

SOME CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE SEMINARY

.. to ..

SOUTHERN BAPTISTS

PRESIDENT JOHN R. SAMPEY

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was founded to educate and train leadership in the life of the denomination. Thousands of men trained in the Seminary have served as pastors of churches, evangelists, and missionaries in the homeland and in foreign fields. A goodly number of the graduates of the Southern Seminary have rendered efficient service as executive secretaries of boards in the various states as well as the general boards of the Southern Baptist Convention. The Seminary has trained men for teaching administrative work in our Baptist colleges. Our denominational papers have sought our graduates as editors. The influence of the Seminary has gone into every department of our denominational life. Our graduates are found in all lands in which Southern Baptists have undertaken work.

By and large we are proud of our Alumni, and thank God for the noble contribution they have made, and are making, to the Kingdom of God. Lest we be exalted above measure, an occasional Judas Iscariot has studied with us and gone forth to betray our Master by a thoroughly selfish life. Such a man failed to catch the spirit of the Seminary and its great teachers.

The Democracy of the Ministry

When Dr. James P. Boyce in his famous Inaugural Address in Furman University in 1856 contended for the admission of men of all degrees of academic preparation to our theological schools, he advocated a plan that has greatly promoted the democracy of our Southern Baptist ministry. Three years later the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was founded and Dr. Boyce's suggested plan of having college graduates and men of only an ordinary English education to study the English Bible and other subjects side by side in the same classes brought men of college and university training in close and friendly touch with their less favored brethren in the ministry. It was found that the lectures and text books in all classes not requiring a knowledge of Latin, Greek and Hebrew

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could be understood by non-college men of good average ability. Thus the future pastors of the city churches came to know and love their brethren who would serve the rural churches. The plan has worked well for more than eighty years, and even now when about ninety percent of our student body are college men there are still a considerable number of men who get the benefit of the best training the Seminary can give with no thought of winning an academic degree. It is a noteworthy fact that a man brought up in the home of a rich man became the enthusiastic advocate of a plan for promoting the democracy of our Baptist ministry.

Doctrinal Solidarity

One of the changes in theological education advocated by Dr. Boyce was intended to safeguard the orthodoxy of the institution. An Abstract of Principles embodying all the great Christian doctrines was to be signed by every man elected to a professorship, with the promise that he would teach in accordance with, and not contrary to, this epitome of Christian doctrine. Students were to be admitted without any doctrinal test. Through all the years students have come marching into the Seminary with all sorts of notions, but in the course of their years of study under professors who profoundly believe, and in an able manner teach, the doctrines of our evangelical faith, with a suitable emphasis on the doctrines peculiar to Baptists, men usually go forth to their life work with a clear understanding of New Testament Christianity and a firm faith in its divine origin.

It was natural that a strong Calvinistic flavor should pervade the Abstract of Principles of the Seminary, inasmuch as Dr. Boyce and Dr. Manly studied under Dr. Charles Hodge in Princeton Theological Seminary. There is a proper recognition of the ethical demands of the Gospel. Through the study of Theology under Drs. Boyce, Kerfoot and Mullins, and more recently under Dr. Tribble, Southern Baptists have attained a doctrinal solidarity that is healthful, because it has come as the result of earnest study and conference under the guidance of able and sound theologians. Their teaching has been reinforced by the men who have interpreted the Bible in English and in the original languages.

A Love of the Scriptures and Delight in Proclaiming Their Message

Under the inspiring teaching of Broadus and Manly and their successors men have come to love the Scriptures and to receive them as truly the Word of God. They have gone

forth from the Seminary with a message which the world needs. The teachers in both Old and New Testament have followed the course of literary and historical criticism accurately, but their faith in the Bible has never been shaken. Our students have been encouraged to study the Bible itself rather than books about the Bible. Sane and reverent criticism of the books of the Bible has a proper place in all theological schools. The student of the many books written by Dr. A. T. Robertson is impressed with his familiarity with the views of critics of every type, but he will look in vain for any statement that weakens the authority of the Scriptures or that discredits the teaching of our Lord and the Apostles. He practiced free research and maintained a firm faith. As long as Southern Baptist pastors proclaim the messages of the prophets and the apostles with firm faith in their power, so long will they lead men to repentance and faith and obedience.

Missionary Conviction and Passion

From its origin in 1859 to the present year of grace the Southern Seminary has sought to develop in all its students a conviction that we are debtors to all men and must take to them the message of salvation. In all the lands in which Southern Baptists are working students of the Seminary will be found. The list of missionaries is our honor roll. With them may be found former students of our sister institution, the Woman's Missionary Union Training School, some as wives of missionaries and others as single women, all giving of their best for the spread of Christ's Kingdom. In the home land most of our Alumni are pastors with missionary vision.

Efficiency in Church Life and the Denominational Program

The Seminary has from the beginning emphasized pastoral work. During the past thirty years there has been great progress in the efficiency of church life and in co-operation in our denominational activities. The Seminary has found in the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention a strong ally in its efforts to develop the teaching and the training work of the churches. Our sister seminaries in Fort Worth and New Orleans have joined in this work as in all other activities promoted by the Southern Seminary. We are proud of the fact that in both of these institutions some of the ablest teachers are alumni of our own Seminary.

A Sane Attitude Toward Christians of Other Denominations

The founders of the Southern Seminary were convinced Baptists, but all of them had friendly relations with other evangelical Christians. Dr. John A. Broadus preached his first

sermon in the pulpit of a Presbyterian church. Dr. Boyce was educated in Princeton Theological Seminary, and Dr. Manly took his third year of theological study in the same Presbyterian seminary. It was natural that these men should have respect and affection for Christians with whom they had studied. They looked upon Methodists and Presbyterians as allies rather than enemies. This attitude has been characteristic of the men who have taught in the Seminary. They have always been ready to co-operate with all who love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. The Southern Seminary has had a representative on the International Lesson Committee from 1878 to the present.

The strongest argument against infant baptism I have ever heard was made by Dr. Basil Manly in lectures in which he answered in detail the arguments of his teacher, Dr. Charles Hodge, in favor of baptizing infants. Fraternal touch with other Christian bodies should not lead us to be silent on the questions that divide us.

Contributions to Christian Authorship

The Seminary has given to the world books of great value. In 1871 a book appeared entitled "The Preparation and Delivery of Sermons," by John A. Broadus. The author was already famous as a great preacher. His book has been more widely used as a textbook on the art of preaching than any other treatise in existence. "A Commentary on Matthew" by the same author is a gold mine for those who wish to understand the teaching of Jesus. "A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research," by Dr. A. T. Robertson is one of the greatest contributions to Christian scholarship ever made by an American author. Among the forty-three other volumes flowing from his pen are books of permanent value. Doctor Mullins, Dr. Dargan and Dr. Carver have published books containing the results of vigorous thinking. I confidently expect from members of the present Faculty books that will carry to the coming generation fresh messages that will promote faith in the Gospel.

Thus we gratefully assert that the contributions of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary have been many, varied and worthy. The great student body of nearly 500 men enrolled this session bear testimony to the confidence of these discriminating men in the value of their training in this institution. We rest in the assurance that the Seminary's greatest days lie yet ahead.