Letter from Thomas W. Merrill to Samuel Cornelius, 
September 21, 1854
Letter #181, Kalamazoo College Baptist Collection

Transcribed by Rachel Worrell, Class of 2015

© Copyright 2014 Kalamazoo College. All Rights Reserved.
Rev. S. Cornelius.

Dear Brother.

Yours of the 12th is received, via Lansing, and I can assure you, I feel much obliged to you for the interest & solicitude you have manifested for my happiness and usefulness. I have felt, as you are aware, not simply a favorable regard, but a deep interest, even from its origin, in the perpetuity and prosperity of our Seminary at Kalamazoo: and already had the pleasure of contributing between $300 & $400, to promote its welfare: and had I the means, should be happy to contribute largely to its aid. As I remarked to my Brethren in Lansing, I have it in my heart, and hope erelong to have it in my hands to contribute a Theological Scholarship of $1000. according to a conditional subscription, placed sometime since in the hands of Rev. T.Z.R. Jones, whether or not those conditions were filled. And to secure that object, I made provision in my Will, executed sometime since, that the above amount be paid over to the Convention at my decease. It is true, I had rather be my own executor, and hope erelong to place that amount in the hands “The Baptist Convention of the State of Michigan,” the beneficiary, to be designated by myself, during my natural life, at my option. If any one doubt the honesty of my intention, I am willing, besides making the appropriation by Will, to give any unmistakeable evidence, my circumstances will allow. I have just made arrangements for the boarding of Br. Wm Cater, of the Lansing church, his wife & two children, who are now here, that he may study for gospel ministry: and to do it, I have been obliged to loan money at 18 per cent, & otherwise to incur a considerable debt, providing for him & for my children. As he is very much destitute of means, I have assured him that I would see that his family were supplied with provisions, for at least one year.

As to our conversation at Lansing, in presence of the council, I remarked, that I had subscribed a scholarship of $1000. and that I considered the subscription good, and morally obligatory. At that time, Bro. Cornelius asked me if I were willing that the $1000. should go towards the Theo. Endowment? I remarked, that had I known the trials of young men preparing for the ministry, that I felt deeply in this behalf, and that I was unwilling, that it should be diverted from the original intention. Brother Cornelius then inquired, if I were willing, that the Convention should use or invest the $1000, and pay the interest to secure the object proposed; & I remarked, that I could have no objection to that. By this remark, I did observe I did not intend to pledge the payment, of interest of the $1000 at once, but as soon as consistent. If I have misunderstood, or erred in any wise, I wish to stand corrected: or if the brethren should think, that besides the $1000. scholarship, I should subscribe $1000 towards the endowment, I may be willing to do it, though it take all I have, after cancelling my liabilities. Perhaps my personal expenses have been, and still are as moderate as can be desired, and I am willing to deny myself to help others, yet it may not be objectionable to have a choice in the objects of benevolence. If I donate my entire means, it may annihilate the bone of contention, or root of evil, yet what may be best, I know not.

I solicit a continued interest in your sympathies and prayers.

In haste I am dear Bro. Yours truly, Thomas W. Merrill

N.B. Hope you will find abundant success in securing the Endowment, and that in securing Tho. Scholarships, an object of no secondary importance, some agent may be alike successful: that those whom the Lord selects for his special service, may not longer labor under galling & ruinous, embarrassment in preparation.

T W M