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I. LITERARY.

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THE EARLY DAYS OF UNION SEMINARY.

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[The following paper was prepared by Rev. Dr. Robert Burwell, of Raleigh, N. C., and was to have been read by him in person at the celebration of the seventieth anniversary exercises of Union Theological Seminary on the evening of January 4th, 1894. As he was prevented at the last moment by indisposition from being present this duty was performed by Prof. T. C. Johnson. It may lend an additional interest to this excellent paper to know that it was prepared by a gentleman *ninety-two* years of age, who at considerable disadvantage to himself has labored thus to set forth his recollections of the Seminary as it was seventy years ago.—Ed.]

I accept with pleasure your invitation to take part in these services by furnishing reminiscences of the early days of Union Seminary and of Dr. Rice, who, by his efforts and self-sacrifice, was the main agent in establishing this school of the prophets.

In performing the task you have assigned me, I have to rely on my memory, and seventy years is a long period, and many things are forgotten which should be remembered, and even those events that are remembered are seen in a dim light.

Sad thoughts naturally come over me, as I recall these scenes, but on these I will not dwell. This is a day of rejoicing—a festive occasion, when we assemble to give thanks for the past, and to indulge in hope as we look to the future. In the cheerful and inspiring words of the Psalmist I would say, "Come, let us sing a new song. Praise ye the Lord.

Praise Him in the sanctuary. Praise Him for His mighty acts."

When we are looking back to these early days it seems to me that we ought to recall the days which preceded the 1st of January, 1824. It is well known that previous to 1820 Dr. Moses Hoge, President of the College, had under his care and instruction a theological class. Candidates for the ministry attended this class from Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia and Pennsylvania. Many of these I knew, and of others I have heard. This was, as I think, the first attempt in the South to have a regular class in theology in connection with a college, and if this be so, then this unpretending class, taught by Dr. Hoge, was the beginning of the great work now going on so auspiciously in establishing theological schools throughout the South.

At this time, when there is such a desire to know all about the days of old, would it not be well for some one to give a history of Dr. Hoge and his work, his mode of instruction, the connection of this school with the college and with Hanover Presbytery, and also the number and names of those who attended this class? I suggest that such a history would make a good article for the magazine, and would be not only instructive, but also deeply interesting to many of us. If this list of names is ever published you will find there the names of many who afterwards became well known.

At the death of Dr. Hoge in 1820, the class which he had taught was disbanded. The few who then made up the class soon left, and no more came. This embryo seminary was closed.

Moreover, the policy of the Trustees of the College was changed. A layman was elected President, and the chair of theology, so far as there was one, was abolished. The question then came up, What shall be done? And from 1820 to 1823 this question was only discussed, for good and true men differed in opinion as to what was best.

Some thought that the old way of studying privately under some approved minister was the best; while others contended that Princeton was able to meet all our wants. This Seminary was then the Seminary of the united church, in full operation, and furnished with every requisite for a complete theological education. Drs. Alexander, Miller and Hodge, were the professors, but it was soon found that Princeton did not supply

the pressing need of the South. Some noble men, however, came to the South and did good work.

The idea gained ground and became fixed in the minds of the leading men in the South, that our candidates, who were to labor in the South, must be educated in the South, and hence the establishment of seminaries was necessarily laid upon us.

Dr. Rice earnestly advocated this idea, not from any hostile feeling towards the North, or from any want of confidence in Princeton or Andover. So far from this being the case, Dr. Rice had warm personal friends in the North, who gave substantial proof of their good feelings for the South, and of their esteem for Dr. Rice. He advocated the establishment of a Seminary on the ground that it would best prepare young men for laboring in the South where the circumstances were peculiar, and thought it would increase the number of candidates for the ministry and also give an impetus to the work of domestic missions and make the Southern churches more aggressive. The experience of the past has shown that Dr. Rice was correct in thus reasoning. The number of candidates has increased and the church has become more aggressive. All this may be attributed, mainly, to the fact that the wisdom and foresight of the men of these early days led them to establish two Seminaries for training ministers. The stern logic of events from 1861 to 1865 has settled the question. I often think and ask, what would we have done after the Civil War without Union and Columbia Seminaries. After the storm of war had passed, we had these two schools ready for work.

On this day of rejoicing let us give thanks to God who put it into the hearts of our forefathers to establish, at this early day, these two schools which are now doing so much for our Southern church.

After these discussions to which I have alluded, Hanover Presbytery decided that a Seminary must be established, not a mere theological class as under Dr. Hoge, but a real Seminary, with suitable buildings, professors, a library and endowment, indeed with all the equipments needed for a complete theological education. When we consider all the circumstances, we must say, it was a bold undertaking, and we need not wonder that many shook their heads and pronounced the whole scheme impracticable. Hanover Presbytery then in-

cluded in its bounds all Eastern Virginia, except a few counties which belonged to Winchester Presbytery. In this vast field there were only ten counties (if my memory is correct) in which there were Presbyterian Churches, and most of these were very weak.

There were churches in Richmond, Petersburg, Lynchburg, but these were in their youth and were feeble compared with what they are now. There was a church in Norfolk, but in those early days this city was not connected with the state by railroad. The church in Norfolk, though the oldest church on this continent, was almost unknown, and delegates seldom appeared in presbytery or synod. The strong-hold of Presbyterianism was the counties of Prince Edward and Charlotte. You perceive then how small was the field in which the work proposed was to be done, and how limited the resources on which the Presbytery could depend. And yet in the face of all these difficulties this noble Presbytery determined to proceed. Verily the spirit of Samuel Davies and his associates animated the men, who then belonged to old Hanover Presbytery.

In due time the Presbytery proceeded to devise a plan of the Seminary—arrange for the raising the funds needed for the buildings, locate the proposed institution, and elect a professor.

As to the professor, but one man was thought of, and he had been the ruling spirit in all the previous movements. That man was Dr. J. H. Rice. He was pastor of the church in Richmond. He had done, and was then doing a great work in that city, and was beloved by the flock, of which he was the bishop. I believe that he did not hesitate.

As to the place where the proposed Seminary was to be located there was no difference of opinion. Indeed the Presbytery had no choice, only one place was thought of. As the school was under the Presbytery, it must be located within the bounds of Hanover Presbytery. Hampden-Sidney College, in the midst of a refined, wealthy, and Presbyterian population, offered advantages which no other place could then offer, and it was located near the old college.

The two institutions move side by side. Two noble planets, each moving in its own orbit, separate but concentric, each doing its appropriate work. Long may these two institutions

move on in harmony and may no erratic comet come to disturb this harmony, or to dim their light.

The questions as to the professor and the location were easily settled, but the question as to how and where to find the funds needed was not so easily answered. The field for reaping this harvest was very limited, as we have seen. In the wide extent of country included in the bounds of the Presbytery, there was not one church which would now be regarded as a strong church. On these churches the Presbytery depended. Noble Christians in Boston and New York made donations in these early days, and Richmond and Petersburg aided, but the main dependence was on the churches of Prince Edward and Charlotte, and the people of these two counties responded generously to the appeals of Dr. Rice and the agents sent out by the Directors of the infant Seminary. Among these agents was the Rev. Robert Roy, (Rob Roy, as we called him), who by his activity and energy and his pleasant manners accomplished much in a short time, but the personal influence of Dr. Rice was more effective. A gentleman used to say that Dr. Rice held the sheep while Rob. Roy took the fleece. Through the influence of Mr. Cushing, President of the college, land for the proposed building was given by a rich old man who was not much given to such free will offerings, but whose heart was opened by the earnest appeals of President Cushing. Thus the way was prepared. There was no building as yet, and we will see a little later on in this paper how a building was provided.

There was another difficult question that perplexed the friends of the school and it was, Where are the students to form the first class?

When Dr. Hoge's class was suspended by his death in 1820 there were only three students, two from North Carolina and one from South Carolina. When these left no more came from these states. Candidates under Lexington and Winchester naturally resorted to Princeton. Hanover had only two candidates, and both were at Princeton. There were three, all graduates of Hampden-Sidney, who, though not yet under care of Presbytery, had determined to enter the ministry. After much thought, and at what you will see at once was a great sacrifice, we made up our minds to enter the Seminary—to aid in our humble measure in launching the frail bark on its uncertain and dangerous voyage.

I was sent to Richmond to escort Dr. Rice and his wife to their future home. I can never forget the morning we started on our journey. People flocked to the house to bid farewell to their beloved pastor and his wife. Even after they were seated in the carriage, hands were stretched out to them and the sad words of parting were spoken. I then understood, in some degree, what sacrifice this noble man was making to establish the first school of the prophets in the South.

After three days hard work we reached college and Dr. Rice took possession of his humble dwelling, prepared to open the Seminary and enter on his great work. Think of it; three days of hard work from Richmond to Hampden-Sidney, a journey now accomplished in a few hours.

At the inauguration of Dr. Rice, the Rev. Mr. Read, from Charlotte County, delivered the charge to the new professor, and I think the Rev. Matthew Lyle took part in the services. Dr. Rice delivered his Inaugural Address on the interpretation of the Bible, a very proper subject, as he made the Bible his text-book in all his teachings.

The day appointed for beginning the proper work of the Seminary at length came. It was the first Monday in January, 1824. The professor and his three students assembled in the room which President Cushing had provided. He had furnished a residence for the professor, and he provided a room in which the work was to begin. This room, as you have often heard, was in one end of the kitchen. This Seminary was not born and nurtured in a palace.

Look now into that humble room and what do you see? One professor worn out by his many cares—yet stout of heart, and showing faith—and *three* students. Prayer is offered, and the Seminary is consecrated to the Redeemer for the extension of whose kingdom it was established, and the work begun, which has been carried on now for seventy years, and I hope will go on with increasing energy and zeal till the end comes.

Of the professor I shall speak in the sequel of this paper. Permit me to say a few words about these three, who made up the first class in this institution, then in its infancy, but *now* by the blessing of God, so prosperous. Two of the three were men of mature years, experienced in the ways of the world and prepared to struggle with the stern realities of life. The third was comparatively young and inexperienced.

Jesse S. Armistead before his conversion had been a merchant. When, by the grace of God, he was made a new man in Christ, he consecrated himself to the work of the ministry. He went through a regular college course, graduated in 1823, and then entered the Seminary, and took the full course, such as it then was. The greater part of his ministerial life was spent in Cumberland County, Virginia. There he labored long and faithfully. I have heard that he was an able preacher, and sometimes truly eloquent. I pay this humble tribute to the memory of one who was my class-mate for six years.

Thomas P. Hunt was, as I think, a step-son of Dr. Hoge. After he left college he did not engage in any regular business but now he had determined to preach the gospel. In due time he was licensed and preached in Virginia and North Carolina. He was a very fluent speaker, and he was regarded as a good preacher. He moved to Pennsylvania. I do not know whether he became a pastor of any church. He soon gave himself up to the temperance cause, and became famous as a lecturer on temperance in the South, but especially so in the North. I have heard that he became wealthy by the purchase of coal lands in Pennsylvania. When he died he left a handsome bequest to Hampden-Sidney College.

As to the third one who formed this first class it does not become *me* to say anything. I trust I can use the words of one of Watts's sweetest hymns and sing with a grateful heart:

"Thus far the Lord has led me on,  
 Thus far His power prolongs my days,  
 And every evening shall make known  
 Some fresh memorial of His grace.  
 Much of my time has run to waste,  
 And I perhaps am near my end,  
 But He forgives my follies past,  
 He gives me strength for days to come."

As to the course of study I have very little to say. In these early days it was short and very meager. What could be expected when the work now allotted to four or five men was then laid on the shoulders of one man! The works to aid in the critical study of the sacred scriptures, now so abundant, were then not in existence. The valuable commentaries now in our hands had not been published, indeed their authors

were not born in 1824. You can see that this first class of the Seminary was poorly provided with facilities for a critical study of the New Testament in Greek. We did, however, the best we could. There were daily recitations, the Greek Testament being our principal study, Dr. Rice commenting on the pages we read. Frequently he relieved the tedium of reading and translating, by giving to the class specimens of the higher criticism, then beginning to be known by means of translations from German works.

We also had daily recitations in Hebrew under Professor Marsh, of this college, but it was irksome work, and we did not learn much Hebrew. This was not the fault of Mr. Marsh, who was a good Hebraist, and was enthusiastic in his work.

Church History was a part of our course of study. The text book, a small volume of 350 pages, an abridgment of a larger work, in *German-Latin*, was good as far as it went, but a mere skeleton, and this was all we had of Church History.

Dr. Rice delivered lectures on the confession of faith, which showed his accurate knowledge of the confession, and of the controversies which it excited. These lectures were written from day to day, and as he had many other things on hand, he was not always ready when the hour for lecture came. He would bid us wait and go on writing, and when he had finished he read the lecture to the class. Thus his lectures may be said to be extempore, but they were the fruits of long study and of much thought. Such, briefly was the course of study in these early days, and what a contrast between it and the course through which candidates are now carried in this same seminary. But it was a beginning of a great work—a little fountain opened which swelled into a majestic river.

Some other things I will mention as reminiscences of the early days of this Seminary.

In 1825, one end of the Seminary building was finished, and Dr. Rice and his family occupied it. There was a room for his study in which he lectured and heard his classes. Into this new building the Seminary was moved—a great stride from the humble kitchen to a palace.

At the beginning of the second session another class was organized, and at the close of the second term a third class was formed, and about the same time Rev. H. P. Goodrich was elected and installed professor of Hebrew, and so when I was



licensed in 1826, there were two professors, three regular classes, and a building fairly under way.

Another important change was made about this time. I am in doubt as to the year. The Synod of Virginia took charge of the enterprise, and soon after the Synod of North Carolina united with the above Synod, and so the Seminary, under the care of Hanover Presbytery, became Union Seminary under the care of the Synods of Virginia and North Carolina. Then the clouds began to disperse, the day dawned, and this school of the prophets entered on its career of prosperity.

Long may this union continue and long may this Seminary stand as a monument of the labors and the prayers of *John Holt Rice*.

Dr. Rice, in form and appearance, was a man who would at once attract attention. He was tall, and his bodily frame well proportioned to his height. His face, though grave, and at times sad, was often full of smiles. Although not reared in an aristocratic circle, yet by his long residence in Richmond, and intercourse with the refined society of that city, he had acquired an ease and polish of manners that made him appear well in every company. His moods were variable; sometimes he sat silent, absorbed in thought; at other times, he was full of life, and then by his playful remarks and jests he caused many a happy smile. His jests had sometimes a sting in them, but his smile and kind words soon relieved the pain. His Catholic spirit was well known. A Presbyterian by birth and conviction, he was no bigot, but cordially received as his brethren all who loved the Saviour. He was emphatically a man of peace, but when the truth was assailed he girded his armor and gave stunning blows.

As a scholar and learned man, he stood very high in his day. He was well known in this country. He corresponded with distinguished men in Europe, and I remember he frequently gave us Dr. Chalmers's letters to read. He was familiar with English literature. He kept up his reading and study with the times in which he lived. While I would not claim for Dr. Rice the learning which German professors have, and which many in this country have, I would say that, taking everything in consideration, Dr. Rice was a good scholar, and he was, beyond doubt, a learned theologian.

He was from his youth a diligent student and loved books. No avaricious Shylock rejoiced more over his ducats than Dr.

Rice did over his books. They were his friends and constant companions. In every literary enterprise he took a deep interest. I remember with what gladness he welcomed the "Andover Review", the first of the kind published in this country. He urged his class to take it, saying in his playful way, "Even if you have to sell the buttons off your coats". He was a friend of education and promoted it by all the means in his power.

As professor, he was faithful, and did all that one man could do. He manifested a deep interest in his students, loved and treated them as his children. By precept and by his own example, he urged on them the importance of thorough preparation for the work in which they were to be engaged. Earnestly did he urge his pupils to study the Word of God, to make it their rule of life as well as their guide in preaching, and especially did he dwell on the advantage of studying the Word in the languages in which the inspired men spoke and wrote. On this latter point he was enthusiastic, and at the same time he extolled our glorious old English translation. In his lectures, so hastily written, he dwelt on pastoral duties, of which he knew so much from his own experience and on the manner and style of preaching, of which he was a bright example.

In the pulpit, his appearance attracted and secured the attention of the people. He was grave, solemn and dignified. His face and his manner in the pulpit showed that he felt as one should feel when speaking as an ambassador of Christ, and addressing men on the most important subject.

His gestures, though not always according to the rules of elocution were not grotesque; his voice, not ringing as some, was yet clear, and the utterance of his words so distinct that he was heard even when he spoke in the open air. He was always in earnest, sometimes terribly so, and I have heard him when he rose to the height of true eloquence.

He was Scriptural and practical in his preaching. The Bible was his book of instructions, and, as an ambassador of Christ, dared not go beyond it. He preached the Word. He dwelt much on the duties of Christians, vesting his earnest appeals on the great truths of the Bible. He never read his sermons; he usually spoke without any notes, though sometimes used a brief outline. He prepared for preaching by careful thought on his subject. All his sermons gave evidence of this, and he was ready to preach when any sudden emergency arose. On

one occasion he did this. The Bible Society of Prince Edward met in the College Church, and a Methodist minister was to preach the annual sermon. A large congregation had assembled and were anxiously waiting, when news came that the minister expected was sick and could not fulfill his engagement. The committee having charge of the services went to Dr. Rice and asked him to preach. He went into the pulpit, took his text and preached one of his best sermons. Dr. Rice was always ready when the Bible and its circulation was the subject.

He was *plain*, and always aimed to be understood. A little incident will illustrate this: He had made an engagement to preach in an adjoining county; notice was given that Dr. Rice, Professor in the Seminary, would preach and a large congregation assembled to hear how a Doctor of Divinity and professor would preach. (In a lecture delivered to his class inculcating the importance of preaching so as to be understood, he narrated the incident). He said that after the services were ended, as he was going to the place where his horse was, he passed a group earnestly discussing some question. As he passed, he heard one man exclaim, "Was that Dr. Rice? Why, I understood every word he said". Dr. Rice had the power of going down to the level of his audience so as to be understood by all. The common people heard him gladly. But in his preaching he never used slang words, never told anecdotes to cause a sensation or provoke a smile. He had no clap-trap device to attract and stir the crowd.

One other trait of his character I give. He was untiring in his efforts when he fixed his mind on a favorite scheme. His motto was, "persevere, and you will succeed." His long continued efforts to establish this Seminary in the face of many difficulties is proof of this. His determination to secure an education when it seemed to be entirely hopeless is another proof of his perseverance. When an important idea lodged in his mind, that idea ruled him. He dwelt on it in his conversation and in his preaching, presented it in every possible light, until his hearers were sometimes wearied by his subject. For several years before his death the danger threatening the country took possession of him, and this was his theme. As a lover of his country and of his countrymen, North and South, he trembled at the movements of the abolitionists and of unprincipled politicians. Many pronounced him an ill omened prophet. He returned from the North and came home sick at

heart and worn out, for he thought he heard the mutterings of the coming storm. He preached on "*The Signs of the Times*," and in that sermon he gave utterances to sad forebodings of what was to come. It was his last sermon, and one who heard him told me it was his greatest pulpit effort. An outline of this, his last sermon, was found on his table after his death, and it was copied by many. Could not a copy be found and published in the Magazine? It would be an interesting relic of days past and a memento of the last work of this great and noble man.

And so it was in the matter that has brought us together on this occasion—one idea was in his mind from the death of Dr. Hoge in 1820, to his own death in 1831—the idea of a well furnished Seminary in the South was a ruling idea. This he kept before him, and in the face of difficulties that were great he labored incessantly, took no vacation, gave himself no rest. Wearied and worn out by his constant struggles with these difficulties, he sometimes was almost in despair. On one occasion the class came to his study for recitation; we found Dr. Rice sitting beside his table, his head on the table absorbed in thought and unconscious of our presence; after a few moments he roused up exclaiming, "These thoughts will kill me." But he was comforted by the presence of the Saviour, and at last day-light began to dawn upon his beloved Seminary, and he could say "Mercy is triumphant."

Dr. Rice had an earthly comforter; his beloved wife stood at his side to support him in his weakness, cheer him in his sadness and to encourage and help him in his great work. Pious, intelligent, cheerful and always looking on the bright side of things, she held in her hand the golden key to unlock the door of the dark dungeon, and the prisoner was free. Mrs. Rice frequently accompanied her husband in his trips to the North, and by her pleasant and genial manners made many friends, who afterwards gave substantial proofs of their esteem for her and of their interest in this Southern Seminary. On this anniversary let her name be mentioned and memory revered as one of the women who helped it much in its weakness.

I have thus performed to the best of my ability the task kindly assigned me. I have done the work under the pressure of difficulties, but I have done it cheerfully. If anything I have written gives energy and hope to the friends of this

school of the prophets, I am satisfied. If I have encouraged any young man to face difficulties and to overcome them by faith and perseverance, I have all the reward that I ought to expect or desire.

We have been looking back on the past seventy years, and what a record do you see. What a contrast between January 1st, 1824 and January 1st, 1894. Truly God has done wonderful things for us. Let us be glad and rejoice.

Seventy years hence, in 1964, another will stand here to tell the story, and what a glorious history will it be of the mercy and truth and faithfulness of our Covenant God and Father through Jesus Christ.

Brethren, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen."

