

# Union Theological Seminary in Virginia

## Centennial Celebration

OCTOBER THIRTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH,  
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND TWELVE.



RICHMOND, VIRGINIA  
1912.

## UNION SEMINARY IN THE PASTORATE.

BY THE REV. ROBERT FISHBURNE CAMPBELL, D. D., Asheville,  
N. C.

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MR. PRESIDENT, FATHERS AND BRETHREN OF THE TWO SYNODS,  
AND FRIENDS OF UNION SEMINARY:

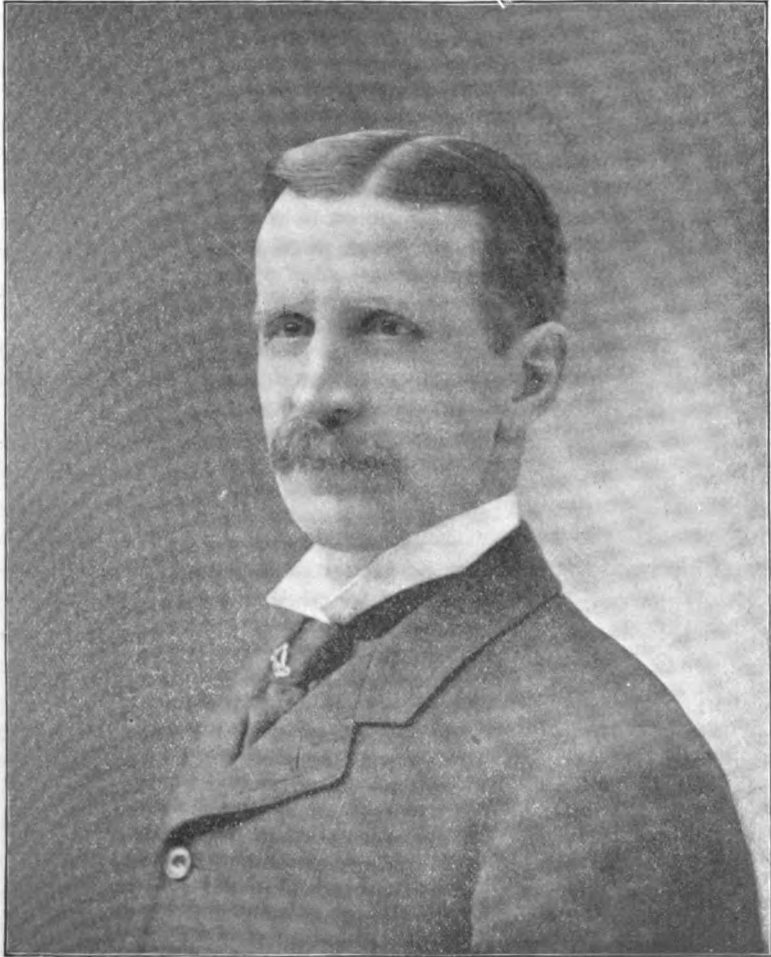
To attempt to crowd a century into twenty minutes is very much like trying to take up the ocean in a sea shell. The most that can be done in either case is to catch in our little measure a large enough sample to show the character of the whole.

The subject assigned me is "Union Seminary in the Pastorate."

"Union Seminary in the Pastorate" is here to-day. Seventy-five per cent. of the pastors in the Synod of Virginia and fifty-seven per cent. of those in the Synod of North Carolina were trained in this institution. The names of one-half of all her living alumni are on the rolls of these Synods. Scattered through the other Synods are as many more. Those of her living sons who are absent in body are present in spirit at this centennial celebration of their *alma mater*. It is safe to say there is no nobler brotherhood of pastors in the world to-day than these sons of Union. But,

"There is one great society alone on earth,  
The noble living and the noble dead."

Surely now, if ever, the noble dead are with us. We are "compassed about with a cloud of witnesses." The alumni of this Seminary, who have kept the faith and finished their course, are interested spectators of this scene.



**GEORGE W. WATTS.**

We are surrounded on this campus to-day by

"Heavenly presences,  
That stand with their peculiar light unlost,  
Each forehead with a high thought for a crown."

They "throw no shade against the wall." They are as the angels of God, invisible to the eye of sense, but as real to the eye of faith as "the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof."

Among the alumni of this Seminary who have served in the pastorate there have been men of true eloquence, golden-mouthed and silver-tongued; such men as Stuart Robinson, a son of thunder, "whose crippled arm served to make the sledge-hammer logic of his discourses seen more powerful," and W. N. Murkland, who "had a mint of phrases in his brain," and Moses D. Hoge, who in God's hand "became a trumpet whence He blew soul-animating strains."

Besides these, there have been a goodly number of pastors who by the power of their preaching, the force of their personalities, and the saintliness of their lives did much to mould the large communities in which they lived:—such men as Wm. S. White and his two sons, George and Henry, Theodorick Pryor, George D. Armstrong, John Leyburn, Alexander Martin, Jacob Henry Smith, E. H. Barnett, the Preston brothers, Thomas and John, Abner C. Hopkins, and many others, the calling of whose names alone would fill the time allotted to me.

Some of these men were distinguished from their fellows by unusual natural gifts; others were remarkable not so much for the possession of extraordinary gifts as for the extraordinary use they made of ordinary gifts, men whose pound gained ten pounds, while others with the same capital gained only five or two.

But, perhaps, the largest work accomplished for the Church by alumni of Union Seminary has been quietly wrought in obscure village and country parishes by modest heroes of the faith, who on small salaries, in the face of many discouragements, without the *eclat* of the metropolitan pulpit, have labored bravely on till "sunset and evening bell" have called them to their great reward.

The churches served by these noble workers have not only been the principal feeders of the city congregations, but have also supplied a large proportion of our elders, deacons and ministers, both in city and in country.

The river, whose streams make glad the city of God, takes its rise in small and distant springs. In its shining strength, the river should not forget the fountains that feed it with their silver threads far back among the hills.

So much for the glorious past and the noble dead. But what of Union Seminary in the pastorate of the living present? Is she a hundred years old, or is she only a hundred years young? Has the century brought decrepitude and decay, or is her youth renewed like the eagle's?

I think we may justly claim for our *alma mater* pre-eminence among the seminaries of our church, certainly in the *quantity* and, perhaps, in the *quality*, of her contribution to the pastorate of to-day.

You brethren of sister institutions—of Columbia, and Clarksville, and Louisville, and Austin—if we seem to boast, remember that this is one of the privileges of the hoary head. Wait until you come to celebrate your hundredth birthday, and you too, like the chief of the apostles and the chief of the seminaries, may “become a fool in glorying.” And when you do, “may we be there to see!”

First, then, as to the *quantity* of her output, Union Seminary has sent into the pastorate approximately thirteen hundred men, of whom about one-half “remain unto this present time, and the rest have fallen asleep.”

Of all the living pastors of our church thirty-eight per cent. received their training in her halls. No other institution approaches her in this. Moreover, she has on her roll in this her centennial session one hundred and seven students, the largest number in her history, an enrollment which places her far in the lead of her sisters.

But what of the *quality* of her sons? Are they “workmen that need not be ashamed”—and of whom *she* need not be ashamed? Here, again, our *alma mater* stands first among her equals. We do not claim that in piety and devotion her sons are superior to

those of other households, but we have reason humbly to believe that in these essential spiritual qualifications they are at least the equals of those who have been reared under other roof-trees.

With rare exceptions, those who have gone out from these halls have been true pastors. There have been few among them of whose ministry one must say, "The hungry sheep look up and are not fed." There may be theological seminaries whose course of study unfits the victims for actual contact with the actual world of to-day, so that their graduates only swell the number of those preachers who have been wittily described as "invisible during the week and incomprehensible on Sunday," but this school of the prophets belongs not in this class. She sends forth her sons as prophets who "have understanding of the times," with warm human hearts and with a living message from God to their generation.

As to her relative success in equipping men for efficiency in the pastorate of to-day, it might not become one of her sons to assert her superiority. But he ought not to be charged with lacking that "charity which vaunteth not itself," if he calls on figures to tell the story; for they speak without partiality and without emotional bias. We have seen that of all our living pastors, Union Seminary has furnished thirty-eight per cent. But if you will make a list of the one hundred and twenty-eight churches of our Assembly having the largest membership, you will find that seventy out of the one hundred and twenty eight, that is, over fifty-five per cent. of these largest churches, have pastors who received their training here. This means that in supplying the fields whose complex needs *demand*, and whose larger resources *command*, the best training for the pastorate that the church affords, our *alma mater* not only holds her own, but has seventeen per cent. to spare.

These figures seem to prove one of two things: either that these churches know where to go to get the best pastors, or that Union Seminary men know where to go to get the best churches. Settle this as you may, one thing seems clear: "There is always room at the top"—for Union Seminary men!

This address, necessarily so incomplete, could not claim an approach to completeness even as an outline, without some

mention of the literary work of our pastors. With literature produced by ministers outside of the pastorate I have nothing to do. That will be handled by others who are to follow me on the program.

I recently heard a distinguished alumnus of this institution bemoaning the literary sterility of our ministry. While it is not, and should not be, the aim of a theological seminary to produce *litterateurs*, there is doubtless ground for regret that our pastors have not been to a larger extent authors too. But there has not been utter barrenness. Here and there at least, we may gather "mosses from an old manse;" and this moss is not all dry, nor altogether the product of moss-backs.

In the field of sermonic literature, we have volumes by Daniel Baker, Stuart Robinson, C. R. Vaughan, Moses D. Hoge, G. B. Strickler and James I. Vance. This is not a very large exhibit. But it would be hard to find in the same number of volumes published anywhere within the last century a higher average of homiletic ability and skill than these sermons display.

Nor is the work of our pastors in other fields of literature to be despised. For instance, we have the Autobiography of William S. White, edited by his son, the best manual for a young pastor that I know of anywhere; the Life and Letters of Moses D. Hoge, by his nephew, Peyton H. Hoge; the Biography of Samuel B. McPheeters, by John S. Grasty. We have the able discussions, ecclesiastical, theological and polemical, of Stuart Robinson, George D. Armstrong, and John H. Boccock, valuable historical and biographical volumes by R. R. Howison and W. T. Price, the thoughtful sociological studies of J. B. Converse, the ingenious Scripture Harmonies of James W. Shearer, the scholarly apologetics of P. P. Flournoy, and miscellaneous volumes, some of them of great value, by A. W. Pitzer, Robert P. Kerr, Egbert W. Smith, A. R. Cocke, Joseph A. Vance, R. V. Lancaster, A. R. Shaw, E. C. Gordon, T. W. Hooper, E. T. Wellford and others, besides pamphlets, tracts and special sermons, too numerous to mention.

Nor have all the alumni of this seminary been devoid of "the vision and the faculty divine." Among her sons are some who can give a touch of witchery to common words, and

"Add the gleam,  
The light that never was on sea or land,  
The consecration, and the poet's dream."

We have on this platform the author of "The Divine Tragedy," which has been pronounced by a competent critic to be "a unique poem, vivid and powerful." And here, too, sits one whom we recognize to-day as the poet laureate of Union Seminary, whose recently published volume, "The Anteroom and Other Poems," has won high praise from the reviewers.

How many silent poets, how many "mute, inglorious Miltons," we may have among us, it is impossible to say.

I cannot close without suggesting the question, what of Union Seminary in the pastorate of the future? And we must turn for an answer to these sons of the prophets, of the classes of 1913, 1914 and 1915.

To you, my young brethren, is given the opportunity to set a pace and fix a standard for the new century.

It may be that my successor, who shall be appointed to speak on the same subject a hundred years hence, will excavate from the accumulated dust of a century, for purposes of comparison, the humble address I make to-day. I should be delighted to think that he would be able to recount more things and nobler things of Union Seminary in the pastorate of her second century than belong even to the honorable record she has made in the first.

I charge you to lift high the royal banner which the alumni of a century that is closing transmit to you who represent the alumni of a new, and (God grant) a better era.

Somewhere on the walls of this seminary should be inscribed in golden characters those golden words from a letter written by Dr. John Holt Rice to Mrs. Rice, while he was on a visit to New York in the year 1827: "Give my love to the young men, and tell them for me, in the name of God, that the salvation of souls depends much on their making attainments in holiness, and entering fully into the meaning of God's Word."

Take heed to these two things, young brethren—the attainment of personal holiness and an ever-increasing knowledge of the



glorious gospel of the blessed God—for in so doing you shall both save yourselves and them that hear you.

And, to this end, may the blessing of our covenant-keeping God be upon you and abide with you, and may that blessing “prevail above the blessings of your progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills.”