



Dear Father, Dear Son: Correspondence of John D. Rockefeller and Jr.

J.W. Ernst

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Many biographies of John D. Rockefeller and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. have been compiled- some have used bits of the original correspondence presented here and tried to show opposing interests between John D. Rockefeller and his son. Still others were written without correspondence at all. This collection of never-before-published letters traces the history of the transfer of the Rockefeller fortune over the course of fifty years. It illustrates how the endowment was bestowed from Senior to Junior with respect, sound advice, and with a mutual trust between father and son. The letters also reveal far more than the business side of entrusting the Rockefeller fortune to the younger generation. The misives are filled with news of family matters and personal wishes constituting a record of the Rockefeller family values which, in turn, sponsored the philanthropies of Junior. Outlined in these letters is the conception for the Rockefeller Foundation, the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, and the General Education Board. Later would follow the realization of the Fort Tryon Park, the Rockefeller Center, Riverside Church, and the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg. Junior's holdings peaked in 1928 at 5 million and his dedication to public parks, and institutions around the world absorbed a considerable portion of his wealth. Ernst's introduction reflects on five themes which run continuously throughout the letters: the respect and love among the members of the family, a father's precautions to his maturing son, the son's willingness to accept his father's precepts and examples, the son's conscious assumption of the responsibilities of the bequeathed fortune, and overriding faith in a benevolent God. These themes continually come together to form the outline of a philosophy of life behind the Rockefeller legacy, as when Senior writes: I am indeed blessed beyond measure in having a son whom I can trust to do this most particular and most important work. Go carefully. Be conservative. Be sure you are right- and then do not be afraid to give out, as your heart prompts you, and as the Lord inspires you.

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