

CHAPTER FOUR

EXCERPTS FROM “THE NEW WEST”¹

by **E. P. Tenney**

Editor’s Note: Edward Payson Tenney was the first successful President of Colorado College. Taking the helm of the struggling young institution in 1876, he turned it into a going concern with a strong faculty and more than 50 students in attendance. He found the financing and arranged for the construction of the College’s first building, now known as Cutler Hall. With the completion of Cutler Hall, Tenney was able to move the College from its humble building on North Tejon Street in downtown Colorado Springs out to the permanent campus in use today on North Cascade Avenue.

President Tenney realized that the success of the College would rest on its ability to raise money in contributions as well as collect tuition. To that end, he wrote a short book entitled “The New West” in which he described the merits of the newly emerging Rocky Mountain region and described the role of what he called the “Christian college” in that region.

Excerpts have been chosen that emphasize President Tenney’s strong religious motivations, his desire to gain financial support for Colorado College from wealthy benefactors in his home state of Massachusetts, and his view of Colorado College as an instrument for improving the lot of Hispanics, Native Americans, and Mormons in his beloved “New West.”

As an element of national wealth, these vast pastures, which have fed the buffaloes for ages, are likely to contribute quite as much to the country as any other equal area not occupied by a manufacturing, mining, or

¹ E. P. Tenney, *The New West: As Related To The Christian College*, 3rd edition, Illustrated (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1878). Page numbers are listed following each excerpt.

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commercial population. Those who know the manner of life most frequently led by herdsmen will fear for the future, unless the youth who are to engage in this business are trained in Christian schools. An enlightened patriotism will plant the Christian college in the New West, and, through its manifold influences, elevate all the people. (Page 5)

It is hardly needful to speak of the gold and silver mines, whose fame has gone out to all the world. One hundred millions of gold have been sent from Montana alone. The annual yield of Colorado is eight millions, which is more than California produced in 1870. Gilpin County has averaged two millions a year for eighteen years. The passion for mining is the instrument of Providence in transferring populations to new seats of empire. The history of California and Australia is now repeating itself in Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico, — the richest region in the world. (Pages 8-9)

Pike's Peak rises not far off, and smaller mountains plant their feet within a mile or two of the town. The unsurpassed wonders of Glen Eyrie, Queen's Cañon, the Garden of the Gods, Manitou Mineral Springs, Ute Pass, and Cheyenne² Cañon — all within five miles of the town — attract tourists from all the world. Any one of these famous resorts would make the fortune of a watering place in the East. Professor Hayden says that he never saw so wonderful a combination of grand scenery in the neighborhood of any other medical springs.³

The rocky spires and changing shadows of Cheyenne Mountain, seen four miles to the southwest of the town, give constant delight to every eye. It is not far to walk or ride into quiet glens, with flowing fountains, rocky streams, abundant foliage, and flowers, with mountain walls and massive peaks rising on every side.

² The orthography of this word, rendered so differently by various scientific explorers, is now practically settled by the usage of a writer whose books have the authority of classics wherever the English tongue is spoken.

³ *Preliminary Field Report*, p. 45.



EDWARD PAYSON TENNEY

The second President of Colorado College, he raised the money and recruited the students that first made the College a going concern. (Photograph from Special Collections, Tutt Library, Colorado College.)

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May we not anticipate an honorable future for a literary institution, established as a fountain of Christian influence and intellectual power, in this enchanting spot? “Most earnestly I believe,” says a writer whose eyes are never weary in beholding the forms of these mountains, and whose fame is known to all literature, “that there is to be born of these plains and mountains, all along the great central plateaus of our continent, the very best life, physical and mental, of the coming centuries.” (Pages 14-15)

Civilization perpetuates itself through the higher education. The culture of the college permeates society. If the college is godless, the civilization will be half pagan. If Christianity is fundamental in elevating the race, the Christian college is the instrument through which to advance Christian civilization. Give to irreligion and infidelity the training of the most promising youth in our country for one or two generations, and the fountain of our positive Christian influences for the renovation of the world will be dried up. (Page 20)

Yet there is no one instrumentality for the world’s moral advancement so important as the Christian training of youth, who are to be the leaders of the world in the years next ensuing. It is on this account, that many parents, whose own lives are failures morally, are anxious to secure education under Christian teachers for their own children, at the time when they most need the restraining influences of religious faith and precept.

Unless the men who propose to energize Christianity with their own business energy, establish the Christian college in the New West, and in every generation imbue some portion of the leaders of the State with the principles of Christian faith and life; and train a ministry upon the ground adapted to the wants of the country, and train them so thoroughly, intellectually and spiritually, that they can win a hearing and a following; and place a Christian teacher in every school district, — they will fail in occupying this region for their Master. The Christian college is an “institution for perpetuating Christianity in the world.”⁴

⁴ J. P. Thompson D. D., *College Society Address*.



DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

Edward Payson Tenney was a graduate of Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. (Photograph by Robert D. Loevy.)

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The grand movements for the moral elevation of the world have their spring in the Christian school. The Christian college for training the leaders of society is the instrument chosen of God, and used age after age. He chooses to work through organizations; He has honored and indorsed the Christian college. His instrument is fitted to do His work. The history of this country proves it, and shows the wisdom of founding such colleges for creating a Christian civilization.

If we are wise, we shall put this renovating power into the far West. Although individual teachers and graduates fall like leaves, the college will endure and prove a perpetual power, influencing every generation of the state, growing through the centuries like some gigantic tree on the slopes of the Sierra, whose life is continued by a foliage constantly perishing and constantly renewed.

The moral interest of the New West cannot be secured beyond peradventure in any other way than by the establishment of a Christian college for the young people, who will in their maturity mold the state. If large-hearted givers will furnish a permanent supply of well-trained men for leadership in society, and exercise a constant influence for good upon the flower of the youth, in an area of [the] country whose citizens will very soon be numbered by millions and which is capable of sustaining a vast population, they will take rank with the noblest benefactors of their race.

Those men are shortsighted who will only do and die today. There are many men who are occupied with present affairs with little thought of the future. The kingdom of God knows nothing of months and years. A thousand years are as one day. The conflict between good and evil will go forward century after century, until the perfect reign of peace; and God's peace on the earth will never be maintained except through the reign of principles that accord with the most enlightened reason.

One generation must, then, join hands with another in building those seminaries of learning which will train the leaders of mankind to habits of self-sacrifice for the good of others. Unless Christian men have the forethought, enterprise, and patience to do this, the Golden Rule will never be carried into practical effect as the common rule of life for the world's population, and the Golden Age of the world will never come.

Are there not today two million sheep feeding on the Rio Grande? One might as well build a mill in southern Colorado without water power or stream to manufacture their wool, as to try to build up a Christian

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civilization on the frontier, — amid a half-Mexican population, wandering herdsmen, scattered ranchmen, rough mining camps, and towns with a population gathered from the four winds, — without a Christian college.

He who founds a college in a new country is planting the Christian pleader, physical, pedagogue, press, pulpit, platform, over a vast region through all ages of time. He who puts his money into Christian enterprises upon a foreign shore is a good servant of God; but he who will be the honored instrument in planting a Christian college in the New West, where it is imperatively needed today, will have mercy upon his own countrymen, and deserve the gratitude of uncounted generations. He will in this way exert an influence for raising to the heights of a Christian life the foreign element in the region of the college, and through its unending roll-call of students bestow a benediction upon the shining shores of far-off seas in distant ages.

The time will not soon come when men will cease to send out missionaries; but there will not be so long the golden opportunity to become the founders of Christian colleges at points in the West, where they are beyond doubt needed at this hour, and where they will wield a commanding power till time shall be no more. (Pages 21-24)

Does not the Christian college bear the same relation to the leaders of Church and State that the common school does to the average mind? Does it not educate certain men, who in turn become colleges to the people whose schooldays are short? He who founds a Christian college is training Christian merchants, editors, teachers, lawyers, physicians, statesmen, and establishing Christian instrumentalities innumerable; and his work will continue till day and night cease. No lighthouses on the coast are so useful as these Christian lights planted on the borders of civilization; no artesian wells, irrigating arid wastes, of such service to mankind as these fountains of Christian life; no seeds so fruitful as these Christian colleges for hundreds of generations.

Do not trained intellectual forces rule society? Is there no demand for mind in this world? Are not the institutions, whose business it is to develop mental power, vital to civilization? And is it not essential that they be under Christian management, if the divine law of love to God and love to man is to rule the world?

Shall our Christian workers relinquish their hold on the centers of power? If the religious principles which underlie the best social life, and

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which are essential to self government, are to pervade the New West, and control its destinies, there is no way in which Christian men can aid so efficiently as by founding a Christian college early in the development of that region. If the thinkers of that wild, beautiful country, of promise so vast in the future, are trained under Christian teachers, their thoughts will develop into Christian States. Is it not a noble thing to aim for, to direct the formative powers, to bring the leading mental forces of awakening empires into captivity to the law of love as manifested in the Gospel, the law of self-sacrifice for the good of others?

The men who give their money to this work touch the sources of Christian progress in our country in the near and distant future. If it is wise to clothe and feed America, it is Christian wisdom to use a part of the money made in the business, for endowing the educated men of America with the thoughts of God.

This is not a petty question, as to giving a little instruction in Latin grammar, algebra, and rhetoric.... All irreligious powers would be glad to combine to do it. But it is a question, whether or not the men of an earnest and aggressive Christian faith and life are quick-sighted and far-sighted enough to seize on the instruments of education, for no dull and narrow sectarian ends, but for the purpose of filling the minds of wide-awake young men with principles of morality and faith and love, which are the true foundation of the Republic, and of all good to the human race.

Shall this work be neglected or delegated to those whose spiritual vision is clouded by the haze of old superstition or of new unbelief? Shall we lay up beams of silver and gold to glisten in the eastern sun, or shall we use our silver and gold for laying the foundations of many generations in some Christian temple of learning, which will be illumined by the Spirit of God, which will send its light into every mountain valley, and along the borders of every stream, and across every wide plain, in a third part of our continent? (Pages 28-30)

The colleges planted by the American College and Education Society have rendered such efficient aid to Christian families in educating their children, and they have, also, proven so positive a power in making known the claims of a religious life to students who have not previously heard the Gospel message, that John Todd did well in saying that we have every

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evidence of the divine approval in this noble work, except that no archangel has thrust down a trumpet to blow the approbation of God into our ears.⁵

Does it need to be said that no such beneficent results have been known, or are likely to be known, where Christian people neglect to plant the Christian college, and leave the youth to be cared for by unbelievers...? (Pages 32-33)

Is it not then essential to plant the Christian college in the New West, to develop the common school system among Mormons, Mexicans, Indians, and the heterogeneous border population? (Page 33)

Such an enterprise can, however, achieve the highest success only as it stands upon its own merits as an instrument of Christian education. If it is in the least under ecclesiastical control, it will never gain the confidence of all the people. Ages of experiment have shown that when an infant college is planted in a region where it is needed, it will best merit the patronage of all friends of the higher education by being free from political and free from ecclesiastical control, and governed by a self-perpetuating Board of Trustees chosen for their fitness for the trust, and manned by instructors of the highest order, elected on no other ground than their qualifications as educators. If it becomes the mere tool of a sect, it will never rise to the highest rank. (Pages 46-47)

There is an open field for honorable service in the systematic study of aboriginal philology. The Smithsonian Institute is likely to achieve much in this direction; but when we count up the share of the world's work, which rightfully belongs to a college in the New West, we must reckon it as one of the peculiar privileges of the location, to train men to investigate Indian philology in connection with the work of aiding Indian civilization.

It is, also, true that the New West offers a rich field for the study of the origin of the aboriginal population of America. "There is scarcely a square mile in the six thousand examined," in the San Juan region, chiefly in southwestern Colorado, says Hayden's Survey,⁶ "that would not furnish

⁵ *Plain Letters.*

⁶ Report of W. H. Holmes.

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evidence of occupation by a race totally distinct from the nomads...who hold it now....” (Pages 50-53)

Unless our Christianity has faith to prepare the way for the millennium in Spanish America, whose faith will do it? Shall New England Christians wait till Old England, or even Micronesia, sends missionaries to New Mexico? Is it not possible to train a few teachers and preachers in a Christian college near the work to be done? It will be more easy to secure men than from the East. If the Spirit of the Lord descends with tongues of fire on a Christian college in the New West, it is likely that one of the tongues will be Spanish.

There are, among the Spanish-speaking people of America, persons of great intelligence, culture, and liberality of spirit. They are Catholics, but they desire a reformation. They welcome Protestant ideas and any instrumentality that will elevate their people. There is no doubt that the school work which the authorities of Colorado College are now organizing for the Spanish-speaking population will have a good reception. It certainly will, if it be carried out with practical wisdom and the spirit of Christ, without controversy. (Pages 60-61)

Colorado College has had the fortune not uncommonly incident to the beginning of important enterprises. The school was opened in 1874, under a very enthusiastic, hard-working financial agent, and first one excellent teacher, then another. It was then suspended; and it lived only in the prayers and hopes of a handful of Christian people. This was the first endowment, the prayers of God’s people. By the timely gifts of a few men in Massachusetts, who were also praying for the coming of the divine kingdom, new life was put into the work. (Page 72)

The silver and gold belong to Him who rules the world, and it is not difficult for Him to honor instrumentalities that honor Him. Consecrated gold from the Colorado Mountains will enlarge and beautify her Christian college. Oxford and Cambridge have been built up by private gifts. The capitalists who coin money in the New West will gladly aid in up-building institutions of learning. (Page 87)

The great plains and mountain regions of western American offer today the most attractive resort in the world to the student of geology.

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Colorado College is surrounded by the most remarkable formations on the continent. The telegraph has been busy in announcing the important discoveries of new fossils in this region, - discoveries which have attracted great attention in Europe, and which have led, at least, one eminent savant to cross the Atlantic to examine these treasures from the Rocky Mountain plateau. (Page 90)

Capable men should be trained in the very region where the service is to be rendered. Professor Kerr, of Colorado College, has found saurian remains within three miles of his class room. The area of country close at hand is also rich in fossil plants, a large number of which are new. It is no wonder that college students and their professors from the East visit this region for summer studies. There is no better location in which to remain, if they wish to pursue out-of-door work in geology. (Page 91)

Colorado College is, therefore, in every respect well located for deriving early advantage from the law of increase, through the interest of donors who desire to promote the study of natural science. Persons of wealth who derive advantage from the Colorado climate, as well as those who have made satisfactory investments in the business enterprises of the country, will be quick to discern the advantages of the situation for building up an institution of learning. Somewhere in the great central regions of America there will be a university town, whose fame will increase with the advancing centuries. It is probable that there is no point, all things considered, more favorable for such a seat of learning than that chosen for Colorado College. (Page 95)

Whenever Colorado College becomes an honor to the Christian charity of the country, — and we believe that the decrees of God have given it a noble future, — there will be found engraved upon its walls the names of a multitude of givers, the rich and the poor, who have added unspeakable dignity to their lives by founding this Christian enterprise, and thereby hastening the reign of Christ. Is it not worth the while to toil patiently, to give largely, and to sacrifice for this work, during the first generation of the life of this College, to prepare it for its ages of service? (Pages 105-106)