who was later to become the father-in-law of young Broadus. The latter had entered the University in 1846 at the age of nineteen. His previous schooling had been in a private school conducted by Mr. Albert G. Sims at his home, "Bleak Hill," in Culpeper County, Virginia. Young John began there in 1839, but in 1840 he dropped out because his father had been elected to the State Legislature, and the boy had to help on the farm, being general overseer. He ran the saw-mill too, though he was only fourteen years old. But we must go back to the story of the Seminary.

The committee met several times, though to do so was difficult, as travel was not easy, no expense money was provided, and the members, with the exception of Dr. Boyce, had little over living expenses. Their idea, as stated, was to provide thorough and extensive training to those who want it but have not the means to get it. They planned "a seminary having independent departments, allowing the students to choose, each to his taste and needs and previous preparation. In this way we shall counteract the tendency toward formalism, to making preachers all in one pattern, which has so commonly characterized some theological seminaries in this country." "I would be unwilling to see any particular amount of education, either general or special, required of a student who felt the call to preach the Gospel, but wanted to fit himself to do so properly."

From a letter written by Dr. Manly to J. A. B. on February 15, 1858, "Suppose you come to see me here in Richmond on the 22nd. By common consent that is to be a great occasion, namely, the unveiling of the statue of George Washington by Houdon," in the State Capitol Building. "To tell the truth, I am not much concerned about the unveiling, nor the speechifying, nor the parade and the brass band. But if you will come here, we can have a talk about the work committed to us, that schedule of studies, that creed, etc. I cannot do anything about it myself. Always is some one knocking at my door, pressing, pleading, 'Let me in now,' 'Attend to me first,' and so I need you to put the fire-coal on my back and make me work. Come and spend a week." So he went. In June of that year, Dr. Boyce sent from Greenville, "a catalogue of the plan of the theological department in use at Furman University, which I had arranged on the supposition that there would certainly be two and

maybe three professors. I think you can get enough of my ideas to judge as to our substantial agreement."

But all through that fall the health of his wife became progressively worse, and he took her to White Sulphur Springs, seeking betterment of her condition. He was to resume his pastoral duties at Charlottesville on October 1st, having been on furlough, and he wrote, "The brethren here have been very kind in purchasing a house for us, and they propose fitting it up for us. Mrs. Broadus is delighted with the prospect of having so delightful a home." But, after an illness of only a week, she died on October 21, 1857. He lay prostrate with grief. The Sunday before, he had preached on "the exceeding great and precious promises" and one of his friends reminded him of it, quoting tenderly the message, "in everything give thanks." So he preached again on November 1st. When he told his wife she was dying, she said simply, "Well, tell me about Jesus." She was not quite twenty-six years old, and left three little girls. Eliza, the elder, was about five when her mother died. Annie was three, and little Maria about one.

But the plans for the Seminary went on apace. Gradually difficulties were ironed out; one by one the obstacles were surmounted or by-passed. At long last it was decided to open in the fall of 1859, at Greenville; and the committee, except Dr. Winkler, who declined, as he wanted to remain in the work he presently had, was named the first faculty.

In these days we find it hard to remember that at one time there was intense opposition to any education for preachers, it being argued that if the Lord wanted a man to preach, He would tell him what to say. Of course, many a man with plenty of education never becomes a

magnetic preacher. Some work on the emotional side, and we all can remember several names in our own time of men who have called on men to repent in very fervid style. Doubtless many have been saved through that method, but most of us prefer the sincere, logical, calm presentation of certain gentlemen we know in our present-day churches. There is no lack of sincerity, but the results last longer.

So Mr. Broadus resigned his pastorate at Charlottesville. It was hard to do. His first wife was buried there; his second, Miss Charlotte E. Sinclair, was born there. Here was the spacious church, builded by his efforts, almost by his own hands, crowded every Sunday with members, citizens of the town and students from the University. Dr. W. M. Thornton, his brother-in-law, wrote "in all his wanderings, I fancy he found no spot on earth so dear as this,—not Carolina's blue skies, not Kentucky's green expanse, nor foreign cities, with their haunting memories of song and story, not even Palestine and the flowery fields hallowed by the footprints of his Lord. But duty and destin called, and he obeyed."

His uncle, Dr. William F. Broadus, who often amused himself by writing in words of one syllable, wrote him June 14, 1853:

"On the last day of last week I left home for a short trip and was gone three days. Your name was in the mouth of more than one friend with whom I met, most of whom, by the way, had both seen you and heard your voice more than once, while the hosts of the Lord were at the June feast. I will tell you some of the things that were said of you. I have not time to tell you all that I heard said of you, for much of our talk was of you. I will give you what two friends said, and their words may serve to point out to you what you told me

you had a wish to know—that is, what those who heard you preach and teach from the word of God thought of your style and your mode.

“I shall give you first the mind of a man who for twelve years has had a place in the ranks of those who preach the word, and whose mind is strong and thought by those who know him to be of a high grade. In short, he is a man whose words would have great weight with all who know him. He heard you ‘preach’ and ‘speak,’ and he thinks your whole mode the best he has met with in his whole life. He says you teach just what ought to be taught, and he would give all of this world’s goods—and he has quite a large stock of wealth—if he could preach as you preach. And then he said that he hoped all the young men who heard you would think as he did and would try to shape their course by yours. But now, lest what you have read lift you up too much, I must tell you what one said who does not think of you just as the friend does whose words you have just read. This man, too, is of those who ‘preach the word.’ He made his first speech in the ‘deask’ one year ere I made my first, and from that time till now has been in the field. He is a good man and has done much good in the cause of Christ, though I must own that he has not spent much time with books, nor had much care to store his mind with what great men have said of God’s words and ways. I took my chief meal with him on the last day of last week, and, as we sat at meal, he spoke of you. Said he: ‘What he said was good, but how strange that a young man so well taught in all that the books can teach should use a style so much like that of a mere child. You ought,’ said he, “to tell him of it, and put him in mind that one knows so much should use a style more high, a style that fits such thoughts as he deals out

to those who hear him.' I had hard work to keep back a smile at these words. I thought how strange that one so long in Christ's cause should wish to have the truth set forth in words of high sound."

President E. G. Robinson, of Rochester Divinity School, wrote on November 23, 1859, "Allow me to congratulate you on the successful opening of your Seminary, and to wish you the largest and truest prosperity in the future." It really was not "his" Seminary. Dr. Boyce had been elected president, and Dr. Manly and Dr. Williams, with Mr. Broadus, made up the faculty. They had twenty six students. Mr. Broadus wrote, "We hope for forty or more next year, but there is difficulty in raising the endowment."

Then the gathering war clouds. Long before 1861 there had been hot words and hard feelings on the slavery and other issues. The Seminary session of 1860 began with thirty students. Mr. Broadus had sixteen in his course on the New Testament. His brother in Alexandria, James Madison Broadus, wrote him, teasingly, "Dr. John A. Broadus, Empire of South Carolina, Greenville. How does that strike you? Are you willing to be alienated from Virginia and other states? When you come to Virginia, do you want to be considered a foreigner?"

But then came Fort Sumter. "I am not a Secessionist—the word angers me. But I am a Virginian. Virginia in the Union, if men are wise enough, unselfish enough, virtuous enough to appreciate and to preserve a Union, is my favorite idea."

The war came on apace. In January 1861 Dr. B wrote, "Brother Boyce is a strong anti-secessionist man, Brother Williams strongly secessionist, Brother Manly mildly so. But neither that nor anything else has ever caused the

slightest jar among us." "We have thirty-eight students and I enjoy my work. Four or five have left for home. I am thankful that I am so busy. I pray God to direct and to overrule, to the advancement of His name." The second commencement of the Seminary was held on May 27, 1861, and the anniversary address was made by Dr. E. T. Winkler. No word was spoken about the political situation. The feeling was strong that ministers should mind "their own business" and "we were all diligently endeavouring to concentrate thereon." Many of the students went directly into the army, some as chaplains, others as soldiers. The First Battle of Manassas was fought on July 21, 1861, and great was the rejoicing in South Carolina when the news percolated. But that autumn the Seminary had but twenty students, of whom eight had been there before. Dr. Boyce went into the army as Chaplain, but for the while, the others remained in Greenville, and began to preach in the surrounding churches to earn bread. Dr. Boyce suggested that the war was likely to last a long time and that it would be well for each to lay in a supply of food and clothing, as the Yankees were sure to blockade Charleston and Savannah. Hoarding, we would call it now! But in the next year or two, real trouble settled down. Confederate money lost its power to purchase. A farmer traded thirty loads of oak wood, two horse loads, for thirty teacupfuls of salt. It is said that the lady who measured the salt, being generous by nature, used her largest teacup and heaped the salt thereon. Madison Broadus wrote his brother from Alexandria, "a sack of salt was retailed last week for \$192.00. Fifteen bags of less than two bushels each were sold here last week for \$32.00 the bag." In February, 1862, Dr. Boyce wrote his colleague, "Last Sunday, with little more than half

the regiment on hand, I distributed 300 Testaments and Bibles, 40 hymnals, and a large box of reading books." Dr. Broadus wrote "We Pray for You Away from Home," a tract which he distributed in 1862 among the Confederate soldiers.

"We pray for the Cause—that just and glorious Cause in which you so nobly struggle—that it may please God to make you triumphant, and that we may have independence and peace. . ."

"We pray for your precious life—that if it be our Father's will, you may come back to us and to your home. . ."

"We pray for your soul. Ah! what shall it profit you if you gain the noblest earthly triumphs, the most abiding fame, yea, every good that Earth can give, and lose your soul? If we continually beseech the Lord that your mortal life may be preserved and made happy, with what absorbing, agonizing earnestness must we pray for your immortal soul, that it may be delivered from the eternal degradation and wretchedness which are the wages of sin, and be brought to know the sweetness of God's service here, the rapture of his presence hereafter. We know it must be hard for you, amid the distractions of camp life, the alternate excitement and ennui, the absence of home influences and the associations of the sanctuary, to fix your mind and heart on things above. We do not doubt the nobleness of your impulses, or the sincerity of your frequent resolutions to do right, nor do we exaggerate the temptations of a soldier's life. It is no reproach on your manliness, and no assumption of superiority on our part, to utter the mournful truth, that, spiritually, man is always and everywhere weak; that you wrestle against outnumbering and overpowering spiritual foes. We pray that you may be enabled to commit



JOHN ALBERT BROADUS
1827-1895

This portrait hangs in the office of the
President of the Seminary.

your soul to the Divine Saviour, who died to redeem us, and ever lives to intercede for us, and who, with yearning love is ever saying, "Come unto Me." We pray that the Holy Spirit may thoroughly change your heart, bringing you truly to hate sin, and to love holiness, and may graciously strengthen you to withstand temptation, and give you more and more the mastery over yourself, and the victory over every enemy of your soul. Whether it be appointed that you fall in battle, or years hence to die at home, may God in mercy forbid that you should live in impenitence and die in your sins. Whether we are to sit with you again around our own fireside and 'take sweet counsel together as we walk to the house of God in company' or are to meet you no more on earth, oh, may God in His mercy save us from an eternal separation."

In May, 1862, Dr. Broadus wrote Dr. Boyce, "If no word comes from the Governor by tomorrow, Manly will go to Columbia to see if the Legislature will exempt ministerial students from the army. If not, all that remain here now will leave at once. There are only 8 left." Dr. Manly wrote from Columbia, "I could not see the Governor, but succeeded in seeing two of the legislators, who are our dictators. They assured me that theological students need have no uneasiness." Dr. Gessner Harrison died on April 7, 1862. This brought sorrow to all at the Seminary. The Seminary closed and did not open again until after the war. Dr. Broadus went into the camps as a missionary and evangelist, preaching wherever he was wanted. From Winchester, July 1863, from the camp of the 13th Va. Inf., he wrote, "They have pure coffee, captured, of course, and it begins to disagree with me. My sleeping is on a little wooden frame, with a bit of oilskin under me, a blanket to soften the board,

another for cover and my overcoat for a pillow. I go into the wards where wounded men lie and talk, sing and preach to them, as best I can. It is clear I must remain. Conflicting reports about results at Gettysburg, but even if General Lee has to leave Pennsylvania, I shall be on the Virginia side of him and will be all right. Went to see Mrs. Magill, who lives on Main Street, and the wounded men from Gettysburg were being brought right by her door. She and her family were busy handing out slices of buttered bread to the men, so I took hold to help. Money had been placed in her hands for the purpose, and she sent to the bakers for great baskets of loaves, and pound after pound of butter was brought by the town folk, and sometimes bowls of scrambled eggs to be spread instead of butter. Every now and then came a pot of coffee and some sent milk and butter-milk. The hospitals here and the basement of a church are overflowing with wounded men. Mrs. Magill had some corn bread yesterday for breakfast. First time they had eaten any for six months. They offered me some. I told them I would not condescend to eat it! I black my shoes each morning and they look better than usual. I preached yesterday morning at the Presbyterian Church, and in the evening at the Lutheran. John William Jones and I have appointments to preach every afternoon this week at the Methodist Church, for the soldiers."

August 20, 1863, he wrote his eldest daughter, Eliza, his letter having this unique heading: "Camp Thirteenth Virginia Infantry, Smith's Brigade, Early's Division, Ewell's Corps, Army of Northern Virginia." I do not know why he omitted "The Confederate States of America, Western Hemisphere!" He wrote, "Yesterday I was preaching about Joshua and his saying 'As for me and

my house, we will serve the Lord,' and there in the midst of the sermon, I felt anxious about you and Annie. Oh, may God give you the grace to put your trust in the Saviour, and to devote your lives to his delightful service—that I and my house may serve the Lord." Again, to his wife, "I preached Sunday morning here and in the afternoon went a mile back to Gordon's brigade, of Georgia, and preached to over 500 men. Gen. Gordon is a Baptist and a very pleasing man. Last night, I slept in Jones' tent, on the ground, with my clothes on. Slept pretty soundly, too, due to being tired. This morning, preached again at ten o'clock, and Jones baptized nine. In all, more than forty have been received into the various denominations, in the last few days, and the work is widening. You have acted nobly, dear wife, in submitting so patiently to my absence, and I am sure you will bear it still. Whatever good I can do here, you deserve the credit much more than I."

After the sad surrender at Appomattox, in April 1865, Dr. Broadus wrote to Dr. Basil Manly, who was at Richmond, "Man's extremity is God's opportunity. As wonderful things have happened in history, maybe our cause (the Seminary) will again rise and prosper." Dr. Boyce wanted to leave the seminary and go on tour for the purpose of soliciting funds for a new endowment. He offered to lend the other three professors \$1800 each, as their salary for the first year, the amount to be refunded to him by the Seminary when it was able. The subscribed endowment of \$140,000 had become valueless during the war. After much talk, correspondence, and prayer, the end of the Seminary seemed at hand. In September, when they came together, Boyce, Broadus, Manly and Williams, Dr. Broadus said, "Suppose we agree that the Seminary may die, but we will die first."

Dr. Boyce said that the Seminary, in its few short years, had taken hold of the hearts and affection of the Baptist people in the Southern States, and if allowed to die now, generations might pass before brethren would have the courage to try again the establishment of a Common Theological School. So they bowed their heads and prayed, then decided to start their session on October 1, 1865. Seven students came, one each from Virginia, North Carolina, and Alabama, four from South Carolina. In August of that year President Andrew Johnson, through the Military Governor, had called a Constitutional Convention, and Dr. Boyce had been elected a member of that body. He worked incessantly for the Seminary when not obliged to sit in session. But the reconstruction days were hard, and grew harder. During that time it was that Dr. Broadus had only one student attending his lectures in Homiletics, but he wrote, "It is somewhat dull to have but one student attend my lectures. But he is a good listener."—He was blind. The lectures were later published—"The Preparation and Delivery of Sermons", which has been revised several times and is still in print.

On April 16, 1866, Dr. Broadus, who had been requested to go to the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting that year at Russellville, Ky., near Nashville, Tennessee, wrote, "Made my last lecture in Homiletics today. Quite likely it will be my last, indeed." Dr. Boyce worked on at the Convention and secured \$1,203.50 for the Seminary. In June he got \$367.00 in Baltimore, and in Richmond, \$359.00. In July he made collections in Missouri and Kentucky to the amount of \$654.00.

In 1868, Dr. Boyce, amid all his weariness, journeying and soliciting for the Seminary, received an offer to become the President of the South Carolina Railroad

Company, at a salary of \$10,000.00 a year. But he wrote, "Thank the gentlemen for me, but tell them I have decided to devote my life to the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary . . ."

In 1869, with its finances in slightly better shape, the trustees engaged a fifth professor, Dr. Crawford H. Toy, who had been professor of Greek at Furman University, but who had been for two years in the Orient, studying Arabic and Sanskrit. The main purpose was in getting him to relieve Dr. Boyce from his class in Polemics, and Dr. Broadus from his class in Homilectics. Dr. Toy's inaugural address was entitled, "The Claims of Biblical Interpretation on Baptists." It was printed later and widely circulated. He said, in part, "On Baptists there rests a special obligation in regard to the Scriptures, because of our complete dependence on the Bible. We profess to make it and it alone, our Religion. We accept all it teaches, and nothing else."

In May, 1867, Dr. Broadus was invited to preach the baccalaureate sermon at Washington College, Lexington, Virginia. General Lee had become president of the school, and he wrote, "Tell him we are as poor as church mice but will gladly pay four times the amount to have him preach one of his Gospel sermons and have the pleasure of his company." That was May 18. On June 16, from Goshen, Dr. Broadus wrote his wife, "I left Lexington last night. I was treated with great respect and kindness, and my sermon, though imperfect, succeeded better than I feared, and, I trust, did some good. General Lee and some professors called at the hotel. He invited me to dine with him, and to take tea Monday, but I was already engaged and had to decline. Visited Stonewall Jackson's grave, and called on Mrs. Lee, who is an invalid in a wheel chair, but was very agreeable."

From Alexandria, June 5, 1868, he wrote Mrs. Broadus, "Talked Seminary this morning at 11 o'clock and got more than I expected. Eight men pledged \$100.00 a year for five years, a total of \$4,000.00, and also got \$100.00 in cash. I have to speak tonight for Richmond College."

June 21, 1870, General Lee wrote him from Lexington, "I am glad to learn that you have decided to visit Europe, and trust that complete relaxation from duty and the objects of your interest that will at all points attract your attention, may entirely restore your health, and that you will return renovated in strength and vigor, to gladden the hearts of your many friends."

Dr. Broadus had originally planned to sail on the Anchor Line Steamer "Cambria," sailing July 21, 1870, but he changed to the S. S. "Anglia," for the 30th of July. But suddenly it was suggested that two daughters of a warm friend accompany him, so it was happily arranged and passage was taken on the Cunard Line Steamer, "Scotia." Among the names on the passenger list were those of Mrs. Horace Greeley and General Phil. Sheridan.

Dr. Broadus wrote home, "I am glad that I am on the Scotia. It is good to feel, when you wake at night, tossed against the side of the berth, and hear the waves breaking against the side of the rolling ship, that you are on one of the best and safest ships in existence." So must the passengers of the Titanic have felt. In October, 1870, Dr. Warren Randolph changed from the Cambria to the Anglia. And the Cambria went down with all on board, 170 lives being lost.

In 1869 came the first recorded effort to move the Seminary from Greenville, South Carolina, the effort and invitation being made by the trustees of Union Seminary at Murfreesboro, Tennessee. They offered \$50,-

000.00 to the Seminary's fund. The offer was respectfully declined, on the grounds that South Carolina friends and funds might be alienated, also by reason of the fact that many of the gifts had been made with the proviso that the funds revert to Furman University should the Seminary project fail. But in 1870 at the Convention, when studying how to get more funds, the suggestion was made that, as so many large contributors and friends lived in Louisville, Ky., it might be well to move there. Dr. J. B. Jeter, one of the mighty men of his day, was asked to write an article for the Religious Herald opposing the plan. But the report was adopted by the Board of Trustees, and it seems that Dr. Boyce must have favored Louisville, for he wrote the report with his own pen.

In 1871 action taken by the Trustees of Furman University released the Seminary from all claims to the aforementioned funds. President Furman wrote that they would deplore the removal but wished to relieve embarrassment. In 1872 Dr. Boyce visited Chattanooga and Memphis, seeking financial inducements to have the Seminary moved there. Later, Bethel College, Russellville, Ky., made overtures. Earnest propositions were made to move to Atlanta. But finally, the choice was Louisville. Curiously, the great depression of 1873 seemed to thwart the progress of God's work. The Seminary nearly went under. In 1877 Dr. Boyce wrote Dr. Broadus on March 23, "I really think it would be well to stop the Seminary for a year or two, and let you accept the pastorate of Eutaw Place Church in Baltimore. Then we could re-open. I am in great perplexity. The brethren will not and some cannot pay." Dr. Broadus wrote from Greenville in reply, "I am grieved you are so gloomy. The prospect is discouraging, as you say,

but I do not think it would do to suspend." In June, July, and August of that year, Dr. Broadus supplied the Calvary Baptist Church in New York, while Dr. McArthur was absent. He had this series of 18 discourses taken in shorthand with a view toward publishing a book of "Calvary Sermons." The experiment was a failure. He found it well-nigh impossible to whip the stenographer's notes into decent shape for publication. Also difficulty arose about a publisher willing to take a chance. The project was not a success. Someone said he was inimitable before an audience, but unreportable to the reading public.

Dr. Boyce rejected an invitation to become President of Brown University. On June 5, 1877, Dr. Broadus wrote his wife, "The die is cast. We open in Louisville in September. We cross the Rubicon. Boyce is pleased and hopeful." So they moved to Louisville. Mr. Samuel Colgate of Rochester helped, Mr. John D. Rockefeller gave \$25,000.00, the Nortons and the Peters and other friends in Louisville made fine contributions.

And so on from the humble beginning in Greenville to the present beautiful buildings and grounds in Louisville. How many ministers of the Gospel have been graduated I do not know. All of the devoted band who worked so hard have gone on to their rewards. The last of the professors of that age, Dr. Sampey, died a few years back.

But their work was not in vain. As we of this present generation look back and see what God hath wrought through men like Boyce, Broadus, Manly, Williams, Whitsitt, Mullins, Sampey and scores of other consecrated men, we must realize more and more what Jesus meant when he said in his prayer before his betrayal, "I have given them the words which Thou gavest

me, and they have received them. I am to be in the world no longer, but they are in the world. I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them by the power of thy name." And, so, Amen.