

“Dr. Thomas Hamilton Lewis”

Carroll County Times article for 26 November 2000

By Jay A. Graybeal

The Western Maryland College community and many Methodists throughout the nation mourned the death of Dr. Thomas Hamilton Lewis who died on June 14, 1929. Dr. Lewis served as President of Western Maryland College from 1882 to 1920 and was influential in the movement for United Methodism. An article about his long service appeared under the headline of Tribute is Paid to Dr. Lewis:

“With the cherished wish granted, that he lie in Baker Chapel, Westminster, after death, the funeral services of Dr. T. H. Lewis was held in that place Sunday afternoon at 3 o’clock. A short service in charge of the Rev. J. N. Straughn, Executive Secretary of the Methodist Protestant Conference, was held from the late residence in Washington in the morning, after which the body was removed to Westminster and placed in Baker Chapel where it lay in state from 1 until 2:30 o’clock, with services at 3 o’clock.

Many of his friends traveled a distance to pay their last respects. There were a large number of clergymen present. The pulpit beyond the casket was banked in floral tributes and the windows were filled, with handsome designs, an especially beautiful one coming in the name of Bishop William F. McDowell of the Methodist Episcopal Conference.

The little chapel was filled for the services which were in charge of the Rev. Dr. H. L. Elderdice, President of the Westminster Theological Seminary, assisted by the Rev. Dr. A. Norman Ward, President of Western Maryland College; the Rev. Dr. G. I. Humphreys, Salisbury, and the Rev. J. C. Broomfield, Pittsburgh, President of the General Conference of the Methodist Protestant church.

The Rev. Dr. Hugh Laterimer Elderdice took as his text, “There Came a Man Sent from God.” He continued, “This reference to John the Baptist by John the Apostle may well be quoted as a condensed history of Thomas Hamilton Lewis. He was a man. He was a man in Body. Though neither a Goliath in stature, nor a Hercules in physical prowess, yet every ounce of his blood and bone, nerve and muscle was a dynamo in perpetual motion.

His vitality was so vigorous, his energy so intense, and his programs so prolific, that the work of his hands was monumental. His feet were never found in the path of least resistance, but always where the road was roughest and the hill highest. His shoulders were broadening for additional burdens. Upon one occasion his conference was so overloading him with work that Dr. J. M. Holmes entered protest, Stop! When you kill Dr. Lewis you kill a dozen men.

‘He was a man in Mind, His intellectual endowments were rare and in constant cultivation, and with early development of his mental faculties, there was deeper desire for new worlds to conquer. Sir William Hamilton had in thought such giants as our profound thinker when he declared: ‘There is nothing great in the Universe but Man, and nothing great in man but mind.’ In study, the mind of Dr. Lewis was analytical; in composition, logical; and in purpose, both philosophical and practical. In every organization of which he was a member, he must needs be the leader, for he could not be a follower. This leadership was not born of contempt for the intelligence of his fellows, not of ambition for self; but was the spontaneous and indomitable assertion of a master mind. His wide-spread culture embraced the fine arts. His keen appreciation of paintings is evidenced by the picture placed by him to adorn the pulpit walls of this sacred edifice; and within the book racks throughout the Methodist Protestant churches of our land, you find the hymnal revised by his discriminating taste in music. One tune bears

the title Baker Chapel, and other tunes carry the names of those who have worshiped at this altar from infancy to womanhood.

'President Lewis was a man not only in Body and in Mind, but also in Spirit. Indeed, his supreme power was the ripened fruit of his spiritual gifts and graces. The gifts most worthy of mention were: his intelligent reading of the Holy Scriptures, which gripped the imagination and was in itself an inspiration; his clear insight into the heart of the Biblical truths that he expounded in his sermons; his well-poised verdict in conflicting moral standards; and his prophetic voice in all the social, civil, and religious issues of his day.

'His most spectacular triumphs were when he made his powerful pleas for a United Methodism. Before the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in the Lyric Theater, Baltimore, in 1908, and before the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, in Asheville, North Carolina, two years later, the timeliness, the truth, and the thrill of his inspired eloquence lifted both assemblies to their feet with Hallelujahs on their tongues. Probably no such scenes were ever paralleled in any other Ecclesiastical Council Convention, or Conference in our generation.

In last week's issue of the Methodist Protestant, his front page editorial proved to be his valedictory. It was a message to the Maryland Conference, convened in the Edmondson Avenue church, Baltimore. He was reminiscent of the similar sessions held during his membership of more than half a century. He closed his day dream by calling the Roll of his ministerial brethren who had answered the summons from on high. Then this old warrior of many a battle, turned on his sick-bed which he hoped soon to leave, saw in fancy more than a hundred and fifty living fellow-fighters on roll, signed his orders for new campaigns and declared his readiness to play again his part. Lister 'We must not waste time in reminiscence. Time will not turn backward. The future calls almost impatiently. No time for tears or sighs. Forward the Ensign moves. Well, Comrades, I won't be left behind. So, leave me here, and when you want me, sound upon the bugle horn'.

The Rev. Dr. Hayes, pastor of Centenary Methodist Episcopal church read greetings of sympathy from Bishop William Fraser McDowell. Following is the message that he gave:

'Bishop William Fraser McDowell of the Methodist Episcopal church, for himself and to represent the Board of Bishops of his church, greatly desired to be present here today, and to share with you in the honors being now paid your distinguished leader, and his personal friend. Absence in a distant city makes this impossible. He has asked me to represent him, in doing so, he remarks: 'The passing of Dr. Thomas Hamilton Lewis is not only a denominational loss; it is an interdenominational one.' He says. Our whole church loved Dr. Lewis and respected him as educator, preacher, author, Christian, statesman, friend; we are in grief with your great denomination in his going away; as he was ours, too, so is your deep sorrow ours; may the God whose gospel he so eloquently voiced for more than a half century, comfort his loved ones, his great conference now in session, his church at large, and ours.

Interment was made in the Westminster cemetery, where a short service was rendered. The active pall bearers were: Clinton Jarman, Greensboro, Md.; Frederick P. Adkins, Salisbury; John H. Baker, Daniel Banker, Jr., and Harry C. Staley, Baltimore, and George K. Mather, Westminster. The honorary bearers were from the Maryland Conference of the Methodist Protestant church: The Rev. Dr. L. B. Smith, the Rev. Dr. G. Q. Bacchus, the Rev. Dr. G. W. Kirk, the Rev. Dr. G. M. Gill, the Rev. Dr. J. C. Balderston and the Rev. Dr. J. C. Wooden."

His wife Mary was the daughter of Dr. J. Thomas Ward, 1st President of Western Maryland College. The couple was married on December 11, 1877, the groom's twenty-fifth birthday. As noted in the article he was buried in the Westminster Cemetery.

Photo caption: Dr. Thomas Hamilton Lewis served as President of Western Maryland College from 1882 to 1920 Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of ? Zumbrun