

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Review & Expositor* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_rande\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_rande_01.php)

# THE REVIEW AND EXPOSITOR

Vol. IV.

July, 1907.

No. 3.

JOHN ALBERT BROADUS.

ADDRESS FOR FOUNDERS' DAY AT THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, JANUARY 11, 1907.

BY REV. W. H. WHITSITT, D.D., LL.D.

RICHMOND, VA.

Mr. President, Members of the Faculty, Students of the Seminary, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I have had many thoughts regarding this occasion and this unique privilege, but I have no words that would be suitable to express them. I must not fail, however, to utter the sincere and grateful thanks that I entertain towards my well-beloved friends, the President and Members of the Faculty of the Seminary, for the honor they have bestowed upon me by inviting me to stand in the order of this celebration. I have observed with interest every item of the course and progress of the school since I left it, and have often found occasion to rejoice with great joy over what I have seen and heard. The works and triumphs of President Mullins have been marvelous indeed, and have excited my constant admiration. It seems likely that his administration shall be the greatest of all that have occurred hitherto. I congratulate him and all of his colleagues upon the fine things they have already accomplished, and trust that these shall be but an earnest of still better things to come.

From this place I have watched generations of students come and go, and it is a special satisfaction after many years to look into the faces of a new generation of students, the last, perhaps, which it will ever be my

chance to behold. I marvel what wonderful fortunes may be before you, what great and singular things it may be given you, in your generation, to see and hear and do. May the God of heaven send you wisdom and strength and patience for every time and trial.

It is beyond my power to express the delight which I experience in returning to Louisville, so long the city of my home, and always the city of my heart. May the selectest mercies of Heaven rest upon this queenly city.

And if they would receive it, I should be glad to send a message of Christian salutation and unfeigned affection to my brethren in Christ, the Baptists of Kentucky; to congratulate them upon the better day that seems to be dawning upon them, and to wish that the salvation of God may ever be among them.

I have been requested by the President and Faculty to employ this occasion in speaking about the Founding of the Seminary, and especially about John A. Broadus, one of its main founders, and the peerless friend whom I have missed and mourned for every day since we carried him to his burial at Cave Hill. I have no qualification for this high task except the love I bore him, and the intimate relations I had with him for many happy years. I desire, therefore, to speak with modesty and with respect for the judgment and insight of any who may be better qualified than myself.

It has always seemed clear to me that the founders of our school fell upon evil days. It was the middle of the nineteenth century, the most glorious, I fancy, of all the centuries, when they began. But in the Southern States of America the middle of the nineteenth century was an unfortunate period indeed. The Southern States were then preparing to undergo a baptism of fire such as no other section of America has experienced hitherto. Almost any other time and place would have been more suitable for the founding of the Seminary.

The doors were first opened in October, 1859, less than two years before the outbreak of the war between the States. If that event had been distinctly foreseen, the

great and serious business might have been postponed. It is inconceivable that wise and sober men should have given such large hostages to fortune, if they had apprehended the meaning of the cloud that then overshadowed the country. Few of us who lived at that period really believed that a civil war was impending. We blindly clung to the conviction that such a calamity was not made for our beloved country.

There were four years of blood and iron, and twelve other years of reconstruction, and it has never yet been decided whether the war or the reconstruction after the war, was the more exhausting and injurious. In short, for sixteen years together the Southern States of our country lay prostrate and wretched. These facts of history are not cited in any spirit of bitterness. They are cited merely to illustrate the topic in hand. I am as highly devoted to the welfare and glory of our country as any other man. In that respect, if in no other, I am the peer of our great President Roosevelt.

If the Seminary could have been established twenty years earlier, or twenty years later, the difficulties of the enterprise would have been much decreased. The twelve labors of Hercules were required before the work could be fulfilled in the middle of the nineteenth century. In all our Baptist history it may be doubted whether anything so heroic has been accomplished. In three notable years, namely in 1869, 1874 and in 1879, the darkness that surrounded the Seminary could be felt.

But the God of heaven possesses wiser insight than any of our historians and scholars. Possibly the institution has taken deeper root by reason of the elemental storms that nursed its earlier days, and the violent winds of controversy that have since swept above it. In spite of these, perhaps because of these, it seems more securely established in the confidence and affection of its constituency than any other Baptist theological seminary in the world. And it is daily pressing forward towards the mark for the prize.

In discussing the part which Broadus took in the founding of the Seminary I shall ask leave to arrange my thoughts under three heads, speaking of him first as a man and leader, secondly as a preacher, and lastly as a scholar and teacher.

#### I. BROADUS AS A MAN AND LEADER.

The first time I ever saw him he impressed me as a great man, and that impression remained until the closing days of his life, and grew stronger with the years. He had great powers, but his foremost asset was a royal character. He was a product of Virginia, and always displayed Virginia thoroughness, Virginia system, and the Virginia sense of duty. A portrait of him holds a place among the Virginia immortals who are collected in the Gallery of the Virginia State Library. Because he so well illustrated the virtues of Virginia, he deserves to appear in that illustrious company. Wisdom, courage, temperance and justice were greatly developed in him. If he had not possessed them all he would have failed and faltered in the trying work of founding the Seminary.

His mental endowments were superb; worthy in every sense of his high character. And these received a most fortunate and successful training. The most valuable portion of that training, it always appeared to me, was imparted in his Culpepper home. The impress that he derived from that home, and from other homes of sturdy farmers that surrounded it, was indelible. I give abundant honor to all his various schools and schoolmasters, but his mother and father held the foremost position among them all. The training which they imparted shone through all the rest; adorned and glorified all the rest.

The contribution made by the University of Virginia was large and indispensable. I am heartily loyal to that great institution of learning, and myself owe many blessings to it. I appreciate every true school and college and university, but the best of our American schools are those kept in the families of our countrymen. As

long as these shall remain uncorrupted and unimpaired the fortunes of the nation will be secure.

Tiberius Gracchus Jones once remarked to me that while the elder Andrew Broaddus was never a leader in the ordinary sense of the term, he yet informed the Baptists with something that was very great and high. In his statement allusion was had to the fact that the elder Andrew Broaddus was not one of the most regular attendants upon the sessions of the General Association of Virginia; that he was never at any time elected to hold an office in the gift of the General Association, and rarely took any share in the public proceedings of the body. But in spite of that limitation his influence upon the Baptists was profound and beneficent.

John A. Broadus also exhibited this peculiarity of the family. He was not a leader in the ordinary acceptation of the term. He attended the Southern Baptist Convention with commendable regularity, but nobody thought of choosing him to be one of its officers. I have consulted the minutes and discovered that while all sorts of men were honored in this way, he was neglected throughout the whole period that he was accustomed to be present. At Memphis in the year 1889 a situation of considerable urgency arose, and he was publicly solicited to accept the office of President of the Convention, but he respectfully declined with the remark that there were two things that he never could accomplish, one of them being to ride a bicycle and the other to preside over the Southern Baptist Convention.

But he was, perhaps, the most potent leader that appeared in the Convention in his generation. His influence was paramount. Divers illustrations of that fact might be cited. In the year 1879 he intervened at Atlanta to defeat a movement which he interpreted to signify "a full merging of the work of this Convention into that of the Northern Societies." The resolution which he offered to prevent the holding of a conference in which this project should be discussed, was approved by the Conven-

tion by a very large majority. It is likely that no more important action was ever taken by the body.

At Birmingham, Alabama, in 1891, great excitement prevailed over the question whether the Convention should organize a Sunday School Board of its own, or should conduct its Sunday school activities under the auspices of the American Baptist Publication Society. For a whole year the parties had been making ready for a decisive struggle. An unusually large number of special addresses had been prepared for delivery, and the peace and dignity of the Convention appeared to be imperiled. But when the report of the committee was read, which had the subject under consideration, Broadus stood up before any other speaker could obtain the floor, and in a brief address persuaded the brethren to accept it without any discussion at all. Following is a copy of the minute of the body with reference to the matter: "After a few remarks by J. A. Broadus, Kentucky, the question was immediately taken and the report adopted. Whereupon prayer was offered by J. B. Hawthorne, Georgia, and the hymn 'Blest be the Tie that Binds' was sung."

But his influence was not confined to the council-chamber of the Southern Baptist Convention. He had won the ear of the State of Kentucky, and become a strong force in the life of the Commonwealth. Likewise his power was recognized in the City of Louisville. On the afternoon of his last day upon earth the Evening Post presented an editorial notice that was introduced by the statement: "Dr. Broadus, our first citizen, is dying to-night."

But his leadership in connection with the Seminary was the outstanding fact of his life. The bulk of the original endowment had gone down forever in the Confederate War. The remnant of it that was left over sustained the institution in much poverty until the year 1869. In May of that year relief was asked at the hands of the Southern Baptist Convention, and a precarious existence was obtained until the year 1874, before which time it was expected that a second endowment should be

raised and the institution transferred to Kentucky. Dr. Boyce had been engaged upon that enterprise since the autumn of 1872, but his work was almost suspended by the panic of 1873. In 1874 Boyce came down to Greenville to lay the facts of the situation before the Faculty, representing that all supplies had been exhausted, and that the constituency had been appealed to so often that few, if any, were now willing to respond.

This darkness and danger brought to Broadus a supreme opportunity. He alone rose to the occasion, and suggested to Boyce that the faculty should unite in sending out a new appeal for immediate help. He prepared it himself. It was ready for the printer the next morning, and was one of the most extraordinary productions in the history of the school. The brethren heard his voice and took courage. A new subscription was given, and the evil day was postponed for another lustrum.

It would be a valuable service if a collection of the circulars could be made that from time to time were sent forth in the interest of the Seminary. It would illustrate many points in the life of the institution, but I feel persuaded that the circular which Broadus prepared to meet the emergency of 1874 meant more than any other.

Success in the work of founding the Seminary would have been impossible without the agency of Boyce; but it would have been equally impossible without the agency of Broadus. They were the twins of our Southern Baptist world. The twins of the ancient classic world were set as stars in the skies, to serve as a guide to mariners who might sail over wide and dangerous seas. This pair likewise have been set in the skies to guide the course and efforts of our people in doubtful and dangerous days.

## II. BROADUS AS A PREACHER.

He did more as a preacher to promote the interests and influence of the Seminary, perhaps, than any other person who has held a chair in its faculty. In June, 1867, while I was a student at the University of Virginia, General Lee invited him to Lexington to preach the com-



mencement sermon of Washington College. The discourse was about One Jesus, and Old Virginia rang from side to side with the glory and power of it. Broadus became the theme of every tongue. Prof. John Hart was then residing at Charlottesville. He had ideas about many topics, and I was always glad to associate with him. I pressed Hart to reveal to me the secret of this extraordinary charm. He instanced divers items and peculiarities, but in the end gave up the effort, saying: "He will appear in the Baptist church here next Sunday, and if you will go and hear him, I believe you will admit that you never heard anybody preach before." I accepted the challenge, and found that it was even so. I surrendered at discretion, and shortly became so much absorbed in the preacher's message that I found it impossible either to study him, or to analyze my own thoughts. Not long afterwards he made an appeal to me to come to Greenville in the autumn, and study at the Seminary. I followed his advice, and by that means the entire course and history of my life was changed.

Like every other man he was in some sort the product of his time. Ponderous theological preaching, with a multitude of distinctions and exceptions, was no longer in favor. His discourse was not fashioned for two or three hours in the delivery. It was sane and skilful, evangelical, devout, earnest, strong to move the heart and mind. He invariably concealed the processes, but the processes of his thinking were always elaborate and careful. The audience rarely saw anything but the results of investigations that were had in the study. People sometimes praised his preaching because it appeared so simple. But it was never unlearned preaching, or devoid of affectionate and studious care. He gave it his best powers, best industry, and all his stores of learning. The text was patiently explored and along with it the whole texture of Holy Scripture. No pains were too great to be bestowed upon this holy work.

A high standard for the delivery of pulpit discourse had long been established in Virginia. Among the Bap-

tists men often emulated the example of the elder Andrew Broaddus, and there were similar great lights in other denominations. It was inevitable that the achievements of his noble kinsman should appeal to him, and that he should bestow every kind of energy upon the task of delivery. But in his conception the supreme end of delivery was not to charm and delight the hearer, but rather to convince and persuade him. Therefore, every art of persuasion was studied and employed, if by any means he might reach the heart and move to action. If anybody ever suggested that he had been entertained by the discourse, the preacher was much afflicted. He felt that he had fallen below his ideal.

Once when we were discussing the performance of one of the students, he remarked to me: "The flower of poesy sometimes blossoms in strange places." I was on the point of replying: "The flower of poesy sometimes fails to blossom in places where everybody might expect to find it." He possessed a marked poetic vein. He was devoted to poetic literature, and the whole apparatus of poetic handicraft was at his command. Why, then, did he not sometimes break forth into poetic expressions? I was never able to answer that question.

He loved his hymn-book, and studied it with rare insight and devoutness. No other man could read a hymn with half so much effect. Why, then, did he not make some contribution to our treasures of hymnology? Perhaps he understood the reason; I never could find it out.

But his poetic power and taste added much to the effect of his preaching. Not that he was given to the habit of quoting poetry in the pulpit, but for the reason that his whole thought was informed with an atmosphere of poetic conception and beauty. He was one of the choicest ornaments of the American pulpit.

### III. BROADUS AS A STUDENT AND TEACHER.

After entering upon his work at the Seminary in 1859, the chief industry and concern of his life was to learn and to teach. Thenceforward he gave himself with unre-

mitting devotion to the investigation of topics of theological inquiry. He appeared to concede that Dr. Toy possessed more learning, and sometimes spoke of him as "our jewel of learning", "the pride of the Seminary". If he was correct in that conclusion it may be claimed, perhaps, that with the exception of Toy, he was the most learned man who ever held a chair in the school. The competency of the soul in religion is a precious doctrine. He had abundance of it, besides competency of the mind and of research. And he had the best use of his acquisitions. Few men have exhibited a more striking power of co-ordinating their own treasures of learning with the results of all other research. He often reminded me of Shakespeare in seeming to know things without taking the trouble to learn them. He possessed a certain faculty of divination that was wonderful in extent and soberness. You shall rarely meet a person in whom the so-called scientific imagination is more highly developed. I cannot predict what the judgment of the Muse of History shall be, but I am persuaded she would be singularly unjust if she failed to set him above all the rest of us as a scholar and teacher.

Of all the teachers I have encountered on this side of the water, he laid the most distinct emphasis upon the duty and practice of original research. He was modest and respectful towards other scholars and thinkers, but he felt it was never an act of injustice to try the spirits. He always anticipated that posterity would try his own results by the light of original sources, and he felt it was no occasion for complaint if he should adopt the like method in his generation.

And in my judgment it was a fitting and noble thing that the biography of the man who was the chief promoter of original research among us, should have been composed by Prof. Robertson out of the original sources. But the last word about Broadus has not yet been said. These original sources are already invaluable, and if they should all be kept together, they will be earnestly studied, and appreciated by coming generations.

The earliest task that he laid upon me in the line of original research, produced a decided impression. It was in the department of text-criticism, and I was required to write an essay on Matt. 1:25: "And he knew her not until she had brought forth her first-born son." The question that he propounded was whether the word "first-born" was entitled to a place in the text. I was supplied with all the apparatus and was expected to decide the matter for myself. My decision fell out against the word "first-born", and it produced a state of trepidation that is still remembered. It was an humble beginning, truly, but it served as an introduction to the art and use of original research in other fields of inquiry.

I had loved and honored all my teachers at the University of Virginia, but I felt a special affinity for Mr. Gildersleeve. At the Seminary I also loved and honored all my teachers, but I felt a special affinity for Dr. Broadus. These two men were very different in some regards, but to me they also seemed much alike. They were both scholars, and no mistake. They both won my confidence and excited my enthusiasm. They both towered above others; they were undoubtedly men of mark.

In the circumstance that he had studied in Germany and was a graduate of Goettingen, Gildersleeve appeared to have some advantage over Broadus. But this was more in appearance than in reality. Broadus was likewise a thoroughly modern man, abreast of the culture of his times. He also possessed an easy mastery of the German language, and made daily use of it in his studies. He took the German periodicals and kept in touch with all tendencies of thought in the Fatherland, and these were often topics of familiar discourse, both in the class-room and in the private circle. In fact it was to me a royal privilege to be in contact with such a teacher.

I had not the remotest idea of studying abroad when I entered the Seminary at Greenville in the autumn of 1867. But the impulses that came to me there were numerous and stirring, and before the course was ended I had become solicitous to go abroad. But some of my best and

most valued friends were firmly set against the project, and were particularly averse to my suggestions looking toward the German Fatherland. I had finally yielded to their wishes and consented to compromise on a course in a Scotch University, when on the way to the Southern Baptist Convention at Macon in May, 1869, I ventured to speak to Dr. Broadus, and to ask his judgment. He listened to the whole story in silence, and then said: "In my opinion you ought to go to Germany and do the best work that is in you, and afterwards to return home in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ."

I immediately decided to take his advice, and he was good enough to write a letter to my mother, that afforded valuable assistance in smoothing down certain obstacles that lay in my path. While I was at the University of Berlin, he visited the city and we passed some never-to-be-forgotten days together. It was during that visit that I obtained the earliest copy of his work on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons, that was destined shortly to establish his fame and influence throughout the English-speaking world.

The Commentary on Matthew, his most elaborate and learned performance, did not appear until the year 1887. Horace exclaims

*Exegi monumentum aere perennius*

but I should appreciate the sentiment better if it sounded less boastful. Broadus indulged himself in no such boasting, but the Commentary on Matthew is a monument of sane and sound exegetical learning that shall perpetuate his name long after you and I shall die and be forgotten.

But the chief end of man is not the making of books. Gen. Washington and Gen. Lee, the greatest of our Americans, made no books. Their lives were expressed in princely character and in immortal deeds. And the life of Broadus is best expressed in his character and deeds. The founding of the Seminary was his foremost achievement, and it will keep his memory green for ages to come. It has been suggested that during the first fifty years of its history, the course of the Seminary was

sometimes laid across stormy seas; but "all the clouds that lower'd upon our house are now in the deep bosom of the ocean buried". The year of Jubilee is drawing nigh, and I feel confident that it will introduce an era of great progress and enlargement.

And now with my closing words, I would pronounce a benediction upon our school. May it always enjoy the selectest favor of God. May he bestow upon it teachers of much learning and wisdom, possessing also great love of the truth, and of the brethren, and of all men. May students be always provided who shall be worthy of their teachers and of this seat of sacred learning, and who shall bring nigh the grace of God to many hearts and homes and churches and cities and countries. May its trustees ever be wise and faithful men. May it enjoy the veneration and affection of the alumni in every place. May the good will of the churches keep it safe from peril or distress, and may the wealth and substance of pious men and women be freely offered for its uses. May it become the chief center of the religious thought and life of our brotherhood, and stand forever to bless and comfort them in their efforts to promote the glory of God and the happiness of men.