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# Union Theological Seminary in Virginia

## Centennial Celebration

OCTOBER THIRTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH,  
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND TWELVE.



RICHMOND, VIRGINIA  
1912.

## UNION SEMINARY IN FOREIGN MISSIONS.

BY THE REV. JAMES I. VANCE, D. D., OF NASHVILLE, TENN.

The peril of theological seminaries is popularly supposed to be dead orthodoxy. Union Theological Seminary has never seemed to be in any peril of such a peril. It has been orthodox always; but it has always been something more than orthodox. It has been a seat of spiritual power. Its atmosphere has been saturated with devotion, and its cloisters have been hallowed by the prayers of men who felt upon them the spell of an unseen world, and to whom prayer was a great reality.

If I were asked to name in a word what I regard as the dominant characteristic of this venerable school of the prophets, I would not say orthodoxy or scholarship or methods, although the Seminary has never been tardy in any of these; but I would say spirituality. The dominant and persuasive spiritual atmosphere of the institution may be traced under God, it seems to me, to two chief causes.

First, there is the fact that its founder was a man of deep personal piety, whose spiritual vision was both broad and clear. In a letter written from New York to his wife in 1827, Dr. John Holt Rice sent this message to the students in the Seminary:

"Give my love to the young men, and tell them from me in the name of God that the salvation of souls depends much on their making high attainments in holiness, and entering fully into the meaning of God's word. \* \* \* O, that God may make our students holy men! \* \* \* They must never let their zeal for active service run away with their private devotion." It was this kind of personality which stamped itself on the institution at its birth, and the Seminary has been greatly blessed in the fact that the men from Dr. Rice's day to this, who have taught in Union, have been men of his stamp, spiritual leaders in whose character and work private devotion was the shekinah of public duty.

The second explanation of the virile and abiding spirituality of this theological school is closely connected with the first, and as I shall hope to show you later, was strikingly so connected in the life of Dr. Rice. It is the fact that Union has always been a missionary Seminary. Its students have been taught from the first that Christianity is a world religion, that Christ's dream was world conquest, that Christian obligation is racial, and that the church itself is a missionary society to carry out the Saviour's command: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."

In the brief time allotted to this address, I can call your attention to only a few of the things which mark the history of Union Seminary in Foreign Missions.

#### CURRICULUM OF MISSIONS.

And first I would mention a contribution which is pre-eminently characteristic of the work done in Union, but which does not obtrude itself, and which in the nature of the case can get no attention from statisticians, but which in reality is fundamental and far-reaching. The missionary conception of Christianity has been taught in, under, and with everything that has been taught. The Bible is the greatest missionary text-book in the world, and the men who have taught in Union, whether their speciality was Hebrew, Theology, Church History, or what not, have taught across and through their course that Christianity is a religion which climaxes itself in a world-summons to service.

The result has been that the students who passed under such tuition as a rule have attacked the problems of their holy calling with a world-outlook. They have not been merely men of the cloister. They have not been dogmatists and ritualists, but apostles and evangelists of the kingdom.

#### SEMINARY MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES.

The Seminary's interest in missions has shown itself, in the emphasis laid upon that cause, in the Seminary's activities.



**RICHMOND HALL.**

Is it not significant that here in 1818, nineteen years before the organization of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, there was organized among the students the Society of Missionary Inquiry; that is, before the church for whose ministerial work the Seminary was training men had a Foreign Missionary work, the Seminary itself had a society for missionary study, in which the men who were to be the future leaders of the church were charging home to their own hearts the needs of the non-Christian world and their own missionary obligation?

How much this pioneer missionary society of the Seminary had to do in marshalling the forces and shaping the policies and ushering in the day when at last the church adopted its missionary platform, we cannot say; but that it must have been one of the most potent influences to that end goes without the saying.

Union was the very first of all our seminaries to introduce into its curriculum a separate course on Foreign Missions, and its student body has been represented from the first in the great inter-church, as well as denominational missionary conferences and conventions.

#### SECRETARIES AND HOME ADMINISTRATION.

It is at least suggestive to call attention to the fact that the three chief Foreign Missionary Secretaries of our Church, Dr. H. M. Houston, Dr. S. H. Chester, and Dr. E. W. Smith, are all Union men, and that on the Executive Committee from the beginning the Seminary has been ably represented. The leadership of these men has been so sane, so spiritual, so Scriptural, that our Church stands today in the very forefront of the great missionary agencies of the world. Again and again, in grave interdenominational crises and perplexing situations on the mission fields, has it been the privilege of our Church, through these men, to speak the word that has saved the day, and led the forces out into the light.

#### MISSIONARY PASTORS.

It is not a small contribution which the Seminary has made

to the Foreign Missionary cause in giving to the Church a magnificent line of missionary pastors. Indeed, there is one of the strategic points in the world campaign. Back of our vast missionary propagandum today, with annual contributions of over a half million dollars, with 321 missionaries laboring on four continents in seven countries in ten missions, carrying on an extensive medical, evangelistic, and educational work, is a Church that believes in missions.

The strength of the Foreign Missionary cause in the Southern Presbyterian Church on the human side is located, not in the Executive Committee and its administration, fine and efficient as we know that to be; nor yet in the piety and zeal of our missionaries themselves, superb and devoted as we know them to be; but pre-eminently in the steadfast and increasing loyalty of the rank and file of the membership of the church to the cause for which the Redeemer gave his life; and that loyalty is there in the rank and file of the Church largely as a result of the steady and persistent preaching and the inspiring and enthusiastic leadership of missionary pastors. The men who have gone into the pastorate from this old Seminary have for the most part gone with the supreme conviction that the churches they served were simply missionary societies.

It is the farthest from my intention to intimate that other seminaries have failed to do the same; but when one recalls the fact that this divinity school has educated some 1,500 ministers of the Gospel, that three-fourths of all the pastors in the Synod of Virginia, three-fifths in the Synod of North Carolina, as well as a large proportion in all other Synods, are from its alumni, it becomes evident that the Seminary has had a potent and widespread influence for missions in the kind of men it has trained and sent into the pastorate.

#### MISSIONARY LITERATURE.

I have endeavored to get some idea of the contribution Union has made through its alumni to missionary literature. My researches of necessity have been most meagre, but they have gone far enough to discover that Union men have made a distinct

contribution to the missionary literature of the church. Reference can be made but to a few of these.

Missionary authorship showed itself at the very outstart of the Seminary's existence in a book on "The Influence of Missions on Literature and Civilization," by Isaac Cochran, who was a member of the Society of Missionary Inquiry, in 1820. William Spottswood White, of the class of 1826, wrote "The African Preacher," and Austin Hazen Wright of the class of 1836 translated the Psalms and the New Testament into Syriac. There are men whose literary work marked an epoch in the effort to Christianize certain nations. Who can measure the effect of the work of such a man as the scholarly John Wright Davis of the class of 1870, who, in addition to his duties as President and Professor of the Theological Seminary at Nanking, wrote a commentary on the Gospels and Acts in Soochow Colloquial, a hymn book with annotations in the Mandarin dialect, a political geography in Chinese, and who was a member of the Committee of Translation of the New Testament into Chinese? Or of Henry McKee Woods of the class of 1882, a member of the Mandarin Revision Committee to translate the New Testament, and the author of "A Christian Commentary on the Chinese Classics"? Or of Samuel Rhea Gammon of the class of 1887, who has not only conducted an extensive evangelistic and educational work in Brazil, founding schools and churches, and powerfully influencing the life of the new Republic, but who has written a commentary on the Epistles of Jude and Peter? Or of William Davis Reynolds, who has touched the life of a nation in his translation of the Bible into Korean?

Time fails me to speak of the literary work of Thornton Sampson and Bryan Grinnan and Absalom Sydenstricker and Gauss and P. F. Price and Walter Buchanan and Hugh White and many others, all of whom have tremendously served the foreign missionary cause with their pens, and all of which is a part of the story of Union Seminary in Foreign Missions.

#### MISSIONARIES.

Perhaps, however, the fact which banks largest on the hori-



zon, and which appeals most strongly to the popular mind, is the number of Union Seminary men who have actually enlisted and gone out as missionaries to the foreign field. One of the international secretaries of the Student Volunteer Movement declares that the number of graduates from Union going into missionary work is without a precedent in his observation of theological seminaries. Half of all the ordained missionaries of the Southern Presbyterian Church have come from Union. Forty-four per cent. of our ordained missionaries in China were trained in Union Seminary, thirty per cent. of those in Korea, forty-six per cent. in Japan, fifty per cent. in Brazil, sixty per cent. in Cuba, sixty-seven per cent. in Mexico, and seventy-seven per cent. in Africa. More than one hundred, more than a man for every year of its existence, represents this ancient school of the prophets in that vanguard of the sacramental host whose life is on the hot edge of the firing line, and who constitute the heroic element of our Christianity.

There have been certain periods in the Seminary's history when enthusiasm for missions manifested itself to an unusual degree. In addition to the phenomenal interest which characterized the early life of the institution, and manifested itself in the organization of a society among the students for missionary study and inquiry, before ever the Church had an organized mission work, a society that has maintained an unbroken existence ever since, there have been periods in the Seminary's life when the interest in Foreign Missions became literally a passion.

It must have been so in 1866, the year which gave Houston to China, and Lane and Morton to Brazil, and Leyburn to Greece. It must have been so again two decades later, in 1886 and 1887, the years which gave Brown and Fulton and Cumming to Japan, the brilliant and devoted Lapsley to Africa, Gammon to South America, and James Graham and P. F. Price to China. It was pre-eminently so in the years 1901-1903, which furnished no fewer than ten recruits to the foreign field, among whom were Lacey Moffett and Warren Stuart, whose clarion call to the Church at home in connection with the Forward Movement summoned us to a new missionary era.

In the roll call of the Seminary's recruits to the mission field

there are some who having already answered to the last roll, have left behind them a challenge which continues to summon others to the high and holy work which fell like an unfinished task from their dying hands.

There is Daniel Lindley of the class of 1829, who for thirty-five years labored among the Zulus of South Africa, and who not only brought hundreds of these people to know the Saviour, but under whose ministry the late President of the Transvaal Republic, Paul Kruger, was converted. Of the saintly Lindley the Boers, after three quarters of a century, say if there be a human name that warms the heart of a Natal Teck Boer, it is the ever-to-be-remembered name of Daniel Lindley!

I am thinking, too, of James E. Bear, my own classmate in the Seminary, with a spirit so gentle and piety so genuine that to know him was to love him; who went to China, and for nineteen years gave all that was in him to help make China Christian, and whose dust sleeps in the soil of the land for which he gave his life.

I am thinking, too, of the gifted William M. Junkin, who gave up his life, so rich in powers and promise, in its splendid morning, for Korea, who went out supported by the gifts and followed by the prayers of the people of the old First Church of Norfolk, of which it was my privilege and honor at the time to be pastor. I am thinking of the sunrise prayer meeting which the church held on the wharf by the seaside the morning he and his young wife sailed away. After reading the story from the Acts of the Apostles of the farewell scene between Paul and the Ephesian elders by the seashore, we, too, bowed in prayer, and commended our missionary to the care of God, and he sailed away to die for his cause.

By his side there comes before our vision that other son of the old mother, C. C. Owen, who, with Junkin, died fighting for Christ and Korea.

Then there is Dr. Graybill, the apostle to Mexico, and, in Brazil, Dabney and Lane and Boyle and Morton and Rodriguez and Armstrong, men of whom the world was not worthy. I shall never forget the fiery, impassioned plea of Dr. Lane for the neglected continent. So aflame was his soul with zeal for his cause,

and so eloquent was his advocacy of the claims of the land of his adoption, that not only our own church, but sister denominations, caught the vision and sent their sons to fight for Christ under the Southern cross.

And then like a morning star on the edge of the shadows of a long night, but itself harbinger of the morning, is the figure of the devoted and courageous Samuel N. Lapsley, who went with his black brother, Shepherd, a thousand miles into the heart of Africa, and there in the tangled wilderness to neglected tribes of savage people on the banks of the Congo founded the Luebo Mission, where miracles of grace and marvels of heroism have been wrought, and where has been gathered perhaps the largest congregation of professing Christians worshipping God under one roof to be found in the wide earth. There, after his brief term of service, Lapsley fell at his post. His body sleeps under Afric's suns, beneath a little mound of Afric's earth at Underhill; but his conquerless spirit has suffused with deathless enthusiasm other lofty spirits, who have said: "We will live, and if God wills it, we, too, will die that night may change to light in darkest Africa."

Were there time I should like to speak of the splendid initiative of the sons of Union on mission fields, of the creative work they have done in founding missions, of their astute statesmanship in the development of missionary institutions, and of their sane and Christian handling of difficult missionary problems. I should like, too, to speak of that thrilling incident which climaxed the recent Laymen's Missionary Convention in Chattanooga, when little Motte Martin from a bed of sickness stood up before that great throng of five thousand people, and for just ten minutes put his soul into his cry for Africa, until twenty-six young men and women came to the platform, saying: "Send us," and nearly fifty thousand dollars was pledged almost in less time than it takes to tell it, to send them.

#### DR. RICE'S OVERTURE.

But I must hasten on to name in closing what in some respects is the most signal, significant, and far-reaching single contribu-

tion the Seminary in its long and fruitful century of service has rendered to the Foreign Missionary cause. This takes us back to the beginning, and summons us once more into the presence of the memory of the saintly and commanding figure of the founder.

No doubt there were other voices in that day pleading that the Presbyterian Church in America adopt a missionary platform, but it remained for Dr. Rice to lead the way. From his death-bed he dictated and forwarded to Professor Charles Hodges at Princeton the overture to the General Assembly, which issued in the organization of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. In this overture, Dr. Rice asked the Assembly to affirm that the Church "is a missionary society the object of which is to aid in the conversion of the world, and that every member of the Church is a member for life of said society, and bound in the maintenance of his Christian character to do all in his power for the accomplishment of this object." Furthermore, he requested that "it be earnestly recommended to all church sessions in hereafter admitting new members to the churches distinctly to state to candidates for admission that if they join the Church, they join a community the object of which is the conversion of the heathen world; and to impress on their minds a deep sense of their obligation, as redeemed sinners, to co-operate in the accomplishment of the great object of Christ's mission to the world."

In addition to this Dr. Rice outlined in his overture the form of the organization which was to conduct the work, and the agents and agencies to be employed. The measure thus proposed was in substance eventually adopted by the Assembly, and so, in a real sense, the founder of Union Seminary became the father of organized Foreign Missionary work in the Presbyterian churches of America. This is the second fact at which I hinted in the outset that found expression in the life and character of the Seminary's founder, which made a permanent impression on the institution, and which helps to explain the fact that, from the beginning, the life of the Seminary has been not so much scholastic or theological or ecclesiastic, as spiritual.

This, fathers and brethren, is a hint of what our dear old Semi-

nary, under God, has been able to do for the work of Christ in the ends of the earth. Let us come to the close of this centennial observance, and to the morning of a new century of Christian service, with a prayer that the vision and faith of the founder may survive in all who ever teach within its walls, and that an increasing measure of personal piety and missionary enthusiasm may be given to the sons of the Church who come hither to be trained. Over all, may there shine fair the figure of a Cross, and to us and to our beloved Church be given the spirit of Calvary!

In the ancient city of Kyoto is the largest, newest, costliest Buddhist temple in Japan. It cost eight million dollars, and was seventeen years in building. The money was collected largely from the peasants of the empire, who saved it by stern self-denial, and then carried their offerings long, weary miles to lay it at the shrine. In this temple are ninety-six huge columns, each forty-two feet high and four feet thick. They were dragged and lifted by people who toiled without wages, who sang as they toiled, and who, after the long day's work was over, tramped many of them, miles back to their homes at night, tired, but with a great joy in their hearts for the service they had been permitted to render.

In an outbuilding hard by is a great hawser three hundred feet long and three inches thick, the strangest rope in all the world, made of human hair from the heads of the women of Japan, who gave it for the honor of their cause. Into this rope are woven the glossy tresses of many a maid, the rich locks of matrons, and the gray hairs of the aged; and with this rope the heavy timbers were dragged and set in place; and so this "St. Peter's of Japan," as it has been called, is a temple built by the love of the people, with the gifts of the poor, and the strength of the strong, and the glory of woman's hair.

If the heathen in their darkness can do a thing like that for a dead god, what may not and what shall not we whose souls are lighted with wisdom from on high do for a Christ who died, and is alive forevermore?