

SOUTH CAROLINA'S EARLY GIFTS TO THE SEMINARY



**AN ADDRESS DELIVERED ON FOUNDERS'
DAY AT THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEO-
LOGICAL SEMINARY, LOUISVILLE, KY.,
JANUARY 11, 1909,**

BY

REV. A. J. S. THOMAS, D. D.

OF

GREENVILLE, S. C.

**1909
BAPTIST WORLD PUBLISHING CO.
Louisville, Ky.**

SOUTH CAROLINA'S EARLY GIFTS TO THE SEMINARY.*

BY REV. A. J. S. THOMAS, D.D., GREENVILLE, S. C.

The people of South Carolina have never ceased to appreciate the high honor conferred upon them, and the confidence reposed in them, when the Seminary was located in their State. They have long recognized that it was a lasting blessing upon them and their churches that this Institution lived in their midst for eighteen years; and is it not equally true, that it was a fine thing for the Seminary that it first found a home among a people sound in the faith, loyal to Baptist principles, and in full sympathy with the denominational interests of the day?

Every great and worthy enterprise must have friends in its inception, establishment, and early days. The Seminary was no exception. It did not lack friends, strong and true, in the beginning. A sentiment in favor of theological education had grown up very early in South Carolina. There had been a seed-sowing for over half a century before the opening of the Seminary in Greenville. The old Charleston Association had been a theological school on wheels. One of the leading objects of that venerable body was the training of young men for the ministry. The first session of the South Carolina State Convention was held in Columbia, in 1821. Richard Furman, patriot and preacher, pastor of the First church in Charleston, and first President of the Baptist Triennial Convention, was President. Theological education was one of the prime objects of the Convention that met in Columbia, as stated in the first draft of their Constitution, which said: "In what relates to education, the organization and support of a seminary of learning in this State for the gratuitous education of indigent, pious young men, for the gospel ministry, shall be considered by this body as an object of primary importance." It would be a large stretch of the imagination to suppose that the men who framed

*An address delivered on Founders' Day at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, January 11, 1909.

that first Constitution even dreamed of this we see here today, but knowing something of the character and the work of those men we are persuaded that they had larger ideas than appear on the surface of the written words. They were laying a foundation, and they knew at least that.

This also is evident, these men were friendly to the idea of theological education, and that meant much. They were to become the supporters of the efforts to establish a school for that purpose, and they were to bring forth and prepare a people who in point of culture, character, sympathy, and doctrinal bent, would be ready to take the school in its infancy, give it a home, and help it to grow and develop into something large. This sympathy with theological training and this desire for a school where the young preachers would be trained, grew up among South Carolina Baptists at a most fortunate time, and while the need of preachers was most keenly felt in the country districts where our people were already numerically strong, yet the necessity for an educated ministry was generally recognized, for many of our churches were made up of the leading people in their respective communities. In those days the Baptists, in middle and lower South Carolina especially, were numbered among the most influential of the people, and their homes were cultured, refined, intelligent and wealthy, as well as religious, and these were the people who fell in with the ideas of Richard Furman and his Charleston church.

It was worth something, then, that in the very beginning the idea of a trained ministry, not only had distinguished and influential advocates in South Carolina, but that these in turn had a people, a Baptist constituency, who could appreciate the idea, who were in sympathy with the suggestion, and who were also willing to follow in a wise and progressive leadership. The very idea found friends in South Carolina. That is, South Carolina furnished a soil and an atmosphere in which this particular seed could and did germinate, and also a people already prepared for the subsequent task, that of nourishing and cultivating this new and tender life. I rejoice that the old commonwealth, under the guiding hand of a kind Providence, could furnish conditions and an environment so favorable, even before the founda-

tions were laid for that which we see here today. Whatever may be said of other conditions then in other places upon which the sun was shining, and among other people upon whom God was smiling, whatever might have been done in other places, this is true, and let it go down into history, that in South Carolina there was a condition favorable and a people ready to undertake the kind of work that filled the heart and occupied the thoughts of Richard Furman and others of his day.

Then there came a day when it seemed desirable to do more than create sentiment in favor of theological training, and in favor of theological departments in Baptist colleges. There was a growing sentiment in favor of a general theological institution for the Baptists of the South. This larger idea found many friends in South Carolina, friends among the people at large as well as among the more prominent and influential brethren. That State furnished some of the strongest supporters of this plan. Of course the formation and the organization of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845 furnished the occasion for the discussion of this plan, and some of the pastors of that day, and among them some of South Carolina's strongest men, took up the matter and inaugurated a movement in the direction of a general theological institution. There could be little concert of action, for after the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1846 it did not meet again till May, 1849. For the first three meetings of that Convention, Dr. W. B. Johnson, of South Carolina, was President, and he was thoroughly in sympathy with the general theological school idea. Still, little was done except to create sentiment.

About that time, in November, 1848, the editorial management of the Southern Baptist, a paper published in Charleston, passed into the hands of a young man in the twenty-second year of his age. The new editor was James P. Boyce. In the issue of that paper dated March 28, 1849, there appeared an editorial entitled, "Central Theological Institution." A copy of that paper with its editorial may be found in a bound volume in the library of Furman University. Recently I read it, and I have made some extracts. Let us see what the young man of twenty-one was thinking about sixty years ago. The editor,

after brushing away the objections that had been advanced in some of the papers in other States, adds:

“We regret to see that they entertain so unfavorable an estimate of the plan proposed, that of combining the funds held by Baptist colleges for theological departments into one common fund for a central theological institution. We regret this the more since we have long wished for so happy a consummation and until the present period have been sanguine of success. The present aspect, however, is far from favorable.” After showing in what particular respects the situation in some of the other States is specially discouraging, he continues: “We confess the aspect of affairs is exceedingly dark, yet we cannot but hope, even though it be against hope, that brighter prospects may yet cheer us, and that the object may be accomplished. In spite of these discouragements we are yet forced to believe that there ought to be such an institution, a central theological institution for the South. It seems to us that it is by no means an unimportant matter to condense the funds gathered for theological purposes. By this means less would be needed for these purposes, and more would be left for other calls which are made upon us. A permanent and sufficient fund for the education of beneficiary students would be insured, and there need be no excuse arising from want of means for procuring a thorough theological education. Besides, were the funds of all the Southern Baptists collected together an institution worthy of the denomination and of its objects might be procured. Salaries could be given which would secure for this purpose the first scholars of the country. No longer would our theological students be compelled to study theology as best they may, but men of experience and talent, men of piety and intellect, could be easily secured, and our young men supplied with the requisite means, and educated under these teachers would themselves be mighty in the Scriptures, conversant with the doctrines of the Bible, and able expositors of its sacred truths. Who does not long for the coming of a day when such shall be the case with our ministering brethren. Who does not already regret, that so many among us, who, could they but have had the opportunity for improvement, might have been able aids to the cause of God,

but are now weakened by the lack of knowledge which they had not the means to procure. But let such a seminary be established, let such professors be procured, and let the funds for the education of young men be raised and invested, and who shall say what will be the result? Our institution would occupy a deservedly high position, able to compete with all in its means for instruction, and working out such results for the cause of Christ as shall tend soon to spread his kingdom throughout the world." What a prophet he was! He concludes: "The question now arises, are we to have such an institution? We have argued its merits, as condensing the funds for theological purposes, as at the same time enabling us to apply so much to this purpose as may secure for us the first talent of the country and by this means establishing an institution of high standing throughout the country. It remains for the denomination to say whether or not we shall have such an institution. There surely can be no necessity for urging a point like this."

You may be sure the editorial produced a profound impression in South Carolina and elsewhere. It was a bugle blast, and, thank God, we shall never hear the last of it. The editorial was followed by prompt and important action on the part of the Baptists of South Carolina. A special meeting, an extra session of their State Convention was held soon after, the last week in April, 1848, in the town of Aiken. It was not largely attended, but some of the most prominent and influential men of the State were present. Dr. W. B. Johnson was President and delivered an address to the Convention, "setting forth his views at large," it is said, touching the establishment of a General Theological Seminary for the South. A resolution was passed expressing it as the sense of the Convention that such an institution should be established, and recommended: "That the delegates to the Southern Baptist Convention, soon to meet in Charleston, be informed that they are authorized to enter into any conference on the subject, in any body of brethren that may be convened for the purpose of consultation on the matter." No doubt of it, the editorial was bearing fruit.

The State Convention met again that year in the town of Edgefield and the following was adopted: "That this Conven-

tion will unite with our brethren of other States in the founding of a theological institution to be located at such place as may be determined by a convention of all the States willing to cooperate in the enterprise." The editorial had not been forgotten.

The movement for the establishment of a central theological institution was fast gaining friends in South Carolina. It seems to have met with little opposition. Suppose W. B. Johnson, J. C. Furman, Richard Furman, J. O. B. Dargan, Thomas Curtis, E. T. Winkler, James P. Boyce, John Culpeper, J. H. Cuthbert, and such laymen as the Lawtons, Lides, Mendenhalls, Tupper, Scott, O'Neal, and others, had opposed or even stood in the way of the movement? For at least a generation South Carolina certainly would have withheld active support, and what would that have meant for the enterprise? The question answers itself; the conduct of those men makes the question almost impossible. The large ideas and the aggressive sentiment and the healthful teaching of Richard Furman, the Senior, and others of his day, were now being felt, and the seed then sown had not only sprung into life, but had almost reached the fruit-bearing age, and South Carolina was ready to give the proposed Seminary scores and hundreds of friends, of both preachers and laymen, in what was then the golden age of the State. With the Baptists of the noble little State the fullness of the time had come for them boldly to challenge the Baptists of all the Southern States. And, bless God that was done.

The new enterprise would need money as well as friends. Naturally enough the State that could furnish so many friends would be expected to furnish money also. South Carolina had both, and could give both, and did give both, and was the first State to give money for the endowment of the new institution. Some State had to make a beginning in this very thing. The conferences held up to this time had not resulted in anything definite. The plan to combine the funds of the theological departments of the several Baptist schools in the South into one common fund as an endowment for the proposed General Theological Institution, had failed. Something else must be done, and South Carolina was ready to make a new and an independent proposition, and for this the way was opened. At

the session of the Southern Baptist Convention held in Montgomery in 1855, a conference of brethren was held and arranged for a subsequent meeting to be held in Augusta, Ga., in May, 1856, to take into consideration the establishment of a Central Theological Institution for the South. At the meeting of the South Carolina State Baptist Convention, held in Newberry, July, 1855, Dr. James P. Boyce introduced resolutions appointing ten delegates to attend the Augusta conference. It is interesting to note the character of that delegation, men famous in the religious, social and business life of the State: James P. Boyce, B. C. Pressley, E. T. Winkler, H. A. Duncan, J. R. Kendrick, I. L. Brooks, J. O. B. Dargan, J. P. Tustin, Richard Furman, Thomas Curtis. The Augusta Conference was held. Evidently the South Carolina delegates submitted a clear-cut, although conditional proposition. After a consideration of this proposition, Dr. Winkler was appointed to bring the subject before the next South Carolina Convention to be held in Greenville, July, 1856. This he did. His report was submitted to a committee consisting of Judge J. B. O'Neal, J. C. Furman, and James P. Boyce. A minority report was substituted, and this minority report was referred to Dr. Boyce, who subsequently made a report which was adopted. That report said: "The funds for theological purposes in South Carolina are no longer in the hands of the State Convention, but have been transferred to the Board of Trustees of Furman University. We believe that the Board will transfer these funds, \$30,000, to the trustees of the common Institution upon the same condition which we annex to our offer for a location in Greenville: That we will try to raise an amount which conjointly with those funds shall secure to such an institution from this State, South Carolina, the sum of \$100,000, provided that these donations are made upon the condition that the institution shall be located in Greenville, South Carolina. That the said institution shall be further endowed with an additional sum of \$100,000, and that should an institution thus endowed not be kept up at that place, the funds given by the Board of Trustees of Furman University, or raised by this Convention, shall inure to Furman University for theological purposes in

South Carolina: That measures be taken by this Convention at once to find out what amount of funds can be collected for this purpose, and how far our delegates to the Conference to be held in Louisville can say positively that the amount has been raised." A committee consisting of I. L. Brooks, J. C. Furman, J. P. Boyce, J. G. Landrum, and J. A. Lawton, was appointed to meet a conference of brethren from all the States to meet in Louisville and to convey this proposition of the South Carolina Convention.

All this meant business. The Conference at Louisville had before them a definite, clear-cut, practicable offer to consider, and like wise men they accepted substantially the South Carolina proposition. The Louisville Conference sent a report to the next South Carolina Convention, agreeing to the action of the former Convention, and the plans then proposed. This communication from the Conference at Louisville was submitted by Dr. Boyce to the very next South Carolina Convention, at Greenwood. Following that report Dr. Boyce added: "From the above report it will be apparent that a noble opportunity is presented to the Baptists of South Carolina to secure for the Baptists of the South a complete theological school. The cordiality with which this offer has been made and the entire unanimity manifested in the vote of the Louisville Conference by which it was adopted, are strong inducements to this Convention to use every possible effort to carry out the object in view. But, when it is realized that thus an end is to be secured which the Baptist churches of the South have for years so earnestly desired; an end from which will result so much good to the cause of the ministry, and the general cause of the Redeemer, and, that **THIS HAS RESULTED FROM THE OFFER MADE BY OUR LAST CONVENTION**, it appears to be the imperative duty of this body to secure this object. Your committee therefore present for the adoption of this meeting the following resolutions:

That this Convention accept the modifications of our offer made by the Conference at Louisville; That we will use our best efforts to meet the conditions required; That an efficient agent be put at once in the field with the object of securing the bal-

ance of the \$100,000, and that a committee of five be appointed at once to nominate and secure such an agent; That this Convention appoint a delegation of twenty members to represent this body at the Theological Convention at Greenville, on Friday before the first Sabbath in May, 1858, called for the purpose of organizing the Seminary." Of course they were appointed and they were present at that meeting, which continued for five days, perfecting the plans for the organization and opening of the Seminary. The South Carolina Convention had no fears of a failure of the plans. That committee to nominate an agent was also appointed, consisting of B. Manly, Sr., I. D. Wilson, C. H. Judson, J. O. B. Dargan, and R. Furman, a great committee it was. The report of that committee is signed by B. Manly only and reads thus, and only these words: "The Committee beg leave to nominate Rev. J. P. Boyce as agent." Of course, what else could they do, and yet did five men ever recommend a wiser thing, or make a greater and more far-reaching report?

Another important resolution was adopted by the Convention that elected Dr. Boyce special agent. Dr. Richard Furman, then pastor at Greenville, offered the following: "Whereas this Convention has transferred to the Board of Trustees of Furman University the theological funds originally held by this body, and whereas the question of transference of said funds by said Board to the General Theological Seminary proposed to be established has arisen, Resolved, That in case the Board of Trustees shall make the transfer, such act will meet with the entire approval of this Convention." That is clear, explicit, concise, just as he usually spoke. It appears to have been adopted without discussion or division, although it involved a matter of \$30,000, and the committing of a large body of Christians to a new and untried enterprise. That was the first large gift of money to this Seminary, but it came from a people of large ideas and great faith, and a people who believed in theological education, and who were to play no small part in shaping the policy and moulding the character of the teaching of the new institution.

Dr. Boyce entered at once actively upon the arduous duties

and task of raising the balance of the first \$100,000, seventy thousand dollars he must raise in South Carolina. There were few railroads, the churches were scattered from the mountains to the sea; nearly all of the wealthiest Baptists were living in the country. In his own private conveyance he must visit the churches and the homes of the people. He did that, and when the Baptist State Convention met in Greenville in July, 1858, he reported that he was "for the most part cordially received, and the amount of money, \$70,000, was nearly made up. In various ways a sum amounting to within \$5,000 of the amount needed was raised." The Convention passed the following: "That the thanks of this body are hereby tendered to the Rev. J. P. Boyce for the prudence with which he has managed, and the untiring energy with which he has prosecuted the work to which he was appointed as their agent by this Convention at its last meeting." This shows that a very remarkable work was accomplished in one year, reflecting great credit on the high qualities of the agent and showing also that he met an uncommonly generous people. The Convention took steps to raise immediately the balance, \$5,000, and the records show that the canvass was completed and the entire amount secured in cash and bonds which were recognized then as good as gold. It would be interesting to have the names of the contributors of that first endowment fund. In that long and honorable roll no doubt there will be found the names of the fathers of many of the givers of the present generation.

We have seen that South Carolina furnished a strong sentiment in favor of the Seminary, a people prepared to establish it, a favorable environment and atmosphere, and the first considerable sum of money for its endowment. But, the greatest gift South Carolina made to the Seminary, was her beloved son, James Petigru Boyce. Thank God there was a State in the South that could make such a rich gift. It was a great day when John Boyce, the grandfather, moved from old Rutherford in North Carolina, to Newberry District in South Carolina. It meant much for the old Palmetto State, and it meant much for the Baptists, and for theological education, and for this

Seminary it meant far more than we can tell, or even comprehend. South Carolina gave him a great father and a good mother. The parents of the child, and the child himself, enjoyed rare religious privileges, the teaching of the elder Basil Manly, at that time pastor of the most influential church in the South, the old First in Charleston. This young man came in touch there with the leaders of Baptist thought and activity. South Carolina gave him opportunity and early training in Baptist work. His first and only real pastorate was in that State, in its capital city, and while pastor there he learned to do agency work, for he traveled and collected funds to help erect the present stately edifice of the First Baptist Church in Columbia. South Carolina early called him to the work of teaching, and teaching young men who were studying for the ministry, for he was Professor of Theology in Furman University when he was called into the first agency work for the Seminary, and the trustees of Furman University magnanimously turned over to the new Seminary, not only the first gift of money, but also the first person ever employed in its service, who was destined to be a member of its faculty, and finally its first President. Let it be written down, never to be forgotten, that among the early gifts to the Seminary, South Carolina not only gave the first large sum of money, but that the richest gift she made, the richest that could be made, was the incomparable, and unconquerable Boyce.

It is not my purpose to give in any degree a sketch of Dr. Boyce, nor to follow his course in his connection with the Seminary. That has been done, ably done by his beloved colleague, Dr. Broadus; in passing let me say, that every student who comes here to study ought to read that book, and no man ought to be given a diploma till he has read it, for to read that memoir is to read much of the history of the Seminary, and every student should know something of the early conditions that gave rise to the Seminary, the story of its establishment, its later struggles, and its more recent growth and achievements. And, as this story is read, I verily believe that the conviction will be forced upon the reader's mind, that if it had not been for James P. Boyce the Seminary could not have

opened in 1859, and if not then when? And, if it had not been for him, and other friends he found, could it have survived the years from 1870 to 1885?

It is altogether questionable whether it could have opened in 1859 if there had not been the heroic determination of Dr. Boyce. Two of the first professors chosen in 1858 declined, and the decision of still another very largely hinged upon the decision of one of those two. It took the firmness and the earnest persuasiveness of Dr. Boyce to bring about a reconsideration, and thus he saved the day, at a most critical moment, and that too after the years of preliminary work, and after he had so well marshalled the forces. After his election, Dr. Broadus wrote to Dr. Boyce, May 13, 1858, "After more anxiety and difficulty than I have ever before experienced, I have at length decided that I cannot leave here (the Charlottesville pastorate). If anything I can conceive could make me feel right to leave this post, it would be the Seminary; but I could not dare to go away." That was a dark day for Dr. Boyce. Hearing of this, Dr. B. Manly, Jr., wrote Dr. Broadus that he could not make up his mind to accept since Dr. Broadus had declined. He said: "There has been no opportunity, since I knew anything about the Baptists, when there was so fair an opportunity for a theological Seminary as this. There will not probably be another for twenty-five years to come if this fails. As I now view the matter, it is already *de facto* a failure so soon as your decision and its results are known." Not so. The good man was mistaken. The enterprise did not fail. Dr. Manly had not figured on the resourcefulness of the intrepid leader. It remained for a Boyce to write the following to a Broadus, under date of March 29, 1859: "Have not circumstances so changed since your refusal last year as already to point this out as your duty now?" And again, April 11, 1859: "Ought you not to make this sacrifice, are you not called of God to enter upon this work?" These are only sentences taken from his letters. What other influences were brought to bear upon this prince of preachers and this peerless teacher, we do not know, but we are told in his own words what happened after he received Dr. Boyce's letters: He wrote to Dr.

Boyce, April 21, 1859, "With much difficulty and much distress, I have at length reached a decision. I tremble at the responsibility of the thing either way, and hesitate to write words which must be irrevocable. But . . . if elected, I am willing to go. May God graciously direct and bless, and, if I have erred in judgment, may he overrule to the glory of his name." Oh, if Dr. Boyce had been less persistent and determined, who can tell what might have happened, and what we might have lost for this institution. In the light of these facts, and of all that preceded, from 1848 to 1859, is it probable that the Seminary would have opened in Greenville in the autumn of 1859, if James P. Boyce had not been planning and leading through the years? And, in the light of all this, did South Carolina ever make to the Seminary and to the cause at large, a greater gift than the noble man whose day we now celebrate?

In bringing these remarks to a close, Mr. President, permit me to bear you and all who hear me this day the cordial greetings of South Carolina, the mother of the Seminary. Our people rejoice in the prosperity that has come to this beloved institution. We pray that yet greater things may be in store for this school our fathers helped to establish, so tenderly watched over, and which became so dear to all our people. We stand ready to help in every effort for the enlarged usefulness of the Seminary. We pledge that South Carolina will continue to furnish you friends; we will continue also to give you money; and we will continue to send you students. But, shall we ever give you another James P. Boyce? We would gladly do that if we could.