



DR. BENJAMIN RICE LACY, JR.

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THE NEW PRESIDENT.

BY R. A. LAPSLEY, JR., D. D.,

Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, S. C.

"The Presidency of Union Seminary is the biggest job in the Southern Presbyterian Church today!" "The best qualified man in the Southern Presbyterian Church for the Presidency of Union Seminary is B. R. Lacy, Jr., of Atlanta, Ga.!" These statements, made at different times by a minister of our Church express the conviction of the author of this article and constitute his apology for writing it.

The first of these statements scarcely requires argument. The men who shape the thinking and direct the training of the Presbyterian preachers of the next generation will exert the predominating influence upon the future of our Church. Union Seminary is the largest of our four seminaries. Just a few less than one-half of the ministers serving our Church today were educated at Union. Of the candidates of our Church in theological training in 1925, Union enrolled one more than the other three seminaries combined. Such facts imply that the President of Union Seminary will be the outstanding figure in the realm of theological education in our Church.

It is the second statement that challenges attention. Every true lover of the Seminary has viewed with anxiety the decline in the health of her beloved former president. They have dreaded the time when he would be forced to relinquish the office he filled in so incomparable a way. Wherever alumni have gathered, this question has been asked, "Where will the Seminary turn for a successor?" It is my deep-seated con-

viction that God has pointed the Board of Trustees to the one man best qualified from every possible point of view to take up the work which Dr. Moore has laid down. This may seem a strong statement. We do not believe it overdrawn. It will be the object of this article to present a few of his many qualifications for this high office, qualifications that should make the Church rejoice that God has directed his conscience to accept this call.

I. The first qualification I would mention is that of *ancestry*. Dr. Lacy has a rich ancestral heritage, which fits him in a remarkable way for the Presidency of Union Seminary.

While other Synods are represented on its Board of Directors, Union Seminary belongs in a peculiar sense to the Synods of Virginia and North Carolina, the largest Synods in our Church, the strongholds of Presbyterianism in the South. Dr. Lacy is connected by birth and blood with the leading families of these great sister states. There is no name in Virginia or in Carolina that holds a higher place in the affection and confidence of the people. Nor is there a minister anywhere bound to the Seminary by so numerous and such tender ties.

Dr. Lacy comes of a family that has been intimately associated with the Seminary from its very beginning. Union Seminary was founded by John Holt Rice, a *great uncle*. Rev. Robert Burwell, D. D., his *maternal great-grandfather*, graduated from the Seminary exactly one hundred years ago. He was one of a class of three who entered in 1823 when the Seminary was reorganized. Dr. Burwell was a trustee of the Seminary from 1837-1854. Rev. Drury Lacy, D. D., his *great-grandfather*, graduated from the Seminary in 1831. He was a member of the Board of Directors from 1837-1864, and was president of the board for two separate terms of office, from 1847-1858, and from 1861-1863. *His uncle*, Rev. William S. Lacy, D. D., left the Seminary before graduation to become a chaplain in the Confederate army. He was also a member of the Board of Directors, representing the Synod of North Carolina from 1880-1887, and the Synod of Virginia from 1895-1899.

By his marriage Dr. Lacy strengthened the ties that bind

him to the Seminary. His wife was Miss Emma White, of Raleigh, N. C. Mrs. Lacy's *father*, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Raleigh, N. C., graduated at the Seminary in 1892. He has been a member of the Board of Directors since 1918. Her *grandfather*, Rev. Henry M. White, D. D., graduated in 1860. He was a member of the Board of Directors from 1869-1905. Mrs. Lacy's *great-grandfather*, Rev. William S. White, D. D., was led to a decision to study for the ministry through the personal influence of Dr. John Holt Rice, the founder of the Seminary. He studied under Dr. Rice while teaching in Farmville, the year the Seminary was reorganized. He graduated from the Seminary in 1828 and was a member of the Board of Directors from 1838-1868.

Dr. Lacy belongs to a family that has exerted a great influence upon religious education in both states. His *great-grandfather*, Dr. Drury Lacy, was one of the early presidents of Hampden-Sidney College. His *grandfather*, another Dr. Drury Lacy, was president of Davidson College. His maternal *great-grandfather*, Dr. Robert Burwell, was the founder of the female institute at Charlotte, which is now Queens College, and also of Peace Institute, in Raleigh, N. C. Where is there another man who can count among his near kinsmen the founders of two women's colleges, the presidents of two men's colleges and the founder of a theological seminary!

Dr. Lacy is closely related to distinguished Southern families of wide connection and influence. Among them are the Lacys, Hoges, Rices, Marquesses, Brookes, Smiths and others. There is in North Carolina today no more widely known or greatly beloved man than Dr. Lacy's own father, Mr. B. R. Lacy, Sr., who has been for years the State Treasurer of North Carolina and for years a member of the Board of Trustees of Davidson College.

Thus the providence of God has woven for generations the chain that binds Dr. Lacy to the Seminary, and to the Presbyterian Church in the two states. As some one has expressed it, "It would look like the good Lord has been preparing him for this work for a hundred years."

II. The second qualification I would mention is that of his remarkable *preparation*.

Dr. Lacy has the preparation of *rare educational advantages*. He is an honor graduate of Davidson College of the class of 1906. He won the orator's medal at Davidson. Was it prophetic of the future, that Dr. Moore was on the platform at the time and made the address of presentation? He was the first alumnus of that college to secure a Cecil Rhodes scholarship. As the holder of that scholarship he had the advantage of three years study in Oxford University, from which he received in 1910 the degree of B. A. Honors History. Before entering Oxford he taught for two years in the Donald Fraser School, Decatur, Ga. He entered Union Seminary in 1910, graduating in 1913 with the degree of B. D. As the honor graduate of his class, he won the Moses Hoge Fellowship, the most distinguished honor in the gift of the Seminary, and thus spent an additional year in postgraduate study. He is the only graduate of the Seminary who has held a Cecil Rhodes scholarship. He received the honorary degree of D. D. from Davidson College in 1919.

Dr. Lacy has had the preparation that comes from *wide travel*. He spent three summers in traveling in Europe during his Oxford days. Upon the completion of his course at the Seminary he visited the Holy Land in company with two fellow students. They returned through Europe and were in Switzerland at the outbreak of the Great War. As a mark of Dr. Lacy's scholarship one of his companions on this trip relates this incident. They were sailing from Beirut to Constantinople. A Greek Catholic priest was a fellow passenger on the boat. Dr. Lacy spent the afternoon discussing theology and Church history with this priest. The conversation was in French and his companion says that he "caught its general drift!"

Dr. Lacy has had the preparation that comes from a *broad experience in the pastorate*. This experience has been three-fold—as a Home Missionary, as an Army Chaplain and as pastor of a large city church.

His experience as a *Home Missionary* was gained at the beginning of his ministry. He was nominally assistant pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Raleigh, N. C. He was really their missionary to the spiritually waste places in the surrounding country. Here he labored as pastor of three small Home Mission churches, and as the evangelist of two counties. Here he met and successfully solved the problems of the small town and weak country churches. He was especially successful in his evangelistic efforts, and in building up a Presbyterian constituency in communities where Presbyterianism was almost unknown.

His experience as an *Army Chaplain* was gained during the World War. He volunteered at the beginning of the war and was appointed Chaplain of the First North Carolina Field Artillery, later the 113th Field Artillery in the regular army. He was with his regiment during the period of training at Camp Sevier. He saw active service with it in France. He took part in the engagements at St. Mihiel and in the Argonne Forest. He was cited for bravery in administering first aid under shell fire, promoted to a captaincy and his commission dated back to the time when he volunteered. Upon the return of his regiment after the war the *Virginian Pilot* spoke of Chaplain Lacy as "the most popular man in the regiment, with an heroic record of many-sided and unbelievably versatile service".

His experience in a *city church* has been gained in the Central Presbyterian Church of Atlanta, Ga., where he has been pastor since May, 1919. This is one of the largest and most active churches in our General Assembly. His success has been remarkable. The Central is distinctly a "down town" church, with all of the problems and difficulties that go with such a location. Under Dr. Lacy's leadership it has grown and prospered. The "Baby Clinic" of the Central Church constitutes an example of the finest type of Christian social service. But his church has also been a center of evangelism, where Christ as a personal Saviour is offered and found. Dr. Lacy's hold upon the city of Atlanta is wonderful. Just a few months before his resignation he was elected chaplain of the

city Fire Department. Upon his leaving Atlanta he was tendered by the Lion's Club, of which he is a member, a valedictory dinner. One who was present says that the testimony borne him by the mayor of the city, a Jewish rabbi and a Catholic priest, would easily mark him as a leading citizen.

Such is his preparation—eleven years of college and university and seminary training, two years of experience as a teacher, three years of experience as a Home Missionary, two years of experience as an Army Chaplain and seven years' experience as the pastor of a large city church! Could there be found anywhere in our Church a man whose preparation is broader, more thorough, or more adequate?

III. The third qualification that I would mention is the *confidence of the Church*. Dr. Lacy has it to the fullest extent. He is a member of one of our most important Executive Committees. He has been a leader in Synod and Presbytery, and in those Assemblies which he has attended. He has had numerous calls to positions of influence and to many of our larger churches.

Dr. Lacy's election has called forth widespread expressions of approval. The *Presbyterian Standard*, whose bedrock conservatism is a matter of common knowledge, says in its issue of May 19th, "In the choice of Dr. Lacy the Board showed great wisdom in calling to his Alma Mater one of her sons who has distinguished himself in war and in peace and who has always exerted a magnetism in dealing with young men, that makes him a fit successor of his predecessor". The *Charlotte Observer*, published in Charlotte, N. C., Dr. Moore's home city, makes this comment, "Dr. Lacy will enter upon his new duties with bright prospects, being particularly equipped for the position by training and experience". The *Greensboro News* says that this action of the Board will meet with "A thundering approval not only from the members of that denomination, but from the large portion of the general public". Raleigh is the boyhood home of Dr. Lacy. Especially interesting is the comment in the *Raleigh News and Observer*: "The election of Rev. B. R. Lacy, of Raleigh, as President of Union Seminary, is a deserved and

distinguished honor to one of the foremost of the younger divines of the South". The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* records its welcome in these words—"Richmond welcomes Ben Lacy. It is confident that he will occupy not the place in our hearts which now belongs to Dr. Moore, for that will remain occupied, but a place of his own which with the years will become equally warm".

Our own ministers have been enthusiastic in their approval. Let me quote from just a few. "His personal qualities of intellect, culture and power of rare facility in establishing strong ties of friendship, of humility beautifully coupled with courage as a Christian, combine to make him an ideal man for the great opportunity now open to him as President of the Seminary." "In academic training, practical experience, natural gifts, qualities of leadership and personality, Dr. Lacy is admirably fitted for the Presidency of the Seminary. Among all the men I know there is not one whom I would rather see placed at the head of Union Seminary." "Lacy was born and trained for the job." "His splendid scholarship, his sound judgment, sterling character and his ability as a leader, mark him as a man preeminently fitted for the office to which he has been called."

There is a great controversy in the Christian Church today. There are those who will want to know where Dr. Lacy stands in this conflict. The writer of this article is a Fundamentalist. He offers no apology. He belongs to that crowd. Sometimes they do things of which he may not approve, but his sympathies are with them, and with their cause. As an ardent Fundamentalist I can with perfect confidence trust the leadership in the theological education of the next generation of preachers to Dr. Lacy.

There are said to be three parties in this controversy, the Modernists, the Pacificists and the Fundamentalists.

Dr. Lacy is not a *Modernist*. He has no sympathy with those who undermine the faith of our young people, who impugn the veracity of the holy Scriptures, who rob our Lord of his true deity and his cross of its atoning power. He is

modern in his outlook on life, he has great sympathy for the youth of today in the face of the problems that confront them, but he is not a Modernist in the sense in which we use the term.

Nor can I think of Dr. Lacy as a *Pacifist*. This does not fit in with his character. He was not noted as a boy for his peacefulness. Although of light weight and build, he was one of the best quarterbacks Davidson College ever produced. And the team on which he played is known as the "Wild Cats". When a student at Oxford he held the Intercollegiate light weight boxing championship of England. He won for himself in France the soubriquet of "The fighting parson". I am sure if there is ever a real fight in the Southern Presbyterian Church where real principles are at stake and real issues involved, Dr. Lacy will be found on the right side of that fight and among its leaders.

I do not know that Dr. Lacy would call himself a *Fundamentalist*. I have never asked him. He is certainly not a "heresy hunter". He has none of the rancor and bitterness that mark some of the leaders of this party. But I know that his orthodoxy is of the highest and finest type. It is practical as well as theoretical, it is experimental as well as philosophical. It is personal rather than traditional. If there is one conviction that he holds more firmly than anything else, it is the conviction of the truth of supernaturalism. He believes in a supernatural religion, in a supernatural revelation, in a supernatural Saviour, in a supernatural salvation. As the President of the Seminary he will defend the faith once delivered to the saints.

IV. The fourth qualification I would mention is that of *personality*. Behind the heritage of a Godly ancestry, behind the advantages of thorough preparation, and behind his standing in his Church, there is the man himself. Has he those qualities of heart and mind and soul that will make him a success as a Seminary president? There is no office in the Church that makes so large demands. I believe Dr. Lacy has qualities that fit him in an unusual way for this office.

He has *humanness*. I asked a prominent layman of Atlanta

what made Dr. Lacy so influential in the city. He replied, "He is so human". He is a man whom men instinctively trust and in whom they instinctively confide. He has a perfect genius for friendship. As Seminary President he will come very close to his students. They will not stand in awe of him. There will be no barrier between them. He will touch their lives in a most intimate way and leave on them the impress of his personality.

He has *genuine piety*. His religion is a real thing. No one can know him ever so slightly without being impressed with this. To kneel with him in prayer is a benediction. He knows the Lord, he reflects in his life and talk the image of the Master. He has the passion for souls, and it will be his aim to give to the Seminary training a distinctly evangelistic cast.

He has *sincerity*. To me this is his outstanding characteristic. He is as true as steel. He is as open as the sunlight. He says what he thinks anywhere and everywhere, without fear and without favor.

He has *common sense*. In all of the many problems that have come up in his work in Atlanta, as a chaplain in the army, as a home mission worker, he has shown the happy faculty of always finding the way out. He will take hold of the leadership of the Seminary with the same practical common sense that has made him a success in the ministry, and would make him a success in almost any profession or in any business. One who knows him well describes him as the "best balanced man I ever saw".

He has *humility*. I have never known a man more genuinely humble. Honors have been heaped upon him, but they have not turned his head. There is in his make-up no trace of egotism. He uses his splendid talents without consciousness of self.

He has *executive ability*. He is a born leader of men. It has always been, and will ever be so. It was so when he was a lad playing about the streets of Raleigh. It was so when he was a student at Davidson College. He was manager of the baseball team in his senior year. He was manager of the

basketball team his senior year. Davidson Alumni still talk of the football games in which Ben Lacy called the signals. So pronounced was his leadership of men that although he entered the army without previous military training, before his regiment sailed for France, he was offered a captain's commission in the army if he would give up his chaplaincy. This offer he declined, but in crucial times, on the battle front, when the 113th was short of officers he served as reconnaissance and as liason officer. And on one occasion during an offensive, when a great 150-millimeter German cannon was captured, he organized a gun crew and fired at the Germans for several days and nights with their own guns and ammunition.

Such is the man who goes this fall to take up the work laid down by Dr. Moore. Nowhere in the Church could one be found so well fitted by birth, training, standing and ability to carry on his program. In his hands the Seminary will be safe. Under his leadership it will go forward. The mantle of Elijah has fallen upon Elisha. As some one has expressed it, "The more I think of it the more I am convinced that God has raised up in our friend Ben Lacy the one who is to carry on in the great work of our premier Seminary".