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I.—LITERARY.

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HISTORICAL SKETCH OF UNION THEOLOGICAL  
SEMINARY.

BY PROF. W. W. MOORE.

I. THE BEGINNING, 1812-1823.

The Presbyterian Church in America was composed originally of emigrants from Great Britain and Ireland, and for a number of years the ministers of their various congregations were drawn from beyond the seas. As the church grew, however, and the population of the country increased, the supply thus obtained proved to be inadequate, and the necessity for a native ministry became more and more apparent. Academies and colleges were accordingly established from time to time during the eighteenth century at various places, such as Princeton, Lexington and Hampden-Sidney; and the candidates educated in these institutions received their theological training from the president of the college, when he chanced to be a minister (as was commonly the case), or from other approved divines here and there throughout the country. But not until 1812, the year of our second war with England, did the church establish an institution to be devoted exclusively to theological education. In that year Princeton Seminary was founded, with the Rev. Archibald Alexander (formerly President of Hampden-Sidney College) as its organizer and first professor. In the same memorable year the Synod of Virginia adopted the plan of a Seminary to be located within her bounds, inaugurated measures to raise funds for its sup-



DR. BENJ. M. SMITH.

## BENJAMIN MOSBY SMITH, D. D., LL. D.

REV. WM. S. LACY, D. D.

Dr. Smith was born the 30th of June, 1811, at Montrose, Powhatan County, Virginia, the family seat of his father, of an ancestry honorable and useful. Bereaved of his father at a tender age, he found in his mother a wise and helpful friend and counsellor as well as a loving pious parent. The struggles of the lad for an education, the self denials of those early years, form an interesting preface to the story of a laborious and efficient life, and give promise of the successful career with which the church is familiar. His early instruction was secured at home at the hand of various tutors. His diligence attracted the attention of Rev. Dr. John Holt Rice, who afterwards took the profoundest interest in the young student, a near relative by marriage. He graduated at Hampden-Sidney College with the first honors, and at the age of eighteen took charge of an academy at Milton, N. C., where he taught successfully for two years. Then entering Union Seminary, before completing its course he was chosen Assistant Instructor, serving from April, 1834 to April, 1836. Licensed in April, 1834, and ordained in October, he supplied during this term of instruction a neighboring church. In 1836 and 1837 Dr. Smith travelled abroad, spending his time in special study chiefly of Semitic languages. He served as pastor of the Danville church from 1838 to 1840; then of Tinkling Spring and Waynesboro from 1840 to 1845. He became pastor of the church in Staunton in 1845, continuing until 1854, when he served for a year as Secretary of the Board of Publication in Philadelphia. He was chosen Professor of Oriental Literature in the Union Theological Seminary in 1854, and served until 1889, when owing to the infirmities of advancing age, he was made by the Board of Trustees Professor *Emeritus*, which position he held until his death, having had an unbroken connection with the institution for nearly two score years. For sixteen years of this time he was co-pastor with Rev. Dr. Dabney, of the College Church.

From memoranda written with his own hand, it appears that Dr. Smith had religious impressions more or less profound

and serious in very early life. The prayers and godly example of a devoted mother, the personal interest taken in him by Dr. Rice, Rev. Daniel A. Penick, and others, his love of reading and the reading of such books as Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul" were the various strands in the cords of God's providence that led him to consider the subject of personal salvation; specially the preaching of that safe, wise and eminently useful revivalist, Rev. Dr. Nettleton. His religious experiences were deep, real, profound. His surrender of self was sincere. In that spirited struggle the question of a call to the gospel ministry awakened most earnest thought. His personal ambition, his love of learning, his omnivorous eagerness for reading, his interest in the young and in the enlightened progress of the commonwealth, his "sluggish disposition with his natural love of indolence, self-indulgence and ease" (as phrased by himself in some of his writing), he felt were calls to him *not* to enter the ministry, but devote himself to the cause of education, and the intellectual development and advancement of his fellows. But the urgency of the need, the earnest inward monition, the longing to serve his Master in the way He would choose, and the consciousness that the pleas he used above were arguments to his conscience to come to the higher sense of duty that impelled him, led him to cry out most humbly and sincerely "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel."

Dr. Smith was a man of such many-sided character and achievement that it is difficult to portray him to the world without seeming extravagance of speech. If the view I present seems too fervid, let it be remembered that I am not only a pupil and admirer, but kinsman and friend. His name was one of the earliest I ever knew, he being a cousin of my father, and a constant and lifelong correspondent. His letters were like those of the olden time, "four square" letter cap, rich with thought and stores of reading and interesting of course from personal allusion. I have been often struck with the admirable completeness of the discussion and finish of the composition, and many of those voluminous epistles would command attention and admiration if published just as written. I have often heard my father say, "Why did not Ben Smith send this to the *Central* instead of to me, where the world might read it and not I only." His correspondence was most onerous, and I doubt not every letter, like those written to my father, how-

ever rapidly written and in snatches of time, was weighty and worthy.

He was a wonderfully busy man. He kept in touch with the world's progress, and in quick and loving sympathy with all that affected the church, and the welfare of society. This added to the extensive correspondence he maintained. With almost intuitive wisdom he met unexpected emergencies in the changed conditions of life owing to a great civil war. He was a kind and wise master, when he owned slaves; and he was a kind and wise friend, when the poor slaves sorely needed counsel and aid. He was deeply interested in the young, especially in their education and uplift. Many a student in the Seminary, many a boy in college, many a youth in school, has found in him not only a safe adviser but a ready helper. Remembering his own early struggles and insatiable greed of letters, he was prompt to sympathize with others in like circumstances, and he was greatly instrumental in quickening and guiding this thirst for an education. Wherever he lived, specially in his earlier ministry, his influence in this direction was most marked and salutary, and the impress of that influence is felt still. While pastor at Tinkling Spring and Waynesboro he taught a classical school, by means of which such names were added to letters and usefulness as the Massies, the Fishburnes, the Craigs and others. Even a youth under the age of manhood he taught at Milton, N. C., and during this period of service visited the University of N. C., the Bingham School and other noted teachers, and was instrumental in organizing an educational society—one of the first in the south. In later life, burdened with other duties, he became superintendent of public instruction for the County of Prince Edward, the duties of which office crowded with annoying details he discharged with great energy and acceptance. In all matters of public policy he was broad, liberal-minded, judicious and practical.

Dr. Smith was likewise busy with his pen. He wrote a great deal for the papers, and contributed valuable articles to the reviews. Besides several printed addresses and sermons of a more or less temporary interest, he was the author of a "Commentary on Psalms and Proverbs," an "Introduction to the Poetical Books of the Old Testament," (published both in Europe and America), a prize essay issued by the Presbyterian Board of Publication, entitled "Family Religion," "Ques-

tions on the Gospel" (for Sunday Schools and Bible Classes), and he was the compiler of the General Catalogue of Union Seminary published in 1884, a work that shows in advanced age the same laborious fidelity and painstaking attention to details that ever characterized him, involving a great correspondence, patience and industry.

For the greater part of his life Dr. Smith was Professor of Oriental Literature, and a student and teacher of the Sacred Scriptures in their original tongues. Acquisition was to him so easy and the "linguistic instinct," as Hadley terms it, so well developed, that he did not always seem to appreciate the difficulties in the way of the average student of divinity, in the mastery of Hebrew and Chaldee. The dress was familiar to him and the thought was the object of interest. He looked beyond the vehicle to the truth conveyed. Yet he was ever quick to recognize conscientious fidelity or special aptitudes for languages, and he was considerate of the dull plodder who wrought faithfully. He was often severe on the shirker and the idle. I have been deeply impressed with his resourcefulness, his readiness, his stores of learning on which he could draw at will. I have been also even more deeply impressed with his reverent handling of the Word of God, his devout love of the sacred text, his profound recognition of it as God's word to guilty man, "the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him." Familiarity with the volume itself, the almost constant use of it in study, in devotion, in teaching others, the dissection of the whole into its parts, and the minute examination of its details, did not in any sense lessen that reverential awe and love with which the *Book* was handled. He would at times relieve the monotony of the routine of the class-room by comments full of salt and sapidity. He loved Matthew Henry, and his quaint suggestiveness. I remember once a fellow student (while we were in the study of the gospels) asked him, "Doctor, what do you think would have become of Peter if he had died just after he had denied his Lord?" The Doctor's brief and sufficient answer was: "But he didn't die." His practical wisdom was often illustrated. On one occasion, a student bewailing his indolence and failure in his studies asked the professor for advice, and his "prescription" was: "Ten grains of common sense, five grains of repentance, five grains of application or diligence—mix well and take with conscientiousness and prayer." His interest in

the welfare of the Seminary was intelligent and profound. His energy and foresight, his personal solicitation and eminent wisdom retrieved its fortunes when imperiled, secured for it friends and timely aid in its need, and established it on a firm foundation. For this he deserves to be held in everlasting remembrance.

Perhaps Dr. Smith is better known and more readily recalled as a public speaker. He was a man of extraordinary fluency. His mind was fertile, his diction was felicitous, his delivery simple and forceful. As was said of one of the greatest of English orators, Charles James Fox, I believe, he thought well on his legs and grew better and stronger to the end. Hence as a debater he was almost unrivalled. His set orations were not apt to be so impressive as addresses in some measure off hand—when stimulated by the theme or the audience he would speak with wonderful facility and power. His oratory reminded me thus of a mighty river, flowing with broad expanse, without chafing or unseemingly impetuosity, smooth, clear, majestic, resistless. His preaching was always instructive, often effective, and at times grand. He preached the rich, strong truth of the gospel, meaty, enriching, supporting. He loved the Calvinistic system, the doctrines of grace, and the hymns that embalmed them. Watts was his favorite hymnologist, (and he invariably used a Psalm in public devotion) and Newton's deep-felt experiences and Cowper's songs of faith and submission were also very dear to him. I remember at the General Assembly in New Orleans, in 1877, Dr. Smith as the Moderator of the preceding assembly preached the opening sermon on "The Holy Spirit revealing Christ to the Believer," which made a profound impression. Scarcely less profound was the impression produced by his reading with faultless emphasis and deep feeling (the truest elocution) Newton's hymn, "In evil long I took delight." I remember also at a meeting of the Synod of North Carolina, held in Statesville, N. C., many years ago he addressed a congregation on Education—already weary with a long and animated discussion on another subject which enlisted absorbed attention. The theme was not one that awakened interest, or as much at least as other themes before the body, and it was at the heels of a long *sedesunt*. Dr. Smith first had the vast assembly to rise and sing several stanzas of "All hail the power of Jesus Name," and then spoke for an hour with the ease and mastery

so characteristic of him, so that everyone was charmed and edified. It always seemed to me a wonderful triumph. It ought to be added to this estimate of Dr. Smith as a public speaker, that one of the charms of his speaking was the rhetorical completeness of each sentence. This might be expected in prepared discourses whether for the pulpit or the platform. But it was noticeably true of any speech he made, however unexpectedly it was made. He would speak in smooth and beautiful English, in rolling and sonorous periods, even though he had no opportunity for preparation.

No sketch of Dr. Smith would be complete without drawing aside the veil of privacy and seeing him in his home. Respecting the sanctities of home, of his happy home especially, I must be permitted to say that it was here he was "at his best." Delightful social intercourse, refined by godly living, was the charm of that sweet and happy home. As host, as kinsman, as husband and father, as friend, as man, the simple and noble excellences of his character were made manifest. He was domestic in his tastes. He busied himself in his home-life. He couldn't but be busy, wherever he was. The discouraged student found welcome and cheer. How dear to memory the sacred hours spent there, in song and social converse, in christian intercourse and sympathy, and especially in those precious seasons of family devotion!

Dr. Smith was most happily married to Miss Mary Moore Morrison, (a daughter of Rev. James Morrison, of New Providence, a grand-daughter of Rev. Samuel Brown and Mary Moore, the captive of Abb's Valley), who survives him. He lost a son of great promise, Josiah Morrison Smith, who died in 1868. His other children were Mrs. Flournoy, wife of Rev. Dr. Parke P. Flournoy, of Bethesda, Maryland; Mrs. Rosebro, wife of Rev. Dr. J. W. Rosebro, of Petersburg, Va.; Mrs. Hogue, wife of Professor Addison Hogue, of Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Va.; Mrs. Preston, widow of Rev. Dr. John A. Preston, of Charlotte, N. C.; Dr. B. M. Smith, of Davis, West Virginia, and Mrs. McKelway, wife of Rev. A. J. McKelway, of Charlotte, N. C. They are all still living except Mrs. Flournoy who died last year. Dr. Smith died at the home of his son-in-law, Dr. Rosebro, Petersburg, Va., at the ripe age of eighty-one years and six and a half months. Venerable for his years, abilities, attainments and great usefulness, his death removed a conspicuous and familiar figure from the history of our church.