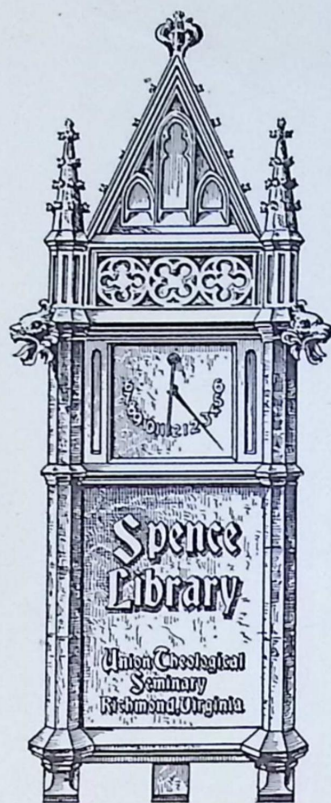


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THE  
LIFE OF MOSES HOGE D. D.

Based on the Biography by his Son the  
Reverend John Blair Hoge

Manuscript  
in The Library, Union Theological Seminary in Virginia  
Richmond, Va.

H. R. Mahler, Jr.  
Richwood, W. Va.  
November 27, 1945



THE LIFE OF MOSES HOGE, D. D.  
Based on the biography by his son the  
Rev. John Blair Hoge  
written  
some time between 1820 and 1826

Manuscript  
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Richmond, Va.

A shipboard romance figures in the ancestral history of the Rev. Moses Hoge. The account of this in the family annals is interesting because of its unusual features. During the struggle to force episcopacy on Scotland in the reign of Charles II two brothers by the name of Hume, who lived near Paisley, differed on this great issue. The brother who adhered to the official party was the grandfather of the celebrated David Hume. The other Hume, a Whig and a Presbyterian, was imprisoned, but upon the intercession of his more influential brother was released on the condition that he would emigrate to America. Accordingly he took passage for New York with his wife and only living child, a girl of fifteen. During the trip across the Atlantic a contagious disease swept through the passengers and Mr. and Mrs. Hume were among the victims. The girl, in this unfortunate situation, accepted the offer of protection made by a young William Hoge, a fellow passenger who had some slight acquaintance with her family. She had no need for financial assistance as the remains of her father's savings had come into her hands, and furthermore she had an uncle who was a respectable physician in New York. To

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this uncle young Hoge committed his fair charge at the conclusion of the voyage. But by this time their friendship had deepened into love and they were soon married and settled in Amboy, N. J. where Hoge had already established a modest business. It is not known how long they lived there, nor the length of their stay in two subsequent homes in Delaware and on the banks of the Swetania in Pennsylvania. In the year 1735 they moved to Frederick County, Va. Here it is believed Mr. Hoge was instrumental in establishing the Opeckon Church which was located on his estate. William Hoge's fourth son, James, was the father of Moses, the subject of this sketch. James was married twice, the second time to Nancy Griffiths, Moses being the ninth of his father's fourteen children and the fourth of the nine children his mother bore. He was born at Cedar Grove, his father's residence, on February 15, 1752.

The early education of Moses Hoge was limited to seven weeks at a school near his home, plus what his father, a man without liberal education, could teach him, and what he could get for himself from books. He early evidenced a studious and contemplative turn of mind and spent what time could be spared from the duties of the farm in reading and thinking. His parents did not neglect to teach him the principles of religion as found in the Bible and interpreted in the catechisms of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Three other books are mentioned as his companions at this stage- Fisher's Explanation of the Shorter Catechism, Boston's "Fourfold State", and Alleine's "Alarm",



the latter of which he thought peculiarly enlightening to his mind and heart. For some unexplained reason his father, James Hoge, left the Opeckon Church and joined a smaller group of Presbyterians called the "Seceders" or Associate Church. The nearest congregation was in Pennsylvania where James traveled at least once a year to receive the sacrament. After mature consideration Moses, at the age of twenty, went with his father to Pennsylvania on one of these occasions and united with the Associate Church. His thoughts had early been turned to the ministry, but he was almost twenty five years old before the way opened up. Apparently James Hoge, the father, had not felt that his financial circumstances permitted him to send his studiously inclined son the distance that would be necessary for him to receive a higher education. About this time two visiting clergymen persuaded James not to procrastinate any longer but do what he could right away in regard to Moses' literary advancement. It seemed providential that Rev. Adam Goodlet, a Seceding clergyman, had opened a grammar school in Culpepper which was not too far from the home in Frederick County. Here Moses studied assiduously for something less than a year. It is suggested that the American Revolution which began about this time may have caused the dissolution of the school, which would explain the brevity of Moses' attendance. Following this brief period of academic life it seems that he joined a volunteer corps and rendered military service for an agreed term which cannot have been long. No details of this period remain.



In November 1778 he entered Liberty Hall Academy which had been founded just a short while before and which had not yet moved to Lexington. It was then under the able direction of William Graham. In this institution Moses was a marked man among his classmates because of his advanced age, his awkwardness, and his retiring habits. But before the course was completed he had earned the respect if not the affection of his fellow students because of his mental ability and diligent application. By 1780 young Moses Hoge, now twenty eight years old, had completed the course of study at Liberty Hall and was ready to enter upon a ministerial career. But at this point an important decision had to be made. His inclinations undoubtedly led him to the Presbyterian ministry, but should it be the Associate Church of his father or the church of his instructor and fellow students at Liberty Hall? Apparently young Hoge had decided upon the latter but was unwilling to take a definite step without consulting his father whom he loved and admired so much. This interview he dreaded. But to his relief he discovered that his father's views had softened and modified, and, while still retaining his own connection with the Seceders, he commended Moses to the guidance of his conscience in this matter. Accordingly Moses Hoge was examined by Hanover Presbytery on October 25, 1780 and received as a candidate for the ministry. This was followed by his licensure in November 1781.

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At the time of his licensure young Hoge entertained the desire to emigrate to Kentucky where he felt he could be more



useful than in his native state. But by some unknown means his attention was directed to a part of Hampshire County( now Hardy ) on the South Branch of the Potomac. This was a frontier country which had suffered frequently from Indian raids and had not until this time enjoyed a stated ministry of the gospel. He remained among these people for several months in a temporary capacity while always in the back of his mind was the intention to remove to Kentucky. He had resolved to leave the South Branch and was prepared to bid the people farewell when he experienced a sudden change of sentiment which he ever after regarded as a special interposition of providence. He then allowed the people to call him as their pastor and the appointment was made by Presbytery in May 1782. He was ordained to the whole work of the gospel ministry by the Presbytery of Hanover at Brown's meeting house in Augusta County on the 13th of December 1782. Shortly after this he organized his people into a church called "Concrete" which his biographer suggests was a reference to the fact that it was composed of people who were formerly of several different denominations.

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On the 23rd of August 1783 he was united in marriage with Elizabeth Poage, daughter of John Poage, Esq. of Augusta County. His son and biographer comments on this wise. " This arrangement was the result of neither feeling nor judgement alone, but both in a happy combination. In this interesting case he acted not only with a view to his own comfort, but to his usefulness in that public character which he had assumed." <sup>1</sup> He took his bride back to the South Branch and

<sup>1</sup> Life of Moses Hoge, D. D. by Rev. John Blair Hoge(mss.) p. 54



resumed his ministerial duties. Because of the poor financial support which he received he resorted to teaching a grammar school for a year's time, which was a common side-line of endeavor for ministers of his day. It is interesting to note that Bishop Francis Asbury of the Methodist Church visited his community about this time and was invited by Hoge to "address a religious discourse" to the members of his school.

p. 5

It was during his ministry on the South Branch that Moses Hoge took a leading part in a debate on the floor of presbytery which showed him to be a firm proponent of complete religious liberty and the separation of church and state. In 1784 a bill had been proposed to the General Assembly of Virginia which incorporated a provision for a general assessment on the people for the support of the church. The Presbytery of Hanover naturally had a vital interest in this matter. Moses Hoge, though but two years a member of presbytery, expressed his firm opposition to the measures contemplated by the legislature. But others in the presbytery, while they agreed with him in principle, insisted that public sentiment was so strongly in favor of the bill that nothing would be gained by direct opposition, and it was suggested that a memorial should be presented to the legislature petitioning for a fair and equal operation of the law in case it should be passed. Accordingly a paper was drawn up couched in such equivocal terms that it placed the Presbyterian Church in a bad light in the eyes of other dissenters for many years. The critics of the Presbyterian Church used this memorial as evidence that it had tried to get a favored position along



with the established church(or what had been the established church) in the distribution of a general assessment. Although the bill did not pass the legislature, if presbytery had adopted Hoge's resolution it would have escaped suspicion on this score.

Hoge gives as his reason for leaving his pastorate on South Branch the intermittent fevers which were prevalent in that region and to which he was particularly susceptible. On the grounds of his health he moved to Shepherds Town in the autumn of 1787, although it is difficult to see how the climate in a neighboring county could work any improvement in his health. In going to Shepherds Town Moses Hoge assumed charge of a portion of a congregation that had suffered division. The history of this congregation goes back to 1775 when a Rev. John McKnight had organized a congregation in Berkely County called Elk Branch. This congregation included in its bounds the flourishing little community of Shepherds Town. That part of the congregation living in the town decided after a few years that it should have a portion of the pastor's labors devoted to that place and a controversy ensued. As a result of this Mr. McKnight in 1782 resigned his pastorate and the congregation split. After several years of ups and downs the people at Shepherds Town called Mr. Hoge who accepted and shortly after organized a church in that place. The other portion of the Elk Branch congregation resolved to make a similar move and selected Charles Town as their place of worship and soon called Rev. William Hill as their pastor.

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For a time the congregation in Shepherds Town worshiped in the Episcopal Church, but soon resolved to erect its own house of worship in spite of some opposition. In 1790 the church was completed and occupied.

A few years prior to Mr. Hoge's removal to Shepherds Town (May 1786) the Synod of New York and Philadelphia had erected ~~the~~ new Presbytery of Lexington of which Mr. Hoge became a member by virtue of his residence west of the Blue Ridge. However, the Shepherds Town congregation was within the jurisdiction of the Presbytery of Carlisle and ecclesiastical procedure demanded that Hoge apply to it for permission to supply this field. This he neglected to do and the Presbytery of Carlisle forwarded to him an official remonstrance against this irregularity. It would have been best for Mr. Hoge to have admitted the breach of proper procedure, but instead he writes a long letter of defense. "When one has transgressed," he writes, "and on that account deserves admonition, I am very sensible that the most reputable thing he can do is to confess and amend. To the honour resulting from a conduct so ingenious I may perhaps, in some future period, lay in a claim; at present I feel rather disposed to vindicate myself than to confess."<sup>1</sup> He mentions rather arrogantly that he had received applications for his services from people in the bounds of four different presbyteries and that he "was not under the necessity of encroaching upon the territories of Carlisle Presbytery for the sake of a piece of bread."<sup>2</sup> The main defense which

<sup>1</sup> Mss. Life of Moses Hoge by J. B. Hoge p. 76-77    <sup>2</sup> *ibid* p. 77



he makes of his conduct is as follows: " And as I did not wish my induction to be marked with the least irregularity, I informed them that it would be proper that they should obtain leave from their own Presbytery previous to any application to ours for my settlement among them. But they assured me that they had consulted a senior member and one of the best disciplinarians belonging to your presbytery, and that he informed them that such a measure was not necessary. And would it not have been arrogant in me to have contradicted one of your most venerable members who is expert in the rules and customs of your Presbytery?" <sup>1</sup> This is rather specious reasoning. It seems that a better defense might have been to blame his own presbytery for not having approached the Presbytery of Carlisle before giving him permission to labor there. The whole tone of the letter indicates Mr. Hoge's indignation at being called on the carpet. Nevertheless he attended the meeting of Carlisle Presbytery in April 1791 and explained his position. In the minutes this reference is found: " Mr. Hoge explained his reasons to Presbytery for officiating in the congregation of Shepherds Town, and requested to be permitted to continue his labors there and at the same time remain a member of Lexington Presbytery- Presbytery granted his request." <sup>2</sup> ¶ The diary of Moses Hoge, extensive selections from which are incorporated in the biography by his son, covers the period of his pastorate in Shepherds Town. In this diary few ob-

1 Ibid p. 77

2 Ibid p. 79



jective events are mentioned. It is chiefly concerned with ~~with~~ a record of the times he has preached, his texts, the emotions he experiences while preaching, self-reproaches, and prayers for grace and strength. However, there are several events of interest that occurred during this period. His first appearance in print was prompted by a pamphlet attacking Calvinism issued by an apostate Baptist minister by the name of Jeremiah Walker. This pamphlet came to Mr. Hoge's attention and he felt that it called for an answer. Accordingly in 1793 he published a pamphlet under the title, "Strictures on a Pamphlet by the Rev. Jeremiah Walker, entitled the Fourfold Foundation of Calvinism Examined and Shaken" which had considerable circulation. Around the turn of the century Moses Hoge felt impelled by the vogue of French infidelity (mediated through the French Revolution) and the popularity of such writings as Paine's "Age of Reason" and Godwin's "Political Justice" to issue a manual as an antidote to the poison of infidelity. His biographer describes the resulting work in these words:

" Having chosen for this purpose the Bishop of Landaff's "Apology for the Bible in a series of letters addressed to Thomas Paine, author of a book entitled the Age of Reason, Part the Second" & some historical selections from Paley's Evidences he thought proper to add to these, some reply to Mr. Paine's Age of Reason, Part the First, with the view of rendering the work more complete and useful. This performance consisting also of Letters to Thomas Paine was called 'The Sophist Unmasked'; the whole work composed of these three parts was denominated 'The Christian Panoply.' " 1

1   ibid p. 145



Apparently there were no copyright laws in those days. From the Shepherds Town period also comes an article on the subject of missions. The General Assembly had resolved to establish a fund for missionary and other pious and charitable purposes and had appointed Mr. Hoge as one of the agents to solicit for this cause. On March 15, 1803 he records in his diary that he has written a circular letter for the mission cause. p. 197

Several ecclesiastical events of interest occurred during the Shepherds Town period. Just before his removal to this pastorate the Presbytery of Lexington was created (May 1786) and Mr. Hoge became a member of it. Shortly after his assumption of the Shepherds Town pastorate the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church was convened. In 1788 the Synod of New York and Philadelphia was dissolved to meet the following year as the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, and four synods created in its place, namely, New York and New Jersey, Philadelphia, Virginia, and the Carolinas. The Synod of Virginia held its first meeting in October 1788. In May 1791 Mr. Hoge attended his first General Assembly as a commissioner of Lexington Presbytery and was interested in meeting and hearing some of the great figures of the church, but was constrained to ask in a letter to a friend, "Are these the disciples, the ministers of the meek and humble Jesus who endured the cross and despised the shame? Where are the signatures of his image?"<sup>1</sup> In 1794 the Synod of Virginia p. 76 p. 119

<sup>1</sup> ibid p. 86



organized a new presbytery to be known by the name of Winchester. Its members were composed of ministers who were formerly of Lexington Presbytery, of whom Mr. Hoge was the first to settle within the bounds of the new presbytery. The presbytery met in Winchester and by appointment of Synod Mr. Hoge preached a sermon and presided as first moderator. The Dec. 4, 1794 entry in his diary records this event: " I preached at the institution of the Presbytery of Winchester from Matt. 13: 31,32. I felt very languid owing perhaps in some measure to a cold fatiguing ride. Often when I hope to do something more than common, I am sadly disappointed. This is no doubt right. But were I as dead to self as I ought to be, such dispensations would not I imagine be any longer necessary. O wretched man that I am who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death." <sup>1</sup>

Moses Hoge is associated with an historical event which justifies inclusion at this point. In August 1794 a requisition of militia had been made on the states of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia for the purpose of suppressing the Whiskey Rebellion which centered in the western part of Pennsylvania. West of the mountains there was not lacking, even among ministers, those who were in sympathy with the rebellion. Political differences that extended beyond the matter of an excise on whiskey entered into the situation and arrayed the people in opposing parties. At the height of this disturbance the synod met in Harrisonburgh in the autumn of 1794. At that time the Synod of Virginia included the presbyteries of Hanover, Lexington, Redstone, Tran-

<sup>1</sup> Ibid p. 125



sylvania and Ohio. Two of these, and to some extent a third, covered the territory affected by the rebellion. Unfortunately at the same time that Synod was meeting in Harrisonburgh a contingent of soldiers on the way to quell the rebellion was stationed in the same town, which fact aggravated the situation which is about to be related. On the way to Synod Mr. Hoge and a fellow traveler discussed the matter of the rebellion, and concurred in the opinion that a church court in the interests of ecclesiastical authority should frown on the spirit of anarchy which had appeared. They agreed that a resolution on this subject should be proposed to Synod. At this point we will let the biographer take over: "According to the agreement already noticed the attention of the synod was called to the following resolution- 'that the Synod prepare an address to the people under their care inculcating upon them the duty of obedience to the laws of their country.' No member of an ecclesiastical body formed on a Scriptural basis, could be disposed to dissent from the principle maintained in this resolution. But as its application to the disturbances in the West was obvious some of the members were opposed to its prevalence. They were however placed in a situation peculiarly delicate. Their opposition to this measure from consideration of policy might subject them to the imputation of hostility to its abstract principle. And apprehensions for their personal safety were not altogether unwarranted by the feverish state of the community, in the bosom of which they were called to act. When the resolution was brought before the house, a painful pause ensued, which was at length broken by the commencement of an animated debate. The measure was on different



grounds ardently opposed. In supporting it Mr. Hoge took an active part. The question on the resolution was finally taken and lost by a mere majority." <sup>1</sup>

Information on the failure of this resolution having been quickly received by the soldiers and the populace, a near-mob scene ensued. Anonymous letters of a threatening nature were dropped on the floor of Synod, and a high military officer addressed the moderator, demanding a record of the ayes and noes on this ballot, with the reasons given for the negative vote. A committee of Synod waited upon this gentleman and persuaded him to withdraw his request and even induced him to sign a statement saying that in his opinion the action of Synod was not subversive of law and order. In the meantime Mr. Hoge had found his way into the confused mob of citizens and soldiery and exhorted them to desist from a course that would bring only disgrace. His attempts to mollify them were not without success. Later he was asked to deliver them a discourse on the occasion of their departure for the west, and he chose as his text, "Render unto Caesar, etc." He records this in his diary. "I preached to the soldiers on the western expedition. It was a disagreeable exercise. I had

<sup>1</sup> Ibid p. 121-122

According to the writer of the above quotation, William Graham, of Liberty Hall, had been the chief opponent of the resolution and influential in defeating it. An explanation is made that Graham had always been a violent anti-federalist, and opposition to federal policies overcame his better judgment in this instance. He afterwards admitted that his judgment on this occasion had been erroneous and that the resolution should have prevailed. P. 122



however some freedom of address. I was sensibly afflicted with the reflection that an unjustifiable and most unnatural insurrection should render a recourse to arms necessary in support of the government." <sup>1</sup>

Hoge's diary during the Shepherds Town period duly records certain family affairs. It is interesting to note that deaths receive far more notice than births. Several children are born during this period but there is only a brief notice of two sons, one of whom is buried a few days later. The birth p.128 of his other children pass unrecorded. In 1795 his father dies at the age of 87. Hoge had felt a deep affection and respect for his father to whom he had looked as his spiritual preceptor during his formative years. His diary displays real feeling on this occasion. Two years later he loses his mother. He seemstto think that his mother had been overly anxious about too many worldly matters since his father's death which accounted in part for the fact that she lacked a "triumph of faith" in her dying moments. I quote an excerpt from his diary at this point because it is typical of many observations on the spiritual condition of people on their death-beds. " To-day after a long & lingering illness, my mother departed this life & seemed to die in peace. In the first stages of her disease she was full of fear, but ~~for several days~~ preceding her dissolution she seemedto be resigned to the will of God & quite willing to die. But though released from that fear which hath torment, she did not seem to die in the triumphs of faith." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibid p. 124

<sup>2</sup> ibid p. 131-132



On June 18th 1802 Mr. Hoge suffered his greatest bereavement in the death of his wife. She had always been somewhat frail and had suffered progressive stages of tuberculosis. The winter before her death he had taken her to South Carolina in which climate she had shown some improvement. In the spring they started for home, but while traveling through Virginia she suffered a relapse. Mr. Hoge decided to turn aside to Sweet Springs, where she had found some relief in former days, but before they arrived she breathed her last. In the biography ten large pages are devoted to the account of the death and burial. There were many scenes between husband and wife in which he anxiously inquired about her spiritual state. Her answers were for the most part satisfactory and he was assured she died in the Lord. He was enabled to stand at the head of her grave and preach the funeral sermon with tranquillity and composure. When he had returned to Sheperds Town he was moved to preach on his experience. His biographer records the occasion in these words. " In the bereavement which he had endured, his affectionate congregation cherished a lively sympathy. And as he had announced to them his intention of delivering on the following Sabbath a discourse in relation to that event, that day was awaited with unusual solicitude. When it arrived he appeared in the pulpit. The text which he had chosen was highly appropriate to the melancholy occasion. 'The cup which my father hath given me shall I not drink it?' John 18.11. With an ardor of feeling & manner usually hazardous in the commencement of a discourse, he replied to this interrogation ' Yes, o yes, drink it, drink it, drink it.' The impression



instantaneously made upon the audience may more easily be conceived than described. The discourse was devoted to the illumination of the doctrine, that we ought to be resigned to the most afflictive dispensations of providence, & of the improvement which we should seek to derive from them. In its conclusion he related in a manner alike remote from sensibility and insensibility, some of the most interesting religious exercises of Mrs. Hoge, during her illness & at her death." <sup>1</sup>

Throughout the following year his diary is filled with lamentations for his lost wife and exhortation for himself. He also mentions on four different occasions that he has indulged in an "unprofitable supposition." ( Sept. 6, Oct. 8, Oct. 16, 1802, and Jan. 5, 1803). These statements in connection with lamentations about his wife indicate, perhaps, that these were thoughts which he considered disloyal to her memory. In May he records that he visited his wife's grave and describes the emotions he experienced on that occasion.

In October 1803 he attended a meeting of the Synod of Virginia at Hampden-Sidney College and on the 25th of that month was united in marriage with Mrs. Susanna Hunt, a widow of Charlotte County, whom he had known for some years prior to the death of her husband. He writes to the family on this wise, " When I left Shepherds Town, I had the apprehension that some strange and probably disastrous event would befall me before my return. This you may recollect I mentioned at my own table the day I set out for this country. I had then a particular event in view. For Mrs. Susanna Hunt I had

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid p. 164



long entertained the sentiments of sincere and tender friendship. At a time when I could be in no danger of being misled by any improper prepossession, her accomplishments & her virtues, appeared to me something more than what commonly falls to the lot of mortals in the present imperfect state. But the thoughts of a second marriage were not to me agreeable. I could not however avoid seeing her again. Nor indeed, although much afraid of the consequences, did I wish to avoid it. The result has been what I did not expect. She is to accompany me to Shepherds Town in about three weeks from the present time. Whether in this instance I have acted prudently or not I am conscious of having acted according to the best light I could attain..."<sup>1</sup>

It appears that while individuals were generous the Shepherds Town congregation as a whole did not fulfill their promise to provide for their minister's temporal necessities. In 1805, at a time when he was educating his children, he found it necessary to open an academy in order to add to his income. In 1807 he received an invitation to assume charge of an academy and congregation in Charles Town. Being undecided in his mind, and having a home of his own in Shepherds Town, he did not see fit to accept the call. But unknown to Mr. Hoge another sphere of service was in process of being opened up for him at the same time. In 1805 some of the ministers of Hanover Presbytery proposed the establishment at Hampden-Sidney College of a library which would contain books which they would not be able individually to possess, but which would then be available to

1. Ibid p. 204-205



all. Accordingly a number of volumes was procured and the library established. It then occurred to these gentlemen that the library would be a splendid facility for the education of ministerial students and they began to think in terms of a seminary. The presbytery was consulted on this matter and in April 1806 the minutes show the following resolutions:

" 1. That an attempt be made to establish at Hampden-Sidney College a complete Theological Library for the benefit of students in Divinity.

2. That an attempt be made to establish a fund for the educating of poor & pious youth, for the ministry of the gospel."

A committee was appointed to manage this business. The funds to be collected would be vested in the Trustees of Hampden-Sidney College, but the appropriation remaining forever with the Presbytery. By the Spring of 1807 funds amounting to more than \$2500 had been obtained, and on the eighth of June the trustees of the college decided upon Mr. Hoge who " was regarded as a suitable person at once to preside over the college and to foster the nascent Theological Seminary." <sup>1</sup>

The opportunity that was furnished to train young men for the ministry was the point that was stressed by members of the Board of Trustees in writing Mr. Hoge about this position. Extracts from several of the letters will show how they all urged this particular feature. Drury Lacy writes, "---You know we have been making some efforts toward establishing a Theological School at the College. I trust this consideration will have some weight in turning the scale in our favor & inducing you to come among us. We shall need your assistance

<sup>1</sup> Ibid p. 212



and influence both in establishing and conducting it. I trust it is a sphere marked out by providence for you to be useful in both to the present and succeeding generations." <sup>1</sup>

Another trustee writes, "This Seminary is the offspring of private donations and of piety. Can you refuse to be her guardian? She has been uniformly struggling with difficulties yet she has sent forth many useful characters into our country. She is now embarrassed & in difficulties. But which is the most useful character, one who cultivates the field already prepared to his hand, or one who has to break it up, prepare it and cultivate it?" <sup>2</sup>

A member of both the Board and the Presbytery writes, "What I wish to present to you for your most serious consideration is the importance of our Theological School. For some years to come the head of the Theological School must be the President of Hampden-Sidney College. Now the eyes of all who are at the same time friends of this institution and acquaintances of yours are directed to you as the fittest person in the compass of their knowledge for a professor of Divinity... God in his providence so ordered matters that in your younger days you applied your mind with great ardour to study, and stored it with the treasures of knowledge. And now when you are in the full maturity of judgement, & in the vigorous exercises of all your faculties, you are called to take upon you a charge of very great importance, to teach the youth of our land virtue and science, & to train up young men for the ministry: does it not deserve most serious consideration whether it was not from the beginning the intention of

<sup>1</sup> Ibid p. 213

<sup>2</sup> Ibid P. 213



Heaven, that you should in this way be useful to your fellow creatures & do good to the Church?" <sup>1</sup> In a letter written some years later (Jan. 1810) Mr. Hoge indicates that the prime factor that operated in making his decision was the Seminary. "It was chiefly from regard to a Theological Seminary lately established at this place that I was induced to accept of the presidency of Hampden-Sidney College. Of that Seminary you have probably seen some account in the public prints. It has already been useful: & will there is reason to expect continue to be so for ages to come." <sup>2</sup>

After a pastorate just short of twenty years in Shepherds Town, Mr. Hoge removed to Hampden-Sidney in October of 1807. That he did not expect an easy task is evident from a sentence in a letter written about this time. "Thus am I about to resign the charge of a people with whom I have lived in much harmony for the space of almost twenty years; but whether it is in judgment or in mercy I know not." <sup>3</sup> His duties at Hampden-Sidney included administration, teaching and preaching. He engaged in intense study, not only along theological lines, but <sup>of</sup> the entire curriculum of the college. He taught much more than was required of him because his assistants were chiefly young men who taught as a side-line while pursuing their own education. He was also largely responsible for financing the institution by soliciting donations. He was indefatigable in his attempts to raise the level of the institution. That he had some success is evidenced by the following quotation which his biographer includes from a letter written by a "gentleman of respectability". "I am both pleased and surprised to learn,

<sup>1</sup> Ibid p. 215    <sup>2</sup> Ibid p. 231    <sup>3</sup> Ibid p. 215



as I very frequently do, how much the public opinion has changed in relation to that institution. Its reputation is daily growing. Numbers whose sons are now too young to be sent to college are pleasing themselves with anticipating the time when they will be under the care of Dr. Hoge." <sup>1</sup>

Dr. Hoge either ceased to keep a diary during the Hampden-Sidney period or else his biographer doesn't quote from it, but there are a number of quotations from letters which give us some information about these years. References in this paper will deal not with the academic routine which largely consumed his years at Hampden-Sidney, but with a few events of more than ordinary interest.

Hanover Presbytery seems to have been ahead of the General Assembly in its concern for a theological Seminary. It was not until 1809 that the General Assembly appointed a committee that subsequently reported three plans to be sent down to the presbyteries. Between the first plan which proposed the establishment of one institution only, and the third which assigned one to every synod, the presbyteries were almost equally divided. The General Assembly however judged the weight to lie with the first plan and resolved on measures to establish one seminary, but with the expressed reservation " that every Presbytery & Synod will of course be left at full liberty to countenance the proposed plan or not at pleasure." <sup>2</sup>

In a letter dated Dec. 5, 1809 Dr. Hoge indicates his preference for more than one seminary. He seemed

<sup>1</sup> Ibid p. 219      <sup>2</sup> Ibid p. 221



to fear a deficiency of piety in one large official seminary and tended to reserve for presbyteries and synods the right to establish their own seminaries or theological professorships as they saw fit.

This action of the General Assembly spurred the Synod of Virginia to establish their seminary on a more official and permanent basis. Up until this time, while called a Seminary popularly, it was in reality a theological professorship at Hampden-Sidney College. Synod therefore in 1812 "unanimously resolved on the establishment of a Theological Seminary; & unanimously concurred in the appointment of Dr. Hoge as their professor."<sup>1</sup> In 1816 the Synod asked the legislature to incorporate the Seminary, but the "Legislature saw lurking 'gorgon hydras and chimeras dire' & deemed its rejection a requisite proof of their attachment to the public weal."<sup>2</sup> In those years an extreme interpretation of the principle of separation of church and state made the incorporation of a theological seminary appear to be a dangerous move.

It appears that Dr. Hoge had some intentions of resigning in 1812. In a letter to a Mr. Priestley in August 1812 he writes( after describing his work and comfortable situation), " But I begin to sigh for retirement and rest. I never contemplated this as the seat of my old age. And it appears to me advisable to retire while the powers of my mind are not impaired. I therefore expect to leave Hampden-Sidney next spring.... But I shall try not to be sanguine. A thousand unforeseen events may defeat my plan. Indeed I scarcely know



how to leave my pupils and the people of my charge. It appears to me, however, to be a duty." <sup>1</sup> In September of 1812 he expresses to the trustees his intention to resign. They ask him to remain and suggest the possibility of a vice-president to relieve him of some of his duties. This seems to have caused him to defer his plans for retirement.

Two brief items of interest might be included at this point. In a letter of May 1813 Dr. Hoge mentions that he was present at the licensure of a son and states that God had seen fit to call three of his sons to the ministry. In August of 1814, after hearing of the capture of Washington by the British, he preached a sermon at Cumberland which excited considerable comment, and preached again that afternoon in College Hall from Psalm 112:7- "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." p. 234

During the last five years of his stay at Hampden-Sidney difficulties appear to have developed. There seem to have been some differences of opinion about the administration of the Seminary, and, in addition there was a general lack of support on the part of the churches of the Synod. Only a few hints of this creep into the biography written by his son. John Blair Hoge has a paragraph which helps us read between the lines of a statement from a letter of Moses Hoge which will be quoted below. After mentioning the difficulties in securing funds for the institution, John

<sup>1</sup> Ibid p. 232



Blair Hoge writes, " Indeed until about the period of Dr. Hoge's departure from the offices which he had held in the church, the Synod never entered with spirit, into the arrangement of a system of instruction & government. In this chaotic state it was thrown into his hands; and notwithstanding the subsequent appointment of a Board of Trustees, from 1812 to 1820, its management rested chiefly with his discretion. It would be marvellous if no peril had attended a responsibility of this sort. In a case like this nothing is easier than for any man or any body of men to inculcate a public functionary when the rule of duty from which he has swerved is unwritten except on the tablets of each man's opinion. Indeed it ought to be stated that Dr. Hoge had the misfortune to differ with a number of his brethren respecting the best method of rendering the Seminary under his care extensively useful. Whether the honor of being right belonged to him or to them it is not the office of this page to decide. But while his sentiments remained unchanged he did not hesitate regardless of any censures which he might and did incur; & some of which were most groundless and injurious, to expend for what he believed to be a valuable consideration, the full amount of the discretion which he possessed." <sup>1</sup> There are enough hints in the above paragraph to show that things were not going as smoothly as they might. These comments by his biographer help us understand this quotation from one of Dr. Hoge's letters written in June 1818. " The mystery which has for the space of eight months covered the proceedings of the Synod of Virginia in impenetrable darkness, begins to be

<sup>1</sup> Ibid p. 223



developed. Nivi per-n-mus quod non veriti sumus. To be suspected of negligence in the discharge of one of the most responsible offices in the world! Had I been charged with suicide, it would in my opinion have been more plausible at least." <sup>1</sup> \*

Dr. Hoge's health, which had declined during the winter of 1819-20, showed some improvement in the spring but this proved to be temporary. Presbytery had appointed him a commissioner to the General Assembly meeting in Philadelphia, but the final decision to attempt the trip was not made until the morning of his departure. He had long been interested in the American Bible Society which was holding its anniversary meetings in New York about this time, so he included this occasion in his itinerary. After leaving New York he stopped by Princeton in order to be present at a meeting of the directors of the seminary there, and to hear

the examinations of

\* An examination of the Synod minutes does not reveal any official charge of negligence. Indeed it seems as if Dr. Hoge had been doing too much. While the Seminary had had trustees for some time they reported that all they had done was to handle the funds. There seemed to be a desire on the part of Synod that the trustees assume more authority over the curriculum, the library(whose rules had been too lax), and general conduct of the Seminary. One resolution states that the professor of theology should not be on the board of trustees to pass review on his own labors. The upshot was the appointment of a new board of trustees which did not contain Dr. Hoge. The reflections in this paper indicate the interpretation Dr. Hoge and his son placed on these difficulties.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid p. 236



the examination of the theological students. From Princeton he accompanied Dr. Archibald Alexander to Philadelphia. In consequence of a cold he contracted he was indisposed for several days and was unable to fulfill an appointment to preach in one of the churches of the city on May 28th. When the Assembly adjourned Dr. Hoge still hoped to begin his homeward journey within a few days, and the letters to his family indicate he expected to recover. But it soon became evident to his physician that there was little hope for recovery. He took a turn for the better around the middle of June and even dictated some assignments for his class in theology at Hampden-Sidney. A few days later his wife and one of his sons arrived at his bedside. After lingering some time longer he died on the afternoon of July 5th. The funeral was held on the 7th and he was buried in the churchyard ~~for~~ the Third Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia. The inscription on a monument by his grave reads as follows:

Near this Monument  
erected by filial affection  
reposes  
all that was mortal  
of the  
Rev. Moses Hoge D. D.  
President of Hampden-Sidney College  
and Professor of Divinity in the  
Theological Seminary of the Synod of Virginia  
A man of genius, profound erudition & ardent piety  
He lived beloved and died lamented  
Aged 68 years  
From the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church  
in the United States of America  
To the General Assembly of the Church in Heaven  
his translation  
Afflictive to his friends but joyous to himself  
was accomplished July 5, 1820  
" Being dead he yet speaketh"  
"If in my life I tried in vain to save,  
Hear me at last, o hear me from the grave."



The excellence of Moses Hoge lay in his strength of character rather than in his social graces and attractiveness. Perhaps this would naturally be expected from a joint product of frontier conditions and Calvinism-rugged strength rather than beauty. The only portrait of him- a pen and ink sketch- shows him during his days at Hampden-Sidney, sitting very erect in his chair before a bookcase with his legs crossed and the toe of one foot anchored behind the heel of the other- a position that not everyone could assume with comfort. He is dressed in the fashion of his day: slippers with buckles, knee breeches, coat with large cuffs and collar, and a shirt with ruffles on the bosom and sleeves. The picture shows a man of slender figure, probably above average height. The profile shows a sloping forehead, long nose, tight lips, and a firm chin with clearly marked jaw line.

During his early educational days he was "grave, retiring, studious." His inclinations were always in the direction of study and contemplation rather than toward activity or social life. Especially at school he seems to have been somewhat diffident. A certain uncommunicativeness marked his personality all through life. His son in introducing the biography remarks that there are wide gaps in the knowledge of his father's life because he had never related much about his early days. If it were not for extracts from his diary and letters we would know very little about his thoughts and feelings. His diffidence may have been in part the result of his physical awkwardness which seems to have been a marked characteris-



tic. His biographer writes that during his days at Liberty Hall he excited the curiosity of his fellow students because of his age and appearance, and to these handicaps was the added disadvantage of being a Seceder- all of which made him the victim of what we would call "razzing" today. "Diffident in no small degree his deportment was what the world calls awkward." <sup>1</sup> A clergyman friend attempted to help him acquire a little polish during this period, but after repeated efforts to have him enter a room gracefully and perform a bow, his preceptor observed, "I do not believe that all the dancing masters in the world could make any alteration in your manners: we must let you go out as you are & make your way through the world in your own way." <sup>2</sup>

At one time Hoge was so discouraged with his performance at public speaking that he questioned whether he would be of greatest usefulness in the ministry. Samuel Stanhope Smith encouraged the young student by advising him to "persevere in present duty and commit the rest to Providence." In speaking of his father's pulpit exercises the son and biographer mentions that some of every audience are captivated by graceful gestures and eloquent speech, and place pleasing appearance above thoughtful discourse. "To persons of this class, it is admitted that Mr. Hoge was illy qualified to be an interesting preacher. But his public discourses were from the beginning instructive and impressive to the pious & the judicious; to all who regarded the matter as more important than the manner." <sup>3</sup> His preaching increased in power during the years and one of his hearers during the Hampden-Sidney days remarked that the awkward

<sup>1</sup> Ibid p. 27

<sup>2</sup> Ibid p. 28

<sup>3</sup> Ibid p. 50



gestures of his long arms and other peculiarities were forgotten in following the message.

We must not assume that because of his diffident and retiring habits there was any weakness of character or lack of conviction in the man. He had an independence of mind and firmness of will that remained with him through life. The fact that he waited until he was twenty to unite with the church was due to the careful and protracted attention he gave to his father's brand of religion before he accepted it in general, with considerable modification, and joined the Seceders. In connection with the "razzing" he received from his fellow students at Liberty Hall his son writes, "The deportment which they observed toward him was not of the most respectful kind. But this had no influence on his conduct. Uniformly modest and inoffensive he exhibited at the same time a firmness and independence of character, which proved most conclusively that he was swayed by a rule too high and sacred to be surrendered at the dictate of every or of any contingency. It was soon perceived, too, that while he held his religious peculiarities with decision, he was no bigot."<sup>1</sup> His character was not, perhaps, without its trace of stubbornness as witnessed by his attitude when cited by the Presbytery of Carlyle for laboring within its bounds without permission, and by what we infer to have been his resistance to the Board of Trustees of the Seminary in his later years. In contrast to this he at times displayed an open-mindedness, as in his step by step decision to enter the regular branch of the presbyterian Church. Dr. Hoge

<sup>1</sup> Ibid p. 28



could also accept the fact that there were many differences of opinion in regard to religion. His tolerance to other denominations is shown by his invitation to Francis Asbury to speak at his school, and by numerous entries in his diary which show that he often went to hear other ministers preach. He speaks highly of <sup>an</sup> untutored Baptist minister whom he heard on one occasion.

Hoge's formal education covered a space of about three years. " If in this short term he made uncommon improvements, his success was not owing so much to any unusual facility in acquiring knowledge as to a diligence & perseverance which nothing could subdue. Indeed his mind had a way of working so original and so peculiarly his own that it could not without immense labor be drilled into the technicalities of a scholastic routine." <sup>1</sup>

Hoge was a man of a few firm friendships rather than of many transient ones. On his death bed he speaks of his lifelong college friends- Blackburn, Priestly, Houston and William Graham.

He was a typical Scot in that, while spiritual rather than temporal affairs were uppermost in his mind, he exhibited some forethought for his family's material welfare. He was as poor in this world's goods as the average minister of that day. For a time he had to open an academy to supplement his income to the point where he could educate his children. But in spite of his limited means we discover that he owns his own house in Sheperdstown. As professor of theology at Hampden Sidney he received a salary of \$800 a year. His wife's death

<sup>1</sup> Ibid p. 31



moved him to make a special effort to provide for his family in case of his demise. In his diary for Nov. 12, 1802 he writes, " I was interrupted by business of a temporal nature, endeavoring to secure some provision for my family when I shall rest from my labors. Lord may I herein be successful if it will be for their good..." <sup>1</sup> His son speaks of this effort in the following words, " He once indeed did make an effort to (preserve) his family, in case of his removal from them, from dependence upon the charities of an un pitying world. And his contentment with the result of that effort, if all circumstances were made known, would probably tempt the man to smile who without plea of necessity, adds house to house and farm to farm." <sup>2</sup> Before leaving for the General Assembly in 1820 he spent considerable time trying to unravel some perplexities which he had suffered to invade his worldly accounts in consequence of the superior attention he had paid to the interests of a higher stewardship, according to his biographer. We might conclude that while he didn't neglect his temporal affairs, his talents ran toward scholarship rather than successful financial efforts.

It would not be proper to conclude this study of Moses Hoge without some attention to his religious experience, theological beliefs, and views on kindred matters. In connection with his religious experience we might mention first the influence of godly parents, especially that of his father whose mental, moral and spiritual qualities he greatly admired. Young Hoge was brought up on the Bible and the Shorter Catechism. The first book that was peculiarly instrumental in enlightening

1 Ibid p. 185      2 ibid p. 207



his mind and affecting his heart was Alleine's "Alarm to the Unconverted." And a sermon delivered by Dr. Waddell, the blind minister of the Northern Neck, was the first religious discourse from which he recollected to have received any unusual impression. Two anecdotes from his early life serve to illustrate the strictness of frontier Calvinistic morals which molded his character. At one period in his youth he was quite interested in an innocent amusement, but, "when in a particular instance, he relinquished this amusement at the close of the evening of Saturday, he detected in his mind a feeling of sorrow that he should not be able to resume it until the Sabbath should be over. Aware of the ascendancy which, although innocent in itself, it was beginning to acquire over him, & apprehensive of the temptations that might ensue, he at once resolved & invariably supported his resolution, never to engage in it again." <sup>1</sup> At this period it was also his custom, if he noticed any deportment inconsistent with the sanctity of the Sabbath among a youthful gathering at his house, to take down some religious book and read aloud an impressive passage as the least objectionable method of offering reproof. p. 13

Hoge's conversion was of the gradual rather than the cataclysmic type. To his religious impressions he was unable to assign an commencement. On the contrary he declared that he could not remember a time when he did not "reverence and love the character of God; and when he did not find pleasure in the society and conversation of pious persons & in the exercises of religious worship." <sup>2</sup> He writes in his diary( sev- p. 12

<sup>1</sup> Ibid p. 13

<sup>2</sup> ibid p. 12



eral years after becoming a minister)," I found great reason to be thankful for the invaluable blessing of a pious education & for the cooperating influences of divine grace which rendered the instructions and admonitions of my parents, particularly those of my father successful & thus made religious impressions upon my mind very early which have not<sup>yet</sup> been effaced. I found reason to be thankful that a gracious providence had preserved me from my infancy from those open vices and follies which stain the characters & ruin the morals of multitudes who are afterwards by the grace of a Sovereign God reformed & brought to real piety." 1

It has already been observed that young Moses did not make a public profession until he was twenty years of age. This was in all probability due to unusual circumstances. His father had withdrawn from the Presbyterian Church near his home and united with the Seceders. The nearest church of this denomination was in Pennsylvania. There the father resorted at least once a year to take the sacrament. Having finally concluded to join his father's church young Moses p. 14 at the age of 20 accompanied his parent to Pennsylvania and united with the Associate Church.

It appears that Moses felt his first desire to be a minister at the age of six. This desire never left him, although throughout his early youth it was held in abeyance because he did not think it possible, living in a secluded situation and being of small means, to get the necessary education.



The more peculiar religious views which he adopted from his father were modified during his term at Liberty Hall. One advanced step in his thinking is recorded in these words, "And before the term which he spent at that Seminary was accomplished he was prepared to set down with his Presbyterian brethren at the table of ~~their~~ Lord and his Lord, & with a heart dissolving over the mercies of a common salvation to ask triumphantly 'Is Christ divided?' Such an act of intercommunion was then almost unprecedented in the religious connection which he had not yet forsaken & which perhaps he had not yet resolved to forsake."<sup>1</sup> A short time later, after consulting his father, he was received under care of Hanover Presbytery and thus entered the main stream of Presbyterianism in America.

In the discussion of Dr. Hoge's views on theology and related matters this paper is confined to what is revealed in the manuscript biography written by his son. For a more thorough study of his views the reader is referred to Dr. Hoge's pamphlets mentioned on page ten of this paper; to a posthumous volume of his sermons; and to Dwight's Theology with which he was in essential agreement in his maturer years.

By the standards of our day we would probably call Moses Hoge a strict Calvinist because of his nurture in the Seceder Church. His father's influence was great, and Moses writes about the time of his parent's death that "he had taken much pains to learn what is the system of truth that was once delivered to the saints, by our Saviour & his apostles, & the

<sup>1</sup> Ibid p.29



system which he finally adopted was moderate Calvinism." <sup>1</sup>  
 According to the standards of his own day we can call Moses Hoge a "moderate" Calvinist.

The outstanding feature of Moses Hoge's theology seems to be a reliance upon and resignation to the Providence of God. On the death of one of his sons he writes, " However I find myself much more resigned since about nine o'clock this morning than I would have imagined possible in so short a time. I shall never forget I Thess. IV. 13- to the end. And why should we not be resigned? The great Ruler of the universe doeth all things well. I dare not wish our son restored to life again were such an event possible. I hope he is in a situation which he would not exchange for ten thousand worlds like ours. I scarcely think it any calamity for a child at an early period to be removed from a world of trouble and sin." <sup>2</sup>  
 When he writes to his wife from his death bed in Philadelphia he expresses his hope that his health will soon allow him to return home, but adds, " One thing however is certain that nothing can befall us without the divine mission and appointment. And this will always be right and best." <sup>3</sup> In lesser matters he also depended upon the ordering of Providence, but sometimes verged on the mystical or even superstitious. In his early ministry on the South Branch he had determined to leave his people and planned to announce it at the conclusion of the morning service. After the sermon and a hymn he arose to inform them that he intended to leave and go to Kentucky,, but while he was speaking a few introductory sentences his

1 Ibid p. 128    2 ibid p. 75    3 ibid p. 246



views were instantaneously changed, for no reason he could explain, and he felt himself constrained to tell them that after a short absence at Presbytery he would return to them for a period. This led to his becoming their settled pastor. He always regarded this event as a special interposition of providence. Another circumstance which he attributes to providence might be differently interpreted by a modern psychologist. During his Shepherdstown pastorate Dr. Hoge felt some twinges of conscience because he so seldom wrote out his discourses. He resolved on the occasion of his first visit to the General Assembly to write out a discourse in case an opportunity to preach should arise while he was away. He set a certain morning to begin. The night before in a dream or vision he thought he received a monition from above- "a- p. 87  
bandon the plan you have formed & if called to speak in my name, it shall be given you in that hour what you shall say." However, he never allowed a dream to serve as a rule of conduct, so accordingly the next morning he set about the composition of a sermon. He had selected a subject and commenced the writing when an unexpected interruption occurred. During six successive weeks he repeatedly resumed this exercise with a similar result in every instance. When he preached on his trip- without written preparation- he felt that he did especially well. From this and succeeding experiences he decided it was the will of Providence that he should entirely withdraw his dependence from written preparation from the pulpit. This resolve he adhered to and consequently left no sermons in full.



A posthumous volume of his sermons was prepared from notes. One other instance reveals his faith in the leading of Providence. After hearing of the capture of Washington by the British he wrote, " In the morning I was more than usually afflicted for the state of our country. And what I think is worthy of being committed to record in this place, upon having recourse to my Bible for relief the first passage which was presented to my view was the flight of the Syrian army from Samaria. On the circumstance just mentioned no dependence ought to be placed. We must not convert the book of God into a lottery. But somehow, I scarcely know in what way I am led to entertain a confident expectation that God would be pleased in some way to deliver us & that at no very remote period from the present most calamitous context." <sup>1</sup>

Most readers would feel cheated if the study of a Calvinist did not include some reference to election. A quotation from one of his pamphlets reveals the subtle gymnastics by which a theologian of that day attempts to explain election while absolving God from responsibility in regard to the non-elect. " Nothing can be ever inferred from election along with regard to the state of the non-elect, only that they are not subjects of distinguishing grace. When God elected the Jews to be a peculiar people, it did not imply that none but Jews could be the people of God. Were the Sovereign of all worlds to translate the half of the inhabitants of our world to heaven today, from this circumstance it would not be possible to

<sup>1</sup> Ibid p. 23



learn what the fate of the rest would be. Nor can we learn from election considered simply in itself, or from the translation of the elect to heaven, at different periods of time, what the final state of the non-elect would be. There is no connection between the unmerited grace bestowed upon the elect & the voluntary sin & consequent ruin of those that perish. If however the history of electing love should imply that the non-elect will perish, this would be no reason why the doctrine should be discarded, unless it could be made to appear, that election is the cause of the destruction. We do not erase from our Bibles the numerous texts which assure us the wicked will be condemned to everlasting destruction. Nor do we reject the history of Noah's preservation in the ark because it implies that the rest of the generation perished in the flood. And we might as well allege that Noah's preservation was a cause why his contemporaries were destroyed by the flood, or that Lot's escape from destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was a cause why his fellow citizens were consumed by fire from heaven, as allege that election is a cause why the non-elect perish... And when the angels carry the souls of the elect into Abraham's bosom, they do not at the same time carry the souls of the non-elect to destruction." <sup>1</sup>

Dr. Hoge believed in the stark reality of sin. He did not spare himself in this regard. His diary abounds in expressions of repentance, self-examination, self-chastisement, weakness and dependence. He exhibits the type of humility that Calvinism induces. He observed the custom on the "anniversary of his nativity" of reviewing the year, deploring its waste, and praying for help and strength. He undoubtedly believed in



sin and man's need of grace.

A few extracts from his diary and letters will show his attitude toward evangelism. On one occasion he writes, "...I had the satisfaction to find that the person who apprehended himself to be destitute of religion at our last meeting obtained a very satisfactory relief. O my God I thank Thee for this instance of thy lovingkindness & the success with which Thou hast been pleased to crown my weak attempts to promote the glory of thy name & the good of souls." <sup>1</sup> He records numerous death bed scenes in which he attempts to help the soul to win through to salvation. But it was a source of disappointment to him that no congregation under his charge experienced a real revival or "religious excitement." Dr. Hoge had an opportunity to observe the religious excesses that characterized the revivals in the early 1800's when he took his wife on a trip through the Carolinas for her health. He records his reaction in these words, " I think it not improbable or at least a possible case, that the exercise under consideration may in some instances naturally arise from strong spiritual affections excited in a heart that has been roused to a state of extatic fervency. But will this justify the exercise itself? I think not. What would be the consequence if every innocent natural affection was in every instance allowed to express itself without control in that way which would be most natural, or to which the impulse of the affection might not directly lead? This would not be tolerated in any civilized society. And ought religious affections be permitted, without restraint to assume an inde-

<sup>1</sup> Ibid p. 85



cent form of expression because that form may be natural? Surely not. Christian prudence ought always to regulate & govern religious as well as other exercises. I cannot yet bring myself to believe that religious dancing is ever necessary, or even the natural result of any divine influence upon a heart that had not previously been aroused to a state of excessive fervour." <sup>1</sup> He felt that much good was being accomplished in these revivals but he deplored the excesses. In his own sacramental service on Oct. 4, 1802 he notes that "a few were overcome and sunk to the earth, but it was in silence." On another occasion he records, "presently a gay young person cried out for mercy. This has not been usual with us; and what is to me a pleasing reflection, there were no improper measures adopted to terrify or alarm any one." p 181

perhaps this would be the proper point to introduce some other quotations which reveal his attitude toward certain matters of church polity. Following an address at a wedding he mentions, "I afterwards introduced the singing of hymns, which will, I suppose, be considered an improper innovation. May these sacred compositions banish from the social circle those vain, idle songs which are so pernicious to good morals & so unbecoming the Christian character." <sup>2</sup> It is an instance of tactfulness on his part that he made this innovation at a wedding instead of at a regular service. An incident in connection with infant baptism is interesting. "I preached at Mr. B--'s & had some satisfaction in the exercise; but was miserably imposed upon with regard to the baptism of a certain child. Nor can I help blaming myself much for want of vigi-

<sup>1</sup> Ibid p. 150      <sup>2</sup> ibid p. 85



lance & care. Thus to prostitute so sacred an ordinance! How it grieves me. How unworthy am I of the office I sustain. Lord lay not this sin to my charge." <sup>1</sup> This is typical of his diary entries. Whatever this imposition may have been he took steps to prevent its recurrence. The next spring he got his people to agree that baptism should be administered on stated occasions like the Lord's Supper, which is not a bad idea. On May the thirteenth of 1792 he records the first of these occasions.

In considering Dr. Hoge's views on the relationship of Church and State two incidents might be cited. When the bill for a general assessment for religious purposes was before the Virginia legislature Dr. Hoge took a firm stand against it in the Presbytery, but other views prevailed and an ambiguous resolution was drawn up which subjected the church to considerable criticism in some quarters. The other incident is connected with the Whiskey Rebellion. Dr. Hoge's resolution before Synod urging upon the dissidents obedience to the laws of the country is interesting in the light of subsequent Presbyterian history. While Dr. Hoge's resolution was perfectly innocent in its wording, its application to the troubled events of that time would have placed the church clearly on the side of administration policy in a controversial political situation in which many members of the Presbyterian Church were on the other side. We can't help but wonder what stand Dr. Hoge would have taken toward the Spring Resolutions had he been present at the General Assembly

<sup>1</sup> Ibid p. 91



of 1861. Was his resolution before Synod in 1794 connected with his political views; and would he have urged obedience to the national government in 1861 had he been living at that time? These are at least interesting speculations though no definite conclusions can be drawn. We do know that Moses Hoge was interested in the negroes and experienced a growing feeling of opposition to slavery. After preaching to negroes on one occasion he records this prayer in his diary, " O grant that thy word delivered to the despised Africans may have a good effect. Pour out upon them a spirit of grace and supplication & deliver them from the slavery of sin. Make them free with the freedom of Jesus Christ..."<sup>1</sup> And in a letter written in July 1801 he says, " Moreover, my objections to the slavery of this country have always been strong & are becoming more so."<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Hoge very early became interested in education. During his days in the Culpepper academy he heard Samuel Stanhope Smith speak to the school, who in the course of his address remarked that " while sanctified learning is the greatest blessing, unsanctified learning is the greatest curse." This made a deep impression on young Hoge and helps account for his lifelong interest in education allied with religion. And he was able to recognize that genuine religion without a formal education can be an excellent thing. On one occasion he wrote in his diary, " I heard Mr. L--- a baptist minister preach an excellent sermon from Zech. 14.8. I am informed that he is not a man of liberal education; and if not, he is a striking proof

1 Ibid p. 150 2 ibid pp. 230



that a liberal education is not in all cases essentially necessary for a minister of the gospel. Very few of the best education can preach like him..."<sup>1</sup> Dr. Hoge was cautious about spending too much time in secular studies. During his Shepherdstown days he confesses in his diary that "too much of this day has I fear been employed in reading history. It is of infinitely greater consequence to act my own part well than to acquaint myself with transactions of former ages. Some knowledge of this kind, is indeed of use, when sanctified. But it ought not to occupy any great proportion of my time."<sup>2</sup> Perhaps something of this same viewpoint is reflected in his remark after spending a day looking at the sights of Philadelphia. "My taste is perhaps defective. But I greatly prefer the works of nature to those of art."<sup>3</sup>

Prior to his call to Hampden-Sidney Moses Hoge had been revolving in his mind a plan to open a similar institution on his own initiative. He had conceived a system of mutual instruction in which he would take students capable of paying their own way in connection with "poor and pious" youth who needed assistance; and along with those pursuing a theological education he would associate a select number destined for different professions. "But a system, not less important if more difficult, of mutual vigilance and edification in virtue and piety was in his view a more favourite object. And it was his intention to have secured so carefully the preponderance of industrious and virtuous youth in his institution, that its habits of learning and order and devotion would have been intolerable to those who were incorrigibly idle and vicious."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibid p. 83    <sup>2</sup> Ibid p. 197    <sup>3</sup> Ibid p. 246    <sup>4</sup> Ibid p. 218



A few concluding quotations will indicate something of his type of piety. " At Mr. B--'s a number were impressed. But as some of the people were afraid of the smallpox our meetings in that quarter are intermitted. O that they were all equally afraid of the contagion of sin!" <sup>1</sup> " At ----- the people had a festival. And of this they have now reason to repent: a poor fellow has been badly wounded by a cannon. His life is said to be in danger. How much better it would be for our highly favoured citizens to repair to the house of God to commemorate a day that must be ever dear to every real American, than to have recourse for that purpose to scenes of idle festivity and mirth." <sup>2</sup> His strictness extended to the ordering of his own life. He was accustomed to observe one day a week of comparative abstinence. This he regarded as conducive to animal & intellectual & spiritual health & was the reason for its observance. He chose Friday because this was the day his wife died. The evening was spent in extraordinary devotions. Hoge's almost morbid preoccupation with death was probably a common characteristic of pious people of his day. Again and again in his diary he prays, " Lord, prepare me for my change." There are numerous instances of his diligence in extracting death bed assurances of salvation from those who were suffering. Great importance was attached to the last words of dying people as having significance as to their salvation. On one occasion he records such cries of a young girl who was dying, " O that I had never been born! O that I had never come into the world." and is pleased that one so young expressed herself with such fluency and propriety in her dying moments. These are probably



instances of a type of piety that was common to that day.

From the existent facts about the life of Moses Hoge we might conclude that he is primarily a scholar and teacher, totally lacking in literary genius, capable of solid but not brilliant preaching, and short in the resiliency and tact that is necessary for a good administrator. He is a typical example of a frontier product who overcomes great difficulties in procuring the education and social polish that is necessary for success in his chosen profession. He was stern, self-controlled and pious, a joint product of Calvinism and frontier conditions, but at times surprisingly tolerant on certain matters. His greatest contribution to his church was his teaching at Hampden-Sidney, carried on conscientiously for many years under severe handicaps. As first professor of theology he laid the foundation for the great seminary that exists today. I am sure that the subject of this sketch would approve the paraphrase that "Hoge planted, Rice watered, but God gave the increase."

H. R. Mahler, Jr.  
Richwood, W. Va.  
November 27, 1945



# APPENDIX

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