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# Centennial Addresses

SYNOD OF NORTH CAROLINA



*Delivered at Alamance Church, Greens-  
boro, N. C., October 7, 1913*

# CENTENNIAL ADDRESSES

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ALAMANCE CHURCH

GREENSBORO, N. C.

OCTOBER 7, 1913

## THE PERSONNEL OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN NORTH CAROLINA FROM 1813 TO 1838

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D. I. CRAIG, D. D.  
Reidsville, N. C.

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One hundred years ago today there were assembled at this place twelve ministers and three ruling elders who constituted the membership present of the first meeting of the Synod of North Carolina. The names of these twelve ministers were: David Caldwell, R. H. Chapman, Wm. Paisley, Samuel Paisley, J. W. Thompson, Robert Tate, Murdock McMillan, John McIntyre, James Hall, S. C. Caldwell, J. M. Wilson, and John Robinson. The names of the elders were Hugh Forbes, John McDonald and Wm. Carrigan. The names of the absent ministers were Wm. Pheeters, Joseph Caldwell, J. H. Bowman, E. B. Currie, W. B. Meroney, Samuel Stanford, W. L. Turner, Malcolm McNair, Allen McDougald, Wm. Peacock, James McRee, Humphrey Hunter, James Wallis, R. B. Walker, J. B. Davis, J. D. Kilpatrick, John Carrigan and John Williamson.

Thus it may be seen that the ministerial personnel of the Synod one hundred years ago numbered exactly 30, while today the roll shows the names of about 240.

Within twenty-five years after this first meeting, just two-thirds of the original thirty ministers were gone. All of these men had lived and labored during a part or the whole of the period of the existence of the Synod of the Carolinas. David Caldwell, Samuel McCorkle, James Hall and James McRee were present at the organization of the Synod of the Carolinas in 1788. But within this period of twenty-five years after the first meeting, we find the roll of Synod replenished with such names as E. W. Caruthers, N. H. Harding, A. D. Montgomery, Elisha Mitchell, Alexander Wilson, D. A. Penick, R. H. Morrison, Colin McIver, Hector McLean, Hector McNeill, Evander McNair, John Witherspoon, S. L. Graham, Stephen Frontis, Jesse Rankin, Samuel Williamson, J. W. Douglas, Drury Lacy, James Phillips, John A. Gretter, Wm. N. Mebane and many others, making the roll of Synod number 77 in 1839.

The Rev. Dr. H. G. Hill and I have been requested to speak of the Personnel of the Church up to 1863, a period of fifty years after the organization of the Synod. We have mutually agreed to divide this period between us, he taking the latter and I the first part of it.

So then, I am to speak of those who composed the Synod from 1813 to 1838.

It is not my purpose to speak of Craighead, McAden, Campbell, Patillo, Alexander and others who wielded such a wonderful influence

in their day. But I have mentioned the names of quite a number of men who were connected directly with this Synod. Who were they? And what did they do in their day?

I wish to say without hesitation that all of them were a grand and noble set of men, worthy of all honor and praise, and should be in everlasting remembrance.

These men were the builders and moulders of thought and action and character for us today, based largely upon the foundations laid in the days of the Synod of the Carolinas. They did their work well, perhaps as well as any set of men on earth could have done it, considering the environments and conditions of the times in which they lived. They met the needs and conditions of their time bravely and nobly, and have left to us an immortal heritage of noble lives and noble deeds.

After the ascension of our Lord He gave to His church "some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers".

The men who met here one hundred years ago were not evangelists in the modern sense of that term. Many of them had a deep and abiding evangelistic spirit, and did much missionary work by special appointment of the Synod. All work of this character was prosecuted after the manner of the early missionaries, like Robinson in Virginia, and McAden and others in North Carolina. In the early years of this Synod that remarkable man, Dr. James Hall, who as a soldier, patriot, scholar, teacher and prince among preachers, was preëminently a missionary evangelist. I might mention also Bowman, Stanford, Tate, McPheeters, Robinson, Douglas and others who did this kind of work in their day and in the early years of this Synod. But these men had pastorates, and their work as evangelists was not followed up by any organized system in the Synod, and not much in the Presbyteries. About the year 1800 a tide of infidelity and intemperance swept over this country. The writings of Paine, Hume and Voltaire were extensively read by the people, and religious literature and newspapers were not abundant to inform the people and to counteract the so-called "Age of Reason". Consequently the ministers had their hands full to instruct and indoctrinate their charges in the principles of truth and righteousness. There seemed to be no place for evangelists, and besides, the Assembly had charge of all missions with the Presbyteries as auxiliaries, and few men were ordained as evangelists. In 1830 Concord Presbytery ordained Thomas Epsey, and in 1839 Orange Presbytery ordained W. N. Mebane as evangelists, and they did a grand work, but the Synod had none. In 1838 Dr. McPheeters contended "that the Synod as such ought to share in domestic missions." This was, perhaps, the first note sounded for Synodical home missions, but nothing was done. The men of this period were not evangelists, strictly speaking, because the times and conditions of the country and the church seemed to preclude the possibility of many evangelists.

But the men of this period were preëminently pastors and teachers, and many of them able preachers and profound scholars.

The idea these men had of their ordination vows was a lifetime pastorate. It was the Bible idea of a shepherd leading, guiding, teaching, and indoctrinating the people in the word of God and in holy

living, by being one with them in all their joys and sorrows, during a whole lifetime. Long pastorates was the rule, and not the exception. In this old church of Alamance the pastorates of Dr. David Caldwell and Dr. Eli Caruthers covered a period of one hundred years! The son of David, Dr. S. C. Caldwell, spent his whole ministerial life at Sugar Creek, and again his son, Rev. J. M. M. Caldwell, was for a long time in the same pulpit. Drs. McCorkle at Thyatira, Hall at Bethany, Hunter at Steele Creek, McRee at Steele Creek and Centre, Robinson at Poplar Tent, Wilson at Rocky River, and I might mention Paisley, McNair, McMillan, McIntyre, Stanford, Currie, Pickard, Witherspoon and many others who were pastors of long duration. They lived with the people, preached on Sunday, systematically taught or visited and catechized the people during the week, and knew the needs, soul and body of all. It was an intimate and sacred lifetime relation, and it was productive of strong Christian characters, rooted and grounded in the truth.

The present day unrest among ministers, and the change from pastorate to pastorate in rapid succession, would have shocked the church a hundred, or even fifty years ago. I received a letter from a brother some weeks ago who claims to have made an investigation, and he says that there are only eighteen ministers in the Southern Assembly who have been in their present pastorates for twenty-five years or more! What this teaches or portends in comparison with the past, I do not know. Is it the lack of training, or of patience, or of endurance, or what? I do not know, but I do know that our ministerial forefathers studied to be pastors, and as such many people to this day rise up and call them blessed.

And besides being real pastors, many of those I have mentioned were teachers. They were teachers not only of the Bible, but they taught classical schools. Many of them were profound scholars; they knew Hebrew, Greek and Latin, and a great deal more; and all of them knew theology as set forth in the standards of the Presbyterian church. There were no short cuts to the ministry in those days, and while they may not have known *about* so many things as the modern preacher, yet they knew the fundamentals and taught them.

From the time of the Revolutionary War until the opening of the University of North Carolina in 1795, and for years afterwards, there were many classical schools in this State, and practically all of them were manned and taught by Presbyterian ministers. The school of Dr. David Caldwell was famous; it was an academy, a college and a theological seminary all in one. It is said that he generally had fifty or sixty young men under him, and that none ever left him without becoming a Christian, and it has been estimated that at least fifty of his pupils became Presbyterian ministers, and many others occupied the highest positions in the State. And the schools of McCorkle, Samuel Caldwell, the Wilsons, Wallis, Hall, Robinson and others were of high order and of wide reputation. As teachers I might speak of Joseph Caldwell, Elisha Mitchell and James Phillips, of the University of North Carolina, and of Hall Morrison and Samuel Williamson, of Davidson College, and of the excellent teachers of the Grove Academy in the east, and in Orange and

Granville Counties, but enough; it is a fact that wherever a pastorate of any considerable size was established, the next proposition was a school.

Thus it will be seen that the personnel of the ministers who lived during the first two or three decades of the Synod's existence, were preëminently pastors and teachers, and many of them were profound scholars. And I wish to say just here, there were scores of ruling elders in those days who were the equals of the ministers in every respect, except in the preaching function. The defenders of the faith in those days were strong men, they were well equipped men, they were tried and true men, and as such they were the leaders of the people, and they wielded a tremendous influence. As pastors and teachers all the time, Sunday and Monday, they were the moulders and builders of men in mind and thought and character. They inculcated principles and doctrines which have made the sons of North Carolina famous, in peace and in war, in church and in state, all the world over. I believe the proverbial conservatism of the people of North Carolina is largely due this day to the undying influence of these godly men.

But the times and customs have changed. The long pastorate and the old-time classical school are largely things of the past. Today we hear a great deal about education and schools, but it is chiefly the state schools and state education, and alas! the Bible is largely left out of them. Oh, may the present generation emulate many of the characteristics and traits of our Presbyterian forefathers, who believed that the Bible is the foundation of all wholesome knowledge, and the only basis of true liberty and happiness, and of life eternal. All honor and praise to the old-time pastors and teachers.

Without trespassing greatly upon the agreement made between the speakers of this hour, there are two or three other men of whom I wish briefly to speak. I have briefly spoken of Caldwell, Caruthers, and of others who were giants in intellect, great and grand pastors, preachers and teachers in their day, and whose lives have been written in the pages of books and in the hearts of men; but there are others to whom this Synod and the State of North Carolina owe a debt of imperishable memory and gratitude.

One of these men is the Rev. Dr. H. G. Hill, one of the speakers on this celebration occasion. Dr. Hill is one of the most remarkable men of this age. His long and active life as a member of this Synod, his abundant labors in the Gospel, his profound wisdom, his unflagging and progressive zeal, and his great influence along all lines for the uplift of men and the glory of God, have rendered him a conspicuous figure in this Synod for many years. As an ardent advocate, a wise counsellor, a powerful debater, an eloquent speaker, and a faithful pastor, he has had but few equals. And to him, perhaps as much as to any other man, is due the honor and the praise of the origin and success of the great Synodical Home Mission "Movement" in North Carolina. May his bow of strength continue to abide.

In the same class with Dr. Hill, allow me to mention the name of the Rev. Dr. J. B. Shearer, the recognized apostle in the church of the great cause of church and Christian education. The long and useful

life of Dr. Shearer as a preacher and teacher, and especially as an educator of young men, and as an author of many good books, has rendered to the church and to the world a service which in influence for good no man can estimate. The splendid leadership of Dr. Shearer in the great cause of Christian education, in which the Bible shall be paramount, is recognized by all. The influence of his noble life, in intimate relationship with hundreds of choice young men, and of his splendid efforts along other lines, will reach down through unborn generations and produce an abundant harvest to the good of men and the glory of God. All honor to him.

The other man of whom I wish to speak was a son of Alamance Church, the Rev. Calvin Henderson Wiley.

The Synod of North Carolina was only five years old when Dr. Wiley was born, and he was born not far from this spot. In his boyhood he roamed over these hills, and his moral and religious training was received here under Caruthers and others at Alamance Church. In early life he was a lawyer, editor, publisher, and the author of various books and pamphlets. In 1850-2 he was elected to the State legislature and he bent all of his powers and energies in behalf of plans for the education of the people, especially the poorer classes. At that time it is said that one-third of the people of the State could neither read nor write. The efforts of Dr. Wiley and others were successful, and he will forever be known as "the organizer and maker of the public school system of North Carolina". For thirteen years, without cessation, he traveled all over the State, chiefly in a buggy, and gave his time, means and energies to the welfare of the children of the State. During the whole time of the Civil War the schools were never closed, and to this day the children of the State rise up and call him blessed.

In after years Dr. Wiley was ordained as a minister of the Gospel, and he became agent for the American Bible Society, thus continuing unto his dying day in the work he loved, of educating, mentally, morally, and spiritually, the people. Dr. Wiley was a wonderful man. He had a wonderful memory and a wonderful knowledge of men and things. He was a veritable walking encyclopedia of knowledge in his day, and as a man among men he was sociable, generous, noble and true. While the names and memory of many of the men I have mentioned today will never die in this Synod, so the name and memory of Calvin H. Wiley will never die in this State.

All of these great and noble men, "of whom the world was not worthy", though they be dead—all except two—yet they still live and speak, and they will continue to live and speak to generations yet unborn.

“With us their names shall live,  
Through long succeeding years,  
Embalmed with all our hearts can give,  
Our praises and our tears.”