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THE RISE OF SEMINARY SENTIMENT  
AMONG SOUTHERN BAPTISTS.

BY CHARLES MANLY, D.D., CHICAGO, ILL.

It should never be lost sight of, that from a very early period in the history of our country, deep interest in the education and training of preachers for their work has been manifested by Baptist individuals and organizations, despite indifference and even opposition in some quarters. Not to mention any earlier instances, the Philadelphia Association, organized in 1707, repeatedly expressed its concern in such records as this, adopted in 1722, viz.: "It was proposed for the churches to make inquiry among themselves, if they have any young persons hopeful for the ministry and inclinable for learning; and if they have, to give notice of it to Mr. Abel Morgan before the first of November, that he might recommend such to the Academy on Mr. Hollis, his account."

While interest in ministerial education was fostered among the churches influenced by the Philadelphia Association, a similar movement was in progress in South Carolina, especially in connection with the First Baptist Church of Charleston. This church was constituted in 1682 in the province of Maine and, because of violent persecution there, came in a body, with the pastor, William Screven, to Charleston in 1683. Mr. Screven continued as pastor till his death in 1713. From that date till the coming of Oliver Hart, December, 1749, the history of the church is involved in much obscurity, owing to the destruction of its records by a flood in 1752. Mr. Hart came from Pennsylvania, reaching Charleston the very day that Isaac Chanler, pastor of the church, was buried. His coming was accepted as a providential interposition, and he became its pastor in 1750. Having seen in the Philadelphia Association the advantages of organization, he secured the formation of the Charleston Association,

in 1751, by four churches; and under his influence was formed in 1755 "The Baptist Religious Society," mainly for the purpose of fostering ministerial education. It is noteworthy that the formation of this Society antedates, by at least one year, the steps taken in the Philadelphia Association to establish an institution of learning for the education of candidates for the ministry, and it may therefore be fairly considered the first practical attempt in this direction in America. To execute this purpose it is on record that in 1757 one hundred and thirty-three pounds were pledged by six churches of the Association, sixty pounds of this amount being by the Charleston church. Evan Pugh, one of the fruits of this investment, exerted through his ministry an influence deep and strong; and some of his lineal descendants, Lides and Dargans, have been or are now known and beloved as among our most valued ministers and private members. Under this provision, Edmund Botsford and Samuel Stillman were aided in the pursuit of their studies. Botsford proved to be a man of great force and usefulness in South Carolina, and Dr. Stillman was for forty-four years in Boston the eloquent and successful defender of evangelical truth against the incursion of Socinianism, which swept away the Congregationalist lines.

To escape the British invaders, Oliver Hart left the State in 1780 and never returned, though his interest in the church and Association continued unabated until his death in 1795, as pastor of Hopewell Church in New Jersey. He was succeeded as pastor in Charleston by Richard Furman, from the High Hills of Santee, where he had distinguished himself as a Christian minister in the cause of education as well as in activity to secure the success of the Revolutionary cause, such that Cornwallis was anxious to capture him and offered a considerable reward therefor.

Because interest in the Religious Society had much declined, Richard Furman sought to have its business transferred to Charleston Association and, with a view

to greater efficiency, he proposed that the Association should be incorporated. To this, objection was made by Edmund Botsford, the moderator, who had scruples about the scriptural propriety of chartering the body, and further by Francis Pelot, a man of great influence, who thought the Association should undertake nothing aside from its spiritual work; and he is quoted as saying, "Never introduce property into your Association; it will always raise contentions." In this, he expressed the views of many besides himself. Yielding to the scruples of his brethren, Richard Furman secured their co-operation in the organization of the "General Committee" of the Charleston Association. It was really a continuation of the Religious Society, only the scope of its work was broadened, and in 1791 the Committee was incorporated. By this union of tact with earnest prosecution of the ends aimed at, he gave evidence of a character often illustrated afterward, which led my father, Basil Manly, Sr., to say of him after long and intimate acquaintance, "He was the wisest man I ever knew." There was in him no trickery or adroit manoeuvring, but an exhibition of obedience to the scriptural injunction, "Give no occasion of stumbling, either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; even as I also please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of the many." I Cor. 10:32.

Under the Committee, by the end of the century, two young men had been educated at Brown University and two at home. A fund had been collected, above all expenses, amounting to about \$1,000. Up to the time of Dr. Furman's death, in 1825, at least thirty young men had been helped to prepare for the ministry, among whom may be mentioned Joseph B. Cook, Jesse Mercer, J. M. Roberts, and William T. Brantly, whose services and influence entitle them to be held in everlasting remembrance.

The Circular Letter of the Charleston Association for 1797 is an earnest and powerful appeal to the churches

“to provide for the instruction and improvement of persons called by them to the ministry, previous to their entering on the work.” This profound conviction in the mind of Dr. Furman lay at the bottom of all his work and planning for the future. He longed unutterably for the state of things which, in God’s good providence, we now see and know; but while his faith looked forward to it, he “died without the sight.”

Charleston Association was the oldest in the South, and it is a just tribute to her venerable years to say that in the formative period of the denomination, she was equal to her opportunities; and through the person of her leader, and in the forces set in motion by him, she was the *fons et origo* of the present paramount influences in Southern Baptist education.

The cause of education, and especially of ministerial education, received a mighty impulse from the interest in missions awakened by the return of Luther Rice from Burmah, in 1813, to induce the Baptist churches of the United States to support Adoniram Judson. As a result of this awakening, in May, 1814, at Philadelphia, was formed the “Baptist General Convention,” known ordinarily as the Triennial Convention, with Dr. Richard Furman as President. “It is not generally known,” says Dr. J. C. Furman, son of Dr. Richard Furman, in 1883, “that the wide-spread interest in denominational education which shows itself among our brethren of the North had a Southern origin. But it is so, nevertheless. There was no Newton, no Rochester, no Hamilton (now Colgate) in 1814 when the Missionary Convention was held in Philadelphia. \* \* \* The President (Dr. Furman) was asked to address that body on a subject which he held to be of vital importance. From a heart surcharged with concern on the subject of education, especially that of the rising ministry, he made an address, the effect of which was powerful and instantaneous. From that day a great idea was born in the Baptist public mind. The plan presented to the Conven-

tion contemplated a central institution at Washington, with institutions preparatory to it in separate states, where lower grades of culture might be obtained. Waterville and Hamilton were probably the direct outgrowth of the original plan, as were Furman in South Carolina and the Institution at Penfield, Ga., now Mercer University. Newton, in Massachusetts probably originated from dissatisfaction with the management at Washington, as well as institutions in other States."

The plan proposed by Dr. Furman was not carried into execution. Instead, Luther Rice, held in high esteem by the churches among whom he had labored in the cause of missions, a good man, highly gifted, full of noble impulses, but not a financier, became enamoured with the thought of a grand Baptist University and undertook the collection and management of funds intended for it, but in such a manner as to throw upon the Columbian College, as it was called, a burden of debt which so crippled it as to prevent its real success and its ever securing the full confidence of the denomination. (As is now well known, it some years ago became George Washington University and has passed completely out of Baptist hands.)

The failure in regard to Columbian College, though discouraging and disastrous in many respects, was overruled to developing interest in ministerial education, and efforts at combination of States, e. g., Georgia and South Carolina, not proving successful, out of it grew institutions, as already mentioned; some advancing more rapidly and being equipped more thoroughly than others. The importance of the union of several States in securing the highest efficiency in theological education, though earnestly presented from time to time by individuals who would not allow that its impracticability was settled by the outcome at Washington, did not find practical acceptance by the Baptist people of the South. One instance, at least, of such an effort is found in a communication to the *Southern Baptist and Intelligencer* of

March 13, 1835, from Basil Manly, Sr., then pastor of the Charleston Church, having succeeded Dr. Furman. Having already shown great interest in ministerial education by seeking, in 1831, to engage Georgia and South Carolina in a common institution and, failing in this, by traveling in the interest of Furman Theological Institution, he says: "What we want beyond all this (i. e. the Furman Institution) is an institution suitably furnished and endowed for the *exclusive benefit* of those who are entering upon the ministry of the word. Such an institution must not be confined to a single State." Having outlined a plan for accomplishing this and having called attention to "a point near the Tennessee border where at least three States so nearly converge that a site may be selected convenient to them all," he concludes thus: "In one word, Mr. Editor, I beseech my brethren to take the subject under serious and prayerful consideration; and, more than all, that measures be taken to have a Convention of the friends of this cause from the Carolinas and Georgia and such other States as may be disposed to unite with them, to assemble at some central point to deliberate and form some united plan for the accomplishment of this great object."

Meantime, political relations between the States, North and South, were becoming more strained, until in 1845 the Southern Baptist Convention was formed, in connection with which there was recognized the necessity for better facilities and equipments for theological training than existed in any one of the institutions then established in the South. For some years prior to 1845, Baptist students from the South had attended Baptist seminaries in the North. In 1845 there were four at Newton. On the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention, three of these, who had spent two years there already, viz., S. C. Clopton, E. T. Winkler and J. W. M. Williams, left the institution and went at once into ministerial work. The fourth, Basil Manly, Jr., who had spent only one year at Newton, under the advice of his

father, of Dr. J. L. Dagg, then at Penfield, Ga., of Dr. Wayland and other friends, went to Princeton Theological Seminary, where he graduated and where, afterward, James P. Boyce spent two years.

With a view to relieving the situation that was so serious, various Conventions of interested brethren were held. One of these was at Nashville in 1849, of which in the Memoir of Dr. Boyce the following account is given: "In the meeting there held, it is stated by Basil Manly, Jr., that Brethren R. B. C. Howell and J. R. Graves, whom (said Manly) I then met for the first time, were both enthusiastic and zealous for the establishment of the new institution." In fact they thought the very time had come. Young Manly considered that matters were scarcely ripe for this desirable enterprise, and was challenged by Brother Graves, who was already a skilled and renowned debater, to discuss the matter before the Convention. He declined the discussion, and gives the following reasons: "I did not want to be put into the false position of antagonizing the progressive movement for theological education, which I earnestly favored; and I am not ashamed to say I dreaded to cope with so vigorous and able an opponent as Brother Graves in an extempore debate." In this connection, I submit an extract from a letter of my father to my brother Basil, dated January 15, 1849: "What do you think of a great *Baptist College* for the South-West, to be located in New Orleans? The idea seems to me very rational, feasible, eligible. That is, and is to be, the place of chief commercial importance through the whole region drained by the Mississippi,—extending from the Chattahoochee to the Rio Grande, and from Missouri to the Gulf. You know my views about dispensing with the dormitory system. New Orleans favors that, and would give immediate patronage, by its great population and wealth, to an institution begun under favorable auspices; thus setting the thing on its legs at once. The tendency to centralization is uncontrollable; we may not resist it; let us

rather avail ourselves of it. A college vacation may well cover the whole period in which it might be desirable for students to be absent from New Orleans; thus removing the objection any might feel on the score of health. As to vice or extravagance or necessary expensiveness, it is manifest that difficulties on these points are to be met and obviated in some other way than by mere location. The man who thinks to remedy the evils of a college, in either of these respects, by seclusion and remoteness merely, miscalculates egregiously.

When we have once got our great college established there, endowed, officered, and in full motion, we will then place by its side a *first rate* theological Institution,—for profound acquirements in that line. This must be on its own separate basis, and governed by a *different set of Trustees*. If a theological chair or department be *engrafted* on a literary institution, it will be held and treated as incidental and secondary; will gradually decline in its power to awaken interest and attention, and presently be lost sight of. If the officers intended for such theological department, for want of employment on their own side of the house, are made to fill up their time in the other, the effect is inevitable; the tendency is as constant and certain that way as the law of gravitation. Look at those institutions which have attempted this amalgamation under the same set of Trustees. Is there any exception to my remark?"

Near the close of this letter he adds: "I have just been looking over an article in the *North American* on the History of Harvard College by Eliot. The very sensible and accurate writer of the article confirms all my views in respect of the injurious effect of combining the Divinity School with the Academic, under one set of Trustees. He says that arrangement has 'tied a mill-stone about the neck of the Divinity School,' and that no one now doubts it. He shows the same injurious effect, reciprocally, on all the other extraneous matters com-

mitted to that one corporation,—even to the late endowment of the observatory and the Lawrence Scientific School.”

This letter was occasioned, I am sure, by my father’s correspondence, at the same date, as shown in his diary, with Cornelius Pauling, a wealthy Baptist in New Orleans, who had expressed to my father his desire to use his wealth (some millions, I think) in “doing something noble for the cause of religion and the Baptists.” How it came to pass that the plan proposed to him by my father was never carried into effect I cannot explain. What, if it had been accomplished!

But to return to the story of the Educational Convention—There was a small attendance on the Convention at Nashville, on account of fright about cholera, so that an adjourned meeting was held in Charleston the last of May, 1849. Of this session Basil Manly, Jr., was Assistant Secretary. At an educational meeting during the session, Dr. W. B. Johnson, of South Carolina, read an elaborate address in favor of establishing a central theological institution. Basil Manly, Jr., having had time to prepare for it, made an address on the subject, the notes of which were published in the *Seminary Magazine* of December, 1891.

There were, however, many serious difficulties to be overcome. Some good men, to put it mildly, questioned then, as in years before, the wisdom of any special theological institution or even training. In Virginia, for example, when at an earlier day application was made for incorporation of the “Seminary” in Richmond to become “Richmond College”, a Baptist member of the Legislature earnestly and successfully urged that they should drop the theological department on the ground that the incorporation of a theological institution squinted toward a union of Church and State,—so great was the sensitiveness on that subject which had survived from the fierce conflicts of half a century before. Besides, even where, as was true, the professors in institu-

tions already existing were earnest advocates of a common seminary, each sought to have his own become the nucleus of the new organization. Yet again, in response to an earnest published argument of Dr. Howell for union of all existing theological schools at some central point, or if this is inexpedient, for a new theological institution, Dr. Robert Ryland, the distinguished and most worthy President of Richmond College, insisted that a great central theological school "is impracticable, as it will require \$100,000, which cannot be had"; and as the inevitable failure of the attempt would produce general discouragement, he thought the scheme would better be abandoned. A good college training he regarded as the main thing; since a man of trained mind could study theology for himself, as many had been doing with great advantage.

The subject continued to be discussed, however, especially at educational meetings in connection with the Southern Baptist Convention, and the interest was widening and deepening. At some of these meetings, it is to be noted that Boyce, Manly and Broadus, afterward among the Seminary's first professors, were interested attendants. In May, 1856, representatives from a number of States met for conference at Augusta, Ga. Basil Manly, Sr., was made President of the Conference, and so of each subsequent meeting till the organization of the Seminary. The President, from a large committee, reported serious difficulties at every point; but the object was recognized as so important, that they recommended that the subject should be further considered at Louisville the next year. A committee, consisting of the President, A. M. Poindexter and J. B. Jeter, was directed to report at Louisville such information on all matters connected with the subject of a common Seminary as would make it possible to decide whether united action could be undertaken. Among the older men who took interest in the movement and helped it, besides those already mentioned, were J. L. Burrows, J. B. Taylor,

G. W. Samson, J. W. M. Williams, J. O. B. Dargan, J. C. Furman, J. H. DeVotie, J. M. Pendleton, S. L. Helm. Many, younger than these, distinguished themselves as ardent friends of the Seminary, without whose prayerful co-operation it could not have continued even to exist.

On July 26, 1856, the Baptist State Convention met at Greenville, South Carolina. Under the special leadership of Jas. P. Boyce, then a professor in Furman University, it was decided to propose to the coming Educational Convention at Louisville to establish at Greenville a common theological institution, offering the theological fund of Furman (about \$30,000) with additional funds to be raised in the State to make \$100,000; provided that \$100,000 from the other States should be secured for an endowment of \$200,000. Thus a practical proposition was at last to be submitted to the Educational Convention at Louisville the following spring.

On the 30th of July, Professor Boyce, at the close of his first session as theological professor in Furman University, delivered his inaugural address entitled "Three Changes in Theological Institutions," the principles of which were adopted in the establishment of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary: viz. (1) in providing instruction not only for college graduates, but for men having only an English education; (2) in offering, besides the usual range of theological study, special courses, to enable the most aspiring students to make extraordinary attainments; (3) an abstract of principles, or Articles of Faith, to be signed by each professor on his inauguration, to guard against erroneous instruction.

Without at all diminishing the honor due and accorded to Dr. Boyce for this address, which Dr. A. M. Poin-dexter, a most competent judge, pronounced "the ablest thing he had ever heard," and in illustration of how great principles get "into the air" and take hold of a number of men about the same time, it is on record that the Faculty of Furman University (consisting of J. C.

Furman, C. H. Judson, P. C. Edwards and J. S. Mims) in a report to the Trustees in 1855, recommended a modification of the plan of instruction in the Theological Department substantially the same as the first change advocated by Professor Boyce. The report closes with the words: "It is due, however, to our late Brother and Colleague, Professor Mims, and it will also give increased weight to the above considerations, to state that engaged as he was in the labors of theological instruction, he had felt with peculiar force the views here presented; and a short time before his last illness he had it in contemplation to form a plan to meet, by extra labors, the exigency felt, and doubtless had he lived he would have presented the subject with that maturity of thought and justness of view which its importance demands."

For a copy of this report, I am indebted to Professor H. T. Cook, of Furman University, who has in manuscript, a volume relating to the life and services of Dr. J. C. Furman.

Professor Cook adds, what is allowed by all: "Dr. Boyce had been earnestly studying the theological problems of the South, and his address has every mark of having proceeded from his own cogitations and in such a manner that it struck the general attention as something original. His attention had been called to the most important changes while a student under Dr. Wayland. But the idea did not originate with Dr. Wayland. It was indigenous." Luther Rice, writing to Dr. Staughton April 23, 1819, says: "Misapprehensions exist with many in relation to the plan of education published at the meeting of the Board in New York last August, which it is important should be corrected; and such modifications of the plan should be adopted as shall be acceptable to the denomination at large. These modifications, as I am convinced by many observations heard the past year and conceive it my duty to state to you, must embrace the idea of affording, in some instances, improvement in the

English language, composition and theology, without going through a regular classical course."

It is but proper, in this connection, to say that all accounts of Professor Mims represent him as pre-eminently qualified for usefulness in the station he filled; a man of the highest intellectual and spiritual character who, under unremitting and exhausting labors, was cut off in the prime of his days.

But let us return to Seminary matters: The Educational Convention in Louisville, May, 1857, included eighty-eight representatives from Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee and Kentucky. To it the South Carolina proposition was submitted and, after earnest discussion which suggested some important emendations, it was agreed to establish the Seminary at Greenville the next year, provided \$100,000 were in the hands of the Trustees, May 1, 1859.

To give you a picture of that Educational Convention, held in connection with the Southern Baptist Convention in Louisville, I reproduce a large part of a letter dated, Saturday, May 9, 1857, from my father to my mother:

"Our Educational Convention will meet this forenoon. The report of the Committee contemplates a meeting in May next, at Greenville, and a report on the modes of organization for the contemplated theological school from a committee to be now appointed. I think I shall put Boyce, J. A. Broadus, Winkler and Wm. Williams and Basil on that Committee. These young men have got to do the work; let them draw the plans. We will be there, when they report, to correct them, if they are wrong. \* \* \*

"Sabbath afternoon: I redeem a moment to say that yesterday afternoon the matter of the Theological Seminary was decided in favor of Greenville—*no man voting No.*

“It is perfectly wonderful,—the effect of prayer and love. God’s hand is in it. G—— (of Tennessee) made every effort in private and some loud and noisy efforts in public, to prevent action, to distract counsels; but at last he was powerless, as limber as a rag, overborne and conquered. When it was done, I said a few words and we all knelt and bowed down and worshipped. I prayed, and all wept, and what was my surprise, before I could stand erect, to find G—— grasping my hand and saying that he wanted to take it once, at least, before we unite in heaven. The hand of God has been signally manifest. What so many have longed for and sought, but never found, God has now enabled us to see practicable. The Lord hasten it in his time!”

The story of the actual opening of the Seminary in October, 1859; how the Faculty was secured, and the struggles involved in their coming to their work; its wonderful experience through the Confederate War, the tragic story of its rehabilitation in the days of Reconstruction and its removal from Greenville to Louisville; all this, with its inspiring and impressive lessons, is a theme that can never lose interest and value.