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HISTORICAL SKETCH
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By

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Columbia Theological Seminary

A HISTORICAL SKETCH*

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1898-1925

FOUNDING THE SEMINARY

The Hopewell Presbytery in Georgia is ascribed the honor of being the first to suggest the founding of a Theological Seminary. In 1817 it appointed a committee to draw up a plan for such a school. This committee failed to make a report, whereupon another committee was appointed which reported in 1819. The Presbytery proceeded to the selection of a location. This proved the rock on which the incipient enterprise was wrecked. Two locations, Athens, Georgia, and Winnsboro, South Carolina, were bidders. At Athens was the State University, to the Presidency of which Moses Waddell, a distinguished educator, the "father of Classical Education for all North Georgia and Upper South Carolina," had just been called. At Winnsboro was Mount Zion College, presided over by another eminent educator, Dr. T. H. McCaule. Neither the University nor Mount Zion College was distinctly a Presbyterian school, and it was believed that a Theological Seminary would profit much by being located where their influence would be felt, or where the students could pass at once from their preparatory studies to their professional training. As the Seminary could not be located at both places, the rivalry killed the undertaking. The next effort was put forth by the Presbytery of South Carolina. It appointed a committee in 1824 to draft the constitution of the school which should be

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called "The Classical, Scientific and Theological Institution of the South." This was an ambitious project, proposing to take the callow youth from the log school house and turn him out a scholarly preacher. It was decided to plant the institution on a site given for the purpose two and one-fourth miles from the village of Pendleton. Before the plan matured it was deemed best to give it over to the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, but with the stipulation that the plant should be built on the site near Pendleton. The Synod wisely took time to give the matter thorough consideration with the result that it pruned away the classical and scientific part and selected Columbia as the permanent site for the revised and abridged institution.

It was not till December 15, 1828, that the Synod resolved to put the Seminary into immediate operation. To this end it elected Rev. Thomas Goulding Professor of Theology, with the privilege of retaining his pastoral charge of the Church of Lexington, Oglethorpe County, Georgia. During the following year there were five students under his care, pursuing merely preparatory studies.

REMOVAL TO COLUMBIA

Early in January, 1830, Dr. Goulding, with his few students, moved to Columbia and was domiciled in the parsonage of the Presbyterian Church procured for his use. The next year he moved into the buildings occupying the present site of the Seminary. They were not then what they are now. The center building is the same, but it was then flanked by two small buildings, which have given way to the two commodious dormitories known as Simons and Law Halls.

That same year, 1831, Dr. George Howe was elected Professor of Biblical Literature, and the first class began the prescribed course of theological studies. The curriculum was modeled after Andover and Princeton. Two years later Rev. Aaron W. Leland was elected to the Chair of Christian Theology, Dr. Goulding having been transplanted to that of Ecclesiastical History and Polity.

EARLY DAYS

Thus the young institution was fully and ably manned. In that early day three professors constituted an elaborate faculty. Those who drew the plan of Princeton Seminary said in Article 3, Section 1, "The number of Professors in the Seminary shall be increased or diminished as the Assembly may, from time to time, direct. But when the Seminary shall be completely organized, there shall be not less than three professors; one of Didactic and Polemic Theology; one of Oriental and Biblical Literature; and one of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government." Evidently when our first Seminary was founded, the one destined to furnish a model for those that came after, it was thought that three professors would be sufficient to meet the demands of a fully equipped institution. As a matter of fact, Princeton had only two professors for the first nine years of its existence, Archibald Alexander and Samuel Miller. Then Charles Hodge was added, and it was eleven years more before the faculty was increased to four. When, therefore, we note that Columbia had three professors when only three years old, we are tempted to say that she sprang into life full grown like Minerva from the head of Jupiter.

A GOOD BEGINNING

There is a saying that "a good beginning is half-done." Columbia had a good beginning. Her first three professors were men of no ordinary type. Thomas Goulding was born in Liberty County, Georgia, March 14, 1786. He died in Columbus, Georgia, June 21, 1848. It is recorded that at the time of his death he was the oldest of fifteen Presbyterian ministers from one Church, and that a Congregational Church. When about eighteen years of age he went to New Haven to enter Yale College, but finding the "fugging system" in vogue, a system introduced from Europe, he turned away in disgust. And so it happened that the man to whom the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia entrusted the launching of their Seminary never had the benefit of either a College or a Theological Seminary. He pursued his studies in private and the success

attending his efforts showed the mettle of the man. He attained distinction in more than one department of learning. He began the study of law, but before entering into the practice of his profession God graciously converted him. At once he showed an active interest in religious work. A remarkable coincidence had much to do in determining his future course. Two friends, without collusion, each living at a distance, visited him the same day to call his attention to the Gospel Ministry. He was ordained a preacher of the Gospel by the Presbytery of Harmony at Augusta, Georgia, in 1813. He humorously said of himself that he was the "first native of Georgia who had become a Presbyterian preacher since the foundation of the world."

THOMAS GOULDING

Dr. Thomas Goulding is entitled to the gratitude of the boys of all coming generations for being the father of Francis Goulding, author of the "Young Marooners"—a book rivalling "Robinson Crusoe" in its interest for boys.

After giving a few years of efficient service to the Seminary, Dr. Goulding resigned his professorship and took charge of the Church of Columbus, Georgia. He labored in his pastoral charge for thirteen years with great success. Within one short hour after preaching his last sermon he was summoned to hear the Master's benediction: "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

GEORGE HOWE

Dr. George Howe was a native of Massachusetts. He was educated at Middleburg College and Andover Seminary. Shortly after graduating he came South for his health, stopping at Charleston, South Carolina. This was in December, 1830. That same month the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia met. Dr. Goulding wrote to the Synod asking for a Professor of Greek and Hebrew. Two members of the Synod, Rev. Joseph C. Styles and Rev. Aaron Foster, had been class-mates

of Dr. Howe in Andover. They brought him to the attention of Synod and commended him so warmly that Synod at once elected him to the Chair of Biblical Literature. Accepting the call, Dr. Howe entered on a service for the Seminary that lasted fifty-two years and three months. This long connection with Columbia Seminary was not because he had no inducements to go elsewhere. It is a matter of record that he had calls to important Churches; and in 1836, when he was but thirty-four years old, he had a call from the Board of Directors of Union Seminary, New York, to the Chair of Sacred Literature in that institution. The call was urged on him in most flattering terms. His reason for declining should endear his memory to us. He wrote: "WHEN I ACCEPTED THE PROFESSORSHIP WHICH I HOLD IT WAS WITH THE HOPE THAT I MIGHT BE THE MEANS OF BUILDING UP THE WASTES, AND EXTENDING THE BORDERS OF OUR SOUTHERN ZION. THIS MOTIVE STILL HOLDS ME HERE. THOUGH OUR INSTITUTION MUST BE A SMALL ONE THROUGH THE PRESENT GENERATION AND YOURS WILL BE LARGE, IT IS IMPORTANT, IT IS NECESSARY, WHATEVER THE FATE OF OUR BELOVED COUNTRY, THAT THIS SEMINARY SHOULD LIVE. IF I LEAVE IT AT THE PRESENT JUNCTURE, ITS CONTINUANCE IS EXCEEDINGLY DOUBTFUL. IF I REMAIN, THOUGH THE FIELD OF MY EFFORT MUST BE SMALL, AND I MUST LIVE IN OBSCURITY, WE MAY YET TRANSMIT TO THE MEN OF THIS NEXT GENERATION AN INSTITUTION WHICH WILL BLESS THEM AND THE WORLD." Bear in mind that this was a man of Northern birth and rearing who was willing to sacrifice most flattering prospects of worldly advancement, to move in a small sphere and lead a life of obscurity for the sake of a young and struggling institution, rather than endanger its perpetuity. All who love Columbia Seminary should hold in lasting reverence the name of this noble servant of God. His modesty threw a veil over his great gifts, his extensive learning and his varied attainments, so that only his most intimate friends prized him at his full value.

AARON W. LELAND

Dr. Aaron W. Leland was also a native of Massachusetts. He graduated from Williams College in 1808 and shortly after moved to Charleston, South Carolina, where he engaged in teaching. He was ordained to the ministry in 1812, and the succeeding year was called to the pastorate of the First Presbyterian Church in Charleston. At the early age of twenty-eight he was honored with the degree of Doctor of Divinity by the South Carolina College. He was called to the Chair of Theology in Columbia Seminary in 1833 and served the Seminary with unflagging zeal and to the eminent satisfaction of his friends for thirty years. He was magnificently endowed with natural gifts, both of body and mind. His vigorous powers of thought, his vivid imagination, his fervid emotional nature, his splendid voice and majestic form combined to place him in the front ranks of pulpit orators. In addition to the service which Dr. Leland rendered the Seminary in the class-room, he did much to put it on a solid financial basis.

A NOBLE SUCCESSION

This illustrious trio was the beginning of a noble succession. We can do no more than call the roll. We need do no more than call the roll; for the names of this brilliant galaxy will bring before our minds all that signifies and adorns human nature, and makes genius, enriched by divine grace, worthy of our admiration and esteem. Our hearts may well bow in reverence as we pronounce names of Charles Colcock Jones, Benjamin M. Palmer, James Woodrow, William S. Plumer, Joseph R. Wilson, and John L. Girardeau.

A LASTING IMPRESSION

It is not surprising that a Seminary, blessed with such an army of consecrated talent, should have made a powerful and permanent impression on the Church. Yet it may surprise us to learn how deep and determining was its impress on our own Southern Presbyterian Church. In the providence of God, the

men connected with this institution were so placed as to make their influence count for most. Our first General Assembly met in Augusta, Georgia, on the 4th of December, 1861. The men of Columbia were there in positions of acknowledged leadership. Benjamin M. Palmer was Moderator, and in his sermon on that occasion he lifted into supreme prominence the sole Headship of Christ over His Church, and branded as an insufferable offense against our Divine King any attempt to pledge his loyalty to an earthly potentate, or to make His cause and Kingdom subsidiary to any political party or purpose. James H. Thornwell, whose name shines with a lustre all its own, gave to the Church its Magna Charta in the notable state paper sent forth by that Assembly to all the Churches of Jesus Christ throughout the world, giving the reasons for our existence as an independent body. The letter on the Religious Institution of the Colored People issued by the Assembly was the masterly production of Charles Colcock Jones. The man who shaped the policy of the Church in relation to Foreign Missions, and to whom the conduct of this vital cause was entrusted, was John Leighton Wilson. The Book of Church Order was written within the walls of Columbia Seminary by a committee of which John B. Adger was the Chairman, and to which he was the chief contributor. Thus all that is distinctive in our Church was stamped upon it in the plastic period of its infancy by the great lights of Columbia Seminary.

THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

So far we have spoken of the intellectual force of those who in the past guided the destinies of the Seminary. More important to the schools of the prophets than even intellectual wealth is spiritual atmosphere. Perhaps there is no better test of spiritual atmosphere than active interest in Missions, Home and Foreign. Judged by this test Columbia Seminary had made a record for which we may well be thankful. Dr. Charles Colcock Jones, than whom Georgia has never given to the world a finer or more saintly man, was twice professor in the Seminary, and twice gave up his Chair to serve as a Mis-

sionary to the negroes. Having an ample fortune he asked no pay but the privilege of pouring out his consecrated life to bless and brighten the lives of the humble slaves. Of the same spirit was John L. Girardeau. Rich in all the gifts of intellect, of heart, of imagination, that go to make up the consummate orator, able to kindle the most cultured audiences into enthusiastic admiration, he laid these rare and precious gifts on the altar of service to the most ignorant and degraded class among us. Charles A. Stillman, an honored alumnus of this Seminary, built a monument in Stillman Institute that will witness to coming generations to his devotion to the spiritual interests of the colored people.

GO YE THEREFORE

The foreign field was not without a representative in the faculty. Dr. John B. Adger was for many years a distinguished Missionary in Syria: and after becoming a professor in the Seminary he did much to impart a missionary spirit to the student body. The first class of six to graduate furnished three missionaries to heathen lands. One of these was John Leighton Wilson, ranking among the great missionaries of modern times. His was a massive, statesman-like mind, capable of dealing with great problems and of influencing men of commanding influence. A pamphlet of his falling into the hands of Lord Palmerston, England's Prime Minister, decided England's policy touching the suppression of the African slave trade. His mantle fell on Hampden C. DuBose, the author of his biography. Perhaps the greatest and most beneficent reform that has been wrought in modern days was the suppression of the opium traffic in China; and the leader of that splendid reform was our own Dr. DuBose.

In furnishing secretaries for the Committees of both Home and Foreign Missions, Columbia Seminary has done a notable part. As already indicated, John Leighton Wilson not only outlined the policy of our Church in the beginning but continued for many years to guide and develop the work. In the Home land the Mission work of our Church has been largely

under the guiding and nourishing hand of the alumni of Columbia Seminary. For more than twenty years Rev. John N. Craig, D.D., gave to this work faithful and efficient service. At his death he was succeeded by Dr. S. L. Morris, whose wise and energetic administration has marked a new and striking era in this vastly important and ever expanding department of the King's business. He has already gone considerably beyond twenty years of service, and the prayer of the Church is that the day may still be far distant when it will be necessary to choose his successor.

We have touched on only one or two phases of the Seminary's history, but enough has been said to show that the hope which led Dr. Howe to sacrifice personal interest for the sake of the youthful institution has had ample fulfillment.

A RICH HERITAGE NOT FORGOTTEN

A brief word about the present status and future prospects of the Seminary. Modesty forbids our paying a just tribute to the men who compose the present Faculty. Fortunately they can speak for themselves. It is enough that they enjoy the full confidence of the Church. They can be trusted to conserve and nourish and bring into larger fruitfulness the precious interests entrusted to them. They are forward looking men, anxious to see the leadings of God's providence and willing to follow it. But they are also backward looking men. Behind them are the authoritative voices to which their ears are ever attentive; behind them are the fathers who wrought mightily for God, and who left a rich heritage of faith and achievement that is not to be forgotten. Looking both forward and backward they see nothing to shake their belief in the essential soundness of the distinctive principles which gave birth to our Church and for which it has hitherto stood.

What about the future? We are fully persuaded that the Seminary's best days lie in that direction. In reviewing the past certain episodes of a painful nature have been omitted. There were disruptions in the faculty. These spread to the constituency. The Seminary became a storm center, and so

continued for some years. Its fortunes declined, and it seemed for a while as if its days were numbered. But the storm has passed, and the clouds have rolled away. The sun of prosperity is again shining. The old alumni, once alienated, have returned to their allegiance. New alumni in ever enlarging numbers already grown to a considerable army, are spreading throughout the Church, and carrying with them a loyal and enthusiastic attachment for their Alma Mater.

Our horizon is widening. When the Seminary was founded it took South Carolina and Georgia both to form one Synod, and that at its best was not a large Synod, seventy-three ministers, eleven licentiates, one hundred and twenty-eight Churches, and eight thousand five hundred and sixty communicants. It contained five Presbyteries, two in Georgia and three in South Carolina. Now there are four Synods owning and controlling the Seminary, and these contain a communicant roll of more than ninety thousand. Moreover, we are reaching out after others, with well grounded hopes of a still further enlarged constituency. A sober vision sees great things in the near future. The golden age lies there. The dawn of that age is already brightening into day.

PROPHECY COMING TRUE

RICHARD T. GILLESPIE, *President*

Plans are now in progress for the removal of Columbia Seminary from Columbia, S. C., to Atlanta, Ga. In the fall of 1924, the four controlling Synods, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, voted for the removal, provided a suitable site in, or near, Atlanta could be secured, and a fund of FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS, half for a building fund and half for endowment, be raised in Georgia. The campaign is nearing its close with every assurance of success.

Within a few weeks after the decision to remove Columbia Seminary to Atlanta, it was announced that the Synod of Mississippi voted to join her sister Synods of the Gulf States in developing here in the Southeast a seminary adequately equipped and supported for the greater service which now is required of

the Seminary of this fruitful and growing section of the South. The addition of Mississippi to Columbia's territory greatly increases her sphere of influence and adds much strength to her constituency.

When the completion of the Georgia campaign is announced, a building program will begin, the first unit of which will be completed by the fall of 1927, when the faculty and students will assemble to begin class work in the new home of the Seminary.

The celebration of the Centennial will take place in 1928, and thus will begin, under most favorable circumstances, the second century of an honorable and useful service.

A CHALLENGE!

COLUMBIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IS THE
NATURAL AND OFFICIALLY ACCEPTED SEMI-
NARY OF FIVE SYNODS OF THE SOUTHERN
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

ALABAMA

FLORIDA

GEORGIA

MISSISSIPPI

SOUTH CAROLINA

COLUMBIA'S TERRITORY EMBRACES

207 CANDIDATES

613 MINISTERS

1,172 CHURCHES

133,015 CHURCH MEMBERS

247,785 SQUARE MILES

9,685,558 POPULATION (1920)

Make Columbia Strong.